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Two state Supreme Court justices plan talk in Port Townsend on Friday

By Charlie Bermant
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PORT TOWNSEND — The public has the opportunity to ask questions about the legal system Friday when four sitting justices make themselves available at a public forum.

State Supreme Court Justices Debra Stephens and Mary Yu will participate in the event, which begins at 5:30 p.m. at the Cotton Building, 607 Water St.

Joining them will be two Jefferson County jurists: Superior Court Judge Keith Harper and District Court Judge Jill Landes.

The justices were invited to Port Townsend by the Jefferson County Bar Association, whose president, Rafael Urquia, extended the invitation to Yu while attending a recent leadership training session.

Yu accepted and recruited Stephens for the trip.

“I’m really excited about this because it is a rare occurrence for Supreme Court justices to visit Port Townsend and the Olympic Peninsula,” Urquia said.

“If anyone has specific concerns about the legal system or general questions about the judicial process, they will have the chance to ask those questions.”

The two justices also will teach a class to local attorneys next Friday, Urquia said.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Madsen and Justice Susan Owens visited Port Townsend in December but were not available to the general public.

Stephens and Yu both represent firsts on the court.

Stephens was appointed to the court in 2007 by Gov. Chris Gregoire and was the first woman from Eastern Washington to sit on the court.

Yu, appointed by Gov. Jay Inslee in May, is the first Asian-American/Latina to sit on the court as well as its first openly gay member.

Yu, as a King County Superior Court judge, performed the first same-sex marriage in Washington state Dec. 9, 2012.

For more information, phone 360-390-4134.

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