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Former prosecutor says she's pleased she made the career move

By Jerry Crimmins
Law Bulletin staff writer

Jumping from a career as a prosecutor to running a mental hospital for children is probably not a typical mid-life switch.

But [Teresa A. Maganzini](#), 58, who spent 30 years as an assistant Cook County state's attorney, said Thursday the switch has been "very rewarding" for her.

Maganzini is the administrator of the Maryville Scott Nolan Center in Des Plaines, a psychiatric hospital for children and adolescents with severe mental health problems who have not been not successful in foster homes or group homes.

"We might have children who have self-harming issues, or they are suicidal, or homicidal," she said. As diagnoses, for example, "they might have bipolar disorders or eating disorders or schizophrenia."

"The youngest we serve has been [age] 3, and we do have a young adult population that ends at 21. Most of them are adolescents 12 to 18."

Today the Scott Nolan Center has about 40 patients. It recently expanded to a capacity for 80,



Teresa A. Maganzini

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two to a room, but "some of our children because of their own issues, can't have roommates," Maganzini said.

The Scott Nolan Center is one of the many institutions for troubled or neglected children and adolescents that is part of Maryville Academy headquartered in Des Plaines.

Asked why a lawyer would be running a mental hospital, Maganzini said it was unexpected.

She had retired after 30 years as an assistant Cook County state's attorney in May 2007, when she acquired the maximum pension eligibility.

She spent many of her prosecuting years as chief of the Child Protection Division in Juvenile Court, where she worked for Sister [Catherine M. Ryan](#), then chief of the Cook County State's Attorney's Juvenile Justice Bureau.

Prosecutors in the Child Protection Division prosecute parents for abuse and neglect. The prosecutors work to remove children from unsafe environments, Maganzini said, but also try to restore children to families if the parents "can safely care for them."

In 2004, Ryan became executive director of Maryville. As soon as Maganzini approached retirement age, Ryan recruited her to become attorney for Maryville in November 2007.

Three weeks later, Maganzini said she temporarily took over the Scott Nolan Center "to make some changes and kind of spearhead a search for an administrator."

"It certainly was an unusual move for a lawyer, especially one with a background as a prosecutor," Maganzini said. She thought it would last three months.

Instead, Maryville decided that Maganzini was the one for the job.

During her time as a prosecutor, Maganzini had

spent eight years in the Civil Actions Bureau of the state's attorney's office, where she represented the county's hospitals, Cook County Hospital, Provident Hospital, and Oak Forest Hospital, in civil matters.

(That civil hiatus was after she spent almost three years as a trial lawyer prosecuting sex crimes. "I totally needed a break," Maganzini said.)

"Happily, it turns out that my eight years as an attorney in health-care law with the county was extremely useful" in taking over the Scott Nolan Center, she said.

"Hospitals are extremely regulated. You need to be mindful of all the state and federal regulations, also issues that come up with employment and labor."

The Scott Nolan Center has a staff of about 100.

As boss, she said her job is to support the doctors and nurses and child care workers and the rest of the employees in their efforts. "I make certain all the services are available."

In the community at large, she attends many of the same official meetings she used to attend as head of the prosecutors in the Child Protection Division of Juvenile Court. Now she wears a different hat.

Asked if she works directly work with the children at the Scott Nolan Center, Maganzini said, "I leave that to the professionals. ... I don't think anyone would want to rely on my medical or psychiatric opinions."

But perhaps it's not as simple as she describes.

[James V. McCarter](#), community relations coordinator and marketing director for the Scott Nolan Center, said that although Maganzini may not deal directly with patients, she deals with them "in the sense that the staff come to her with the issues."

"Dealing with psychiatric patients, they're

unpredictable," McCarter said.

Maganzini "has to be able to comprehend unique problems and find solutions to those problems." According to McCarter, "she's very good at handling crises. Not everybody can remain calm and collected under crisis."

Ryan said, "She has an appreciation of some of the trauma our children have been through because she worked at our child abuse and neglect court."

"I've also come to appreciate her strong sense of justice and her concern about and respect for people," Ryan added, "the little ones especially."

About half the patients at the Scott Nolan Center come from some other part of the Maryville system and are usually wards of the state.

The other half, and perhaps a few more now, are not wards of the state. They had been living with their families but are "struggling and in crisis," according to Maganzini.

"Our patients don't have the resources to pay much of anything," she said. Their care is paid for by third-party insurance or Medicaid.

McCarter, the community relations coordinator, is another lawyer story.

He, too, was a prosecutor in Cook County, and for 32 years. For many of those years, he was head of the prosecutors who handle delinquency cases in the Juvenile Justice Bureau.

Ryan, who supervised both, and McCarter and Maganzini were a team at Juvenile Court.

In July 2008, Ryan and Maganzini persuaded McCarter to join them at Maryville.

"We put the band back together again," McCarter said. "It's so refreshing to do something completely different" even though he said he took a big pay cut. "A lot of people say I seem much more at ease and relaxed" in his new job.

His role is to build up community awareness of what the Scott Nolan Center does.

Maganzini herself was a little "concerned about this type of career change. You can get very comfortable in your career."

But now, Maganzini said, "I'm so glad I made the move. I think Maryville is a great place to work, and I think it does great things for kids, and I guess at my time of life, that's a very rewarding thing to do."

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