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A Message from PK Jameson, State Courts Administrator

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Columbine, CO; Blacksburg, VA; Fort Hood, TX; Newtown, CT; Aurora, CO; Charleston, SC; San Bernardino, CA; Orlando, FL...the list of mass shootings goes on and on. And the incidence is on the rise in the United States as well as abroad.

In his State of the Judiciary address at this year's Annual Florida Bar Convention, Chief Justice Labarga reported that in the last 34 years, 81 mass shootings occurred in this country—44 of which have taken place in the last decade. There is a rise in anti-government violence, including a dramatic increase in security threats and violent incidents in court buildings.



Courthouses represent our nations' dedication to a forum for the peaceful resolution of disputes and grievances; a place where justice prevails. People who work in our courts and the people who use our courts must be safe. Court security has long been a priority for Florida's judicial branch. Soon after 9/11, it established two branch-wide emergency preparedness policy goals: to protect the health and safety of everyone inside the courts, and to keep the courts open to ensure justice for the people.

To help meet these policy goals, each court identified its mission-essential functions; developed an emergency preparedness plan; and designated an emergency coordinating officer, an emergency management team, and a public information officer. Also in 2001, the Court Emergency Management Group was established to recommend policy for, to prepare for, and respond to emergencies in state courts across Florida. The recently revised long-range plan for the judicial branch also emphasizes the need to "Protect all judges, court personnel, court users, and facilities through effective security, emergency preparedness, and continuity of operations plans."

Because preparing for threats and emergencies is an ongoing requirement, the branch continues to develop strategies to ensure the safety of the public, judicial officers, and court personnel. Recent endeavors include the supreme court's September 2015 creation of the Task Force on Appellate Court Safety and Security, directed to develop proposed standards and best practices relating to the safety and security of the supreme court and the DCAs. The increasing incidences of mass violence also prompted the Judicial Management Council to recommend that trial court security be its next area of focus, and it proposed the creation of a workgroup to focus on security standards of operation and best practices.

In the volatile environment of a court, each of us also has a role in keeping ourselves, our coworkers, and court visitors safe. For instance, be aware if someone appears to be following you; if someone who had business in your court appears to be monitoring your movements, do not go to your vehicle; never leave your vehicle unlocked; shred sensitive information; keep all hate mail in a file for future reference; if you or your staff have a difficult time with someone scheduled to appear in your court, or if you believe a person to be a threat, put a coded mark on the case file folder. And as the Department of Homeland Security stresses, "If you see something, say something." We cannot completely eliminate risk, but if we remain watchful of our surroundings and follow security procedures, we can significantly reduce it.

Sincerely,
PK Jameson

Court Access

Commission on Access to Civil Justice Submits Final Report

Domestic violence and many other family law issues; home ownership and landlord-tenant predicaments; consumer problems; personal injury claims; concerns related to veterans benefits or other government services—civil cases like these are not uncommon in Florida. But for many disadvantaged, low-income, and moderate-income Floridians, the cost of hiring an attorney to handle these cases is beyond reach. And even though Florida's state courts and other entities in the justice system have been working to improve the availability and delivery of a continuum of services, these Floridians still encounter barriers when seeking meaningful and informed access to the civil justice system. At his passing of the gavel ceremony in June 2014, Chief Justice Labarga spoke fervently about this concern—and he proclaimed that one of the top priorities of his administration would be Access to Justice for All Floridians.

The chief justice acknowledges that diminished funding for legal aid services has brought attention to the crisis of the civil legal assistance gap—however, he emphasizes that because access to civil justice is a societal concern, solutions should emerge from a broad, holistic approach that relies on all sectors of society, not just its attorneys and lawmakers. He had this in mind when, in November 2014, he signed an administrative order establishing the Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice: to recommend strategies for addressing this gap, this commission brings together 27 leaders from across the state who reflect a diversity of perspectives and expertise. Comprising judges, lawmakers, statewide elected leaders, lawyers, business executives, and other stakeholders, and chaired by the chief justice, the commission was directed to “consider Florida’s legal assistance delivery system as a whole, including but not limited to staffed legal aid programs, resources and support for self-represented litigants, limited scope representation, pro bono services, innovative technology solutions, and other models and potential innovations.” Supported in its work and goals by The Florida Bar and the Office of the State Courts Administrator, with additional support from The Florida Bar Foundation, the commission, which had its first meeting in January 2015, has made “a coordinated effort to identify and remove barriers to civil justice.” ([Take this link to the administrative order.](#))

The final report, submitted to the supreme court on June 30, provides updates on several promising projects for connecting disadvantaged, low-income, and moderate-income Floridians with legal resources. The four that have generated the most excitement so far are the implementation of a gateway portal, the expanded use of emeritus attorneys, the adoption of a cy pres rule or statute, and the development of Do-It-Yourself Florida.

To address the commission's charges, the chief justice created five subcommittees: Outreach, Access to and Delivery of Legal Services, Continuum of Services, Technology, and Funding. Over the course of the year and a half since its inception, the commission met as a whole five times; in addition, the five subcommittees met separately, on a regular basis. On June 30, it submitted its final report describing its accomplishments, providing an overview of the work completed by each subcommittee, and proposing next steps, including recommendations to the supreme court. The final report builds on previous reports and updates the interim recommendations the commission made in October 2015.

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Gateway Portal

The commission proposed the development of a statewide online triage gateway that will identify and recommend the best existing civil legal resources for users based on variables such as location, income, language,

and other related factors. In essence, the gateway portal would serve as an online connector to resources such as hotlines, law libraries, legal aid organizations, and court self-help centers. The commission has been working with the Florida Justice Technology Center (a nonprofit center that works on harnessing technology to increase access to justice) to design and implement a pilot project in Clay County.

Emeritus Attorneys

The commission recommended emendations to Rule 12 of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar to permit retired judges and retired and active law professors to serve as emeritus attorneys. The commission also proposed expanding areas of the law in which attorneys are allowed to practice as well as allowing emeritus attorneys to provide advice and assistance to clients whose legal problems are not likely to be subject to litigation. Florida Bar committees have been reviewing these proposed rule changes, and, if approved, they will be submitted to the supreme court for consideration.

Cy Pres Rule

From the French, "cy pres comme possible," meaning "as near as possible," cy pres is a doctrine that permits a court to award any unallocated, unclaimed, or undeliverable funds from a class action settlement or judgment to a non-profit organization. The commission discovered that 18 states have cy pres statutes or court rules that designate for legal aid programs any funds left over after class-action settlements are distributed to the plaintiffs covered by the lawsuit. The commission recommended that the supreme court develop a specific proposal for a cy pres rule in Florida, and the court referred the matter to The Florida Bar's Civil Procedure Rules Committee, which is currently researching the issue.

Do-It-Yourself Florida

OSCA, at the direction of the Judicial Management Council and in cooperation with The Florida Bar and the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers, has been developing web-based, interactive "interviews" to help self-represented litigants navigate the court system. Users are guided through a series of questions that enable them to assemble pleadings and other documents suitable for filing either through the statewide electronic filing portal or in person at the local clerk's office.

In his cover letter presenting the final report to his supreme court colleagues, Chief Justice Labarga praised the Florida Access Commission for the foundation it has laid: "While much remains to be done, I am proud of the Commission's achievements thus far," he wrote, adding, "I am confident that the Commission is on the right path toward addressing the long-term and complex issues that impede access to the civil justice system by disadvantaged, low-income and moderate-income Floridians." To ensure further advances in the court's access to justice efforts, the work of the commission must continue in order to "bridge the gap that keeps too many people from meaningful access to civil justice," the report concluded. ([This link goes to the final report.](#))



Court Initiatives

Eleventh Circuit Launches Human Trafficking Specialty Court

Human Trafficking: The Myths

- ~ Human trafficking does not occur in the US; it only happens in developing nations.
- ~ The victims of human trafficking are foreign-born, usually undocumented workers.
- ~ The victims of human trafficking are poor or from small, rural areas.
- ~ To be considered a victim of human trafficking, a person must be forced or coerced into commercial sex acts.
- ~ Human trafficking is limited to sex trafficking.
- ~ Human trafficking occurs only in illegal, underground industries.
- ~ To control their victims, traffickers use elements of physical restraint, physical force, or physical bondage.

Human Trafficking: The Facts

Often referred to as a form of modern-day slavery, human trafficking, which is criminalized under both federal and Florida law, is generally defined as the transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, or obtaining of another person for transport, for the purposes of forced labor, domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation, using force, fraud, and/or coercion (e.g., violence, threats, blackmail, false promises, deception, manipulation, debt bondage). Human trafficking crosses all social, ethnic, racial, and gender lines: traffickers prey on people of all ages, educational levels, nationalities, and abilities, and victims include illegal immigrants, legal immigrants, and even US citizens. Eighty percent of victims are women and children (US Department of State). Although human trafficking is frequently seen in the sex trade industry, human trafficking victims are also seen in industries associated with agriculture, factories and sweatshops, construction, day labor, commercial cleaning, tourism and hospitality, domestic service, health and elder care, child care, salon services, and door-to-door sales, as well as in many other informal and largely unregulated labor sectors (Florida Statewide Council on Human Trafficking).

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center estimates that traffickers exploit 20.9 million victims across the globe, with an estimated 1.5 million victims in North America, the European Union, and other developed economies combined. Even though people are growing increasingly cognizant of this crime, human trafficking continues to be underreported due to its covert nature, misconceptions about its definition, and an inability to recognize its signs.

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Human Trafficking in Florida

Human trafficking is metastasizing in Florida. Indeed, human trafficking experts declare that Florida is one of the most active states in the US for traffickers: according to the 2015 National Human Trafficking Resource Center Statistical Overview, in calls made to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, Florida ranked third, behind New York and Texas. Law enforcement officials speculate that Florida has become a hub for human trafficking because it is a popular destination for transients, runaways, migrant workers, and tourists (labor trafficking is ubiquitous at restaurants, country clubs, and hotels, for example) as well as being a locus for organized crime.



photo courtesy of 11th Circuit

Judge Maria Sampedro-Iglesia, associate administrative judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Juvenile Division, presides over the recently launched human trafficking court, called GRACE Court (Growth Renewed through Acceptance, Change and Empowerment Court).

Since 2004, a wide range of public and private entities, both statewide and local, have dedicated themselves to raising awareness about and supporting the victims of human trafficking in Florida. Among the most prominent are the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, several statewide task forces and councils established by the legislature and the attorney general's office, the Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking, the Florida State University Center for the Advancement of Human Rights, and the Florida Medical Association. Collectively, these entities have performed groundbreaking victim-based research assessments of human trafficking; developed a statewide strategic plan on human trafficking; assisted with drafting Florida's anti-trafficking laws; developed human trafficking curricula and conducted trainings for law enforcement, child protective investigators, service providers, medical practitioners, and other groups that are well-positioned to identify and aid human trafficking victims; provided outreach to and services for victims; and crafted recommendations for more effectively combating trafficking crimes and caring for its victims.

Florida's courts have also been playing an active role: the courts see this as an important access to justice and administration of justice matter because courts are uniquely situated to convene and coordinate the stakeholder groups that have to address the issues related to human

trafficking that surface in the judicial process. For judges and court personnel, numerous human trafficking trainings, both in-person events and webinars, have been offered, and others are currently being planned. In addition, OSCA produced and regularly updates a Human Trafficking Overview that details the relevant federal and Florida law regarding human trafficking cases, offers tips to help judges recognize these types of cases, outlines steps to follow if a human trafficking victim appears in court, and provides lists of useful information (e.g., remedies available for victims, the service needs of child victims, and resources for those seeking additional information). ([Take this link to the overview.](#))

The Eleventh Circuit's Human Trafficking Specialty Court

Of particular note is the work of the Eleventh Circuit, which has taken a vigorously proactive stance regarding the youngest casualties of human trafficking. Acknowledging that Miami, because of its geographic location, is "one of the leaders in this crime," the circuit, through an administrative order issued by Chief Judge Bertila Soto in March 2015, established a Human Trafficking Court, designed "to serve young victims of human trafficking who entered the court system under a Chapter 39 Petition and/or a delinquency petition filed under Statute 985." According to the circuit's Protocol for Human Trafficking Cases in the 11th Judicial Circuit Court, the mission of this specialty court, which officially launched earlier this year, is to "provide victims with comprehensive services and support in order to recover from the life they have been exposed to, have a successful transition to independence, and begin to lead a healthy life, physically, mentally and emotionally." The protocol adds, "It is hoped that the services and support will also reduce any further victimization or involvement in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems."

Judge Maria Sampedro-Iglesia, who presides over the Eleventh Circuit's human trafficking court, emphasizes that, "Unbeknownst to most, human trafficking does not only occur in third world countries, but also in our own backyards. When 12-year-old children are being held captive so their bodies can be sold, this community must respond. It is my hope that GRACE Court will be the answer for the boys and girls and their families who come to our court system from such desperate straits."

Part of the juvenile dependency division of the Eleventh Circuit, this is the first specialized court in the nation devoted solely to human trafficking, according to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center. In addition, while some courts address human trafficking in dependency and some address it in delinquency, the Eleventh Circuit is the first court

to address human trafficking both in dependency and delinquency in a unified setting: whenever a child is identified as a victim of human trafficking—whether it is in dependency, delinquency, or family—that case is transferred to Human Trafficking Court.

Recognizing that there is a “stigma and shame associated with the term human trafficking,” the Eleventh Circuit resolved to call this docket GRACE Court—an acronym for Growth Renewed through Acceptance, Change and Empowerment. The circuit hopes that, in addition to removing the taint associated with the term human trafficking, the name GRACE Court will “encourage these young people and their families to start seeing themselves in a position of strength and growth.”

In developing GRACE Court, the Eleventh Circuit understood that, in order to identify the victims of human trafficking and to respond effectively to their needs, collaboration is essential. Thus GRACE Court depends upon the use of multi-systems partnerships in order to reap the benefits of collective impact. For instance, its steering committee—which provides oversight, offers guidance on key issues, recommends actions in matters requiring specialized knowledge, and addresses any problems or concerns regarding the operations, policy, and procedures of GRACE Court—includes representatives from the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Miami-Dade Office of the State Attorney, the Guardian ad Litem Program, the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, the Miami-Dade County Coordinated Victims Assistance Center, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Juvenile Justice Support Program, and several local, not-for-profit entities dedicated to creating a better life for children in crisis, as well as a survivor of human trafficking.

Moreover, GRACE Court utilizes a collaborative, multi-disciplinary team staffing model. The team includes all managers and service providers involved in a case, as well as members from most of the entities represented on the steering committee. Meetings take place every other week, and team members—who are expected to be present at all meetings—gather to discuss and review what happened at the last court hearing and what has transpired since then. Each member discusses the child’s progress and compliance with services, and the information shared at these meetings is addressed at the next court hearing. To ensure that team members are mindful of the most current information and research as well as aware of the latest screening and assessment tools, they are required to undergo training in human trafficking and trauma-informed services.



GRACE Court logo, designed by Andrea Junco and Tania Smith, School for Advanced Studies.

When a child is accepted into GRACE Court, the court evaluates his or her needs and ensures that all referrals are sent to the appropriate service providers. The court also assists in ensuring that the victim is involved in his or her case plan and/or disposition report. GRACE Court works diligently to create an environment that empowers victims to recommend the services and provisions they feel are necessary to recover from the trauma and victimization. Among the services and provisions available are food and clothing, immediate safe housing, medical care, counseling, substance abuse treatment, education and vocational support, employment opportunities, mentoring, and intensive case management. Collaboration is evident here as well, for GRACE Court has developed an extensive network of community-based partnerships to provide these services.

The circuit’s Protocol for Human Trafficking Cases emphasizes that collaboration—e.g., the multi-systems approach, multi-disciplinary team staffing, and community-based partnerships—are fundamental to the success of GRACE Court. As it states, “Partners must work together and elicit helpful feedback and solutions regarding this court project. We must learn as a group that success may be measured differently for this population. The way a community and a legal system react to a victim’s life can influence a victim’s level of engagement and trust. A specialized court team can coordinate services in an effort to keep victims on the right path, increase self-

sufficiency, provide victims with the opportunity for healing and hope, and prevent them from returning to the sex trade or any other life on the streets.”

GRACE Court is presided over by Judge Maria Sampredo-Iglesia, who is also the associate administrative judge of the circuit’s juvenile division. She explained that she first developed an interest in this area of law in 2011, after she attended a circuit judges conference at which the phenomenon of human trafficking was discussed. Dismayed that human trafficking (or child slavery, as she sees it) happens with such frequency in this country, she began to research the matter and to find ways that the Eleventh Circuit could partner with community agencies to help these children. GRACE Court is the result of her research and contemplations.

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Circuits Offer Continuing Education for Their Court Interpreters

In many cultures, the education of the young is valued unreservedly. Also highly esteemed is the continuing education of adults of all ages—perhaps because, as President Truman is said to have quipped, “It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts!” In fact, for almost all vocations, from trade workers to legal and medical professionals, some form of continuing education is obligatory. This is certainly true for many court, and court-related, occupations. For instance, since 1988, Florida’s judges have been required to earn a minimum of 30 approved credit hours of continuing judicial education every three years. That same year, lawyers began being required to earn a minimum of 30 approved credit hours of continuing legal education every three years. Florida’s certified mediators must also satisfy a continuing education requirement: since 2000, they have to complete 16 hours of approved continuing mediator education every two years.

More recently, continuing education became mandatory for Florida’s court interpreters: since 2010, court interpreters seeking to maintain state-level designation must earn a minimum of 16 continuing interpreter education credits every two years. Judges, the parties, and the court system all benefit from the continuing education

requirement for court interpreters: in reinvigorating the interpreters’ knowledge, skills, and abilities, in helping them carry out their duties fairly and efficiently, and in bolstering their efforts to achieve the height of personal and professional conduct, continuing interpreter education supports access to justice.

As of this writing, since the requirement was implemented, 139 continuing interpreter education programs have been approved by Florida’s Court Interpreter Certification Board. At first, nearly all the programs were online offerings promoted by private entities. However, in fiscal year 2011 – 12, a few circuits expressed interest in creating face-to-face training opportunities tailored to the particular learning needs of their court interpreters, and with the help of judges, staff interpreters, local attorneys, and a variety of topic experts, they began developing, and received approval to put on, their own local programs, which they offered for free.

This commitment to designing local education initiatives has continued to grow. Thus far, nine circuits have received approval for locally-devised programs: the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Ninth, Tenth, Thirteenth, Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Nineteenth Circuits. And, all told, they have offered 29 education programs—on

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a diverse array of topics: the behind-the-curtain workings of the judicial branch; juvenile delinquency; dependency; child support and family law; court interpreter ethics; the court interpreters' Code of Professional Conduct; civil law terminology; motions in criminal trial court; criminal prosecution; forensics; firearms and ammunitions; the impact of trauma and mental health issues on the courts; simultaneous interpreting; consecutive interpreting; and remote interpreting. ([This link goes to the approved continuing interpreter education programs.](#))

The reason this topic is "in the news" at the moment is that, in the brief span between early March and mid-June of this year, six different circuits offered continuing interpreter education programs, treating court interpreters to a veritable windfall of cost-free, home-grown training opportunities. This article spotlights the six programs that were recently conducted (in the order in which they took place) by the Ninth, Sixth, Tenth, Seventeenth, Fifth, and Nineteenth Circuits.

Ninth Circuit: Inside the Courts

March 8, 15, 22, and 29, 2016, from 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Court interpreters who attended all four sessions earned 8.8 credit hours

Inside the Courts, first launched in 1998, is a free, annual program that generally takes place on four consecutive Tuesday evenings each spring. This community education and outreach initiative provides attendees with a behind-the-scenes look at the operations of the court system and the workings of the judicial branch: participants learn about the role of the judge, the processes of a case, the challenges Florida's courts face today, and the future of the court system. Although the program was not originally designed with court interpreters in mind, the information it imparts is so comprehensive and useful that the Court Interpreter Certification Board began approving it for continuing interpreter education credits in 2010, the year the requirement was implemented. (To get continuing interpreter education credit, court interpreters are required to sign in and sign out of each session and to fill out a program questionnaire before leaving each night.)

Inside the Courts was created by Orange County Judge W. Michael Miller, who develops sessions reflecting areas of the law that are of special interest to the community or that have been the subject of recent events, so the material is different each year. He then recruits a squad of judges to facilitate the various

sessions, which he moderates. The first three sessions are generally divided into two parts, each with a different focus and each facilitated by a different judge; the final session consists of a wide-ranging discussion among a panel of judges and the attendees. But this isn't the only time participants have a chance to ask questions: Inside the Courts is highly interactive by design, and people are encouraged to ask questions throughout the event.



photo courtesy of 9th Circuit

Participating in the panel discussion this year are (l – r) Chief Judge Frederick Lauten (Ninth Circuit), Judge Heather Pinder Rodriguez (Ninth Circuit), Judge Tanya Davis Wilson (Orange County), Judge Alan Apte (Ninth Circuit), and Judge Wilfredo Martinez (Orange County).



photo courtesy of 9th Circuit

Judge W. Michael Miller (Orange County) created Inside the Courts in 1998; each year, to keep the material of this annual program fresh and relevant, Judge Miller develops sessions reflecting areas of the law that are of special interest to the community or that have been the subject of recent events.

Participants register in advance, and, on average, 120 are present for each of the two-hour sessions, all of which are held in the Jury Assembly Room in the Orange County Courthouse. During the 19 years of the program's existence, approximately 2,500 people have participated, and thousands more have viewed it on public access television. This year's program had a record turnout: the first

night brought in 175 attendees. Among the focuses this year were sessions on Access to the Courts, Sexual Offenses and the Jimmy Ryce Law, and Child Support to Adoptions.

Inside the Courts was the first continuing interpreter education course the Ninth Circuit offered—but it has not been the only one; over the years, the circuit has offered eight additional programs for its interpreters.

Sixth Circuit: Juvenile Dependency Workshop

March 18, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Court interpreters who attended the entire event earned 3.2 credit hours

The Juvenile Dependency Workshop was the Sixth Circuit’s first continuing interpreter education program. Held in the Pinellas County Criminal Justice Center in Clearwater, this free workshop was designed and offered by Hillsborough County attorney Jessica Tien, who has been conducting Florida Bar-approved seminars on juvenile dependency since 2004; she tailored this program to the specific needs of court interpreters.

Altogether, 21 court interpreters participated in the three-hour session, during which Ms Tien introduced them to the Florida Statutes addressing dependency cases and to the terminology frequently used in juvenile dependency proceedings; familiarized them with juvenile dependency and termination of parental rights proceedings; and presented and interpreted Chapter 39 case law topics and legal advisories from the Department of Children and Families. The workshop concluded with a discussion and a question and answer period.

Interpreters are hungry for opportunities “to enhance their abilities in the proceedings in which they function” and praised this seminar as a chance to “broaden their understanding of the proceedings involved in dependency court.” Added Ms Beatriz Velasquez, a federally certified Spanish court interpreter who is on staff at the Sixth Circuit, “As court interpreters, we are expected to have a comprehensive command of legal vocabulary and acronyms that are specific to varied legal proceedings, from misdemeanor DUIs to felony murders to termination of parental rights. Ms Tien presented an in-depth description of the juvenile dependency process and equipped us with a plethora of acronyms that come up often in Unified Family Court. All the interpreters expressed their gratitude for Ms. Tien’s workshop and the need for additional training in this topic.”



photo courtesy of 6th Circuit

The Sixth Circuit’s recent Juvenile Dependency Workshop was coordinated by Ms Beatriz Velasquez, a federally certified Spanish court interpreter who is on staff at the Sixth Circuit. Ms Velasquez (on left) is pictured here with Ms Jessica Tien, the Hillsborough County attorney who designed and offered the workshop.

Tenth Circuit: Dependency and Delinquency Workshop

April 15, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Court Interpreters who attended the entire event earned 8.1 credit hours

The Dependency and Delinquency Workshop was the Tenth Circuit’s first continuing interpreter education program. This free program was the brainchild of Ms Toni Godinez, the supervising court interpreter for the circuit, and Ms Anne Weeks, senior court operations consultant: sharing their concern about the cost of continuing education classes for court interpreters, they were inspired to develop a free, full-day class for those seeking credit hours. After presenting their idea to Trial Court Administrator Nick Sudzina, they felt impelled to open the workshop to all Florida court interpreters. In the end, 91 interpreters—including three certified deaf interpreters and eight sign language interpreters—from across the southern part of the state attended, some journeying from as (relatively) distant as the Florida Keys (participants came from the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Tenth, Eleventh, Thirteenth, Fifteenth, Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Twentieth Circuits).

The workshop included sessions on Dependency Court 101, The Nuts and Bolts of a Shelter Hearing, Ethics and Confidentiality in Child Protection Cases, Delinquency in Florida, Delinquency Court Procedure: How a Disposition Hearing Works, and a Panel Discussion with a Question and Answer component; participants also had a working lunch, which included small group discussion and question development for the afternoon Q & A. The workshop was conducted by three Tenth Circuit Judges: Judge Kevin Abdoney, who chairs the Court Interpreter Certification Board; Judge Angela Cowden; and Judge Neil Roddenbery. The panel discussion included Judges Cowden and Roddenbery as well as representatives from the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Juvenile Justice, Children’s Legal Services, Heartland for Children, and Guardian ad Litem. The program was so successful that court administration is now talking about offering a continuing interpreter education program annually.



photo courtesy of Anne Weeks, 10th Circuit

Judge Angela Cowden (Tenth Circuit) walks among the interpreters, fielding their questions during the Q & A session; she conducted the workshop with Judge Kevin Abdoney, who chairs the Court Interpreter Certification Board, and Judge Neil Roddenbery.

Seventeenth Circuit: Trauma, Mental Health and the Impact on the Courts

June 10, 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Court Interpreters who attended the entire event earned 5.5 credit hours

Co-sponsored by the Seventeenth Circuit and the Mental Health Association of Southeast Florida, Trauma, Mental Health and the Impact on the Courts was the focus of a Unified Family Court Summit, which Ms Lynn Allen, UFC case management manager, and Ms Jeanne Potthoff, alternative dispute resolution director, have been coordinating annually for the last nine years; each year’s summit has a different theme, different speakers, and new credit opportunities. The summit is traditionally designed for judges, magistrates, court personnel, and stakeholders (e.g., mental health providers, community-based care providers, batterer intervention

providers, substance abuse providers, mediators, attorneys, etc.); this was the first time the program was approved as a continuing interpreter education program.



photo courtesy of 17th Circuit

After the Seventeenth Circuit’s workshop on Trauma, Mental Health and the Impact on the Courts, some of the participating court interpreters remained for a group photo.

The free program, held in the Jury Room of the Broward County Judicial Complex, was conducted by Judge Hope Bristol, Seventeenth Circuit; Judge Scott Bernstein, Eleventh Circuit; and Dr. Mimi Graham, director of the Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy—all of whom are members of the Steering

Committee on Families and Children in the Court—and by Dr. Patricia Babcock, a member of the Dependency Court Improvement Panel. After an Introduction to Adverse Childhood Events, participants watched and discussed *Paper Tigers*, a documentary that follows four teens who attend the first high school in the nation that integrated trauma-informed and resilience-building practices into its curriculum. Following the film were sessions on the impact of trauma on the court system, the manifestation of trauma in early childhood and in children five years old and above, and the kinds of help that courts need in order to assist families affected by trauma.

Altogether, of the 327 attendees, 80 were court interpreters, who came from across the state to earn continuing interpreter education credits. This was the second time the Seventeenth Circuit offered a program for which its court interpreters could earn continuing education credits.

Fifth Circuit: Making the Most of Court Interpreting Ethics

June 17, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Court interpreters who attended the entire event earned 2.4 credit hours.

A free continuing interpreter education program for local court interpreters, Making the Most of Court Interpreting Ethics, held in the Lake County Courthouse Jury Assembly Room, comprised a presentation on the Code of Professional Responsibility followed by a discussion on Understanding Ethics; a session on the Florida Interpreter Code of Ethics, which included an interactive role play segment; and a Q & A segment.

The program was conceptualized under the leadership of Chief Judge Don F. Briggs, who envisioned this continuing interpreter education program as a great opportunity to do community outreach. The various presentations were coordinated by Judge Jim McCune, who serves on the Court Interpreter Certification Board; Mr. Todd Tuzzolino, the circuit’s chief deputy court administrator; and Fifth Circuit interpreting

staff: Ms Ana Braun, Ms Dianne Tornay, and Mr. Ed Fuentes. The interpreting staff also play an active role in the circuit’s outreach endeavors, routinely providing information to local bar associations, recruiting through local colleges and universities via a mentoring program, and creating and maintaining directories of commonly translated court documents in each county.

All told, 29 court interpreters participated in the program. This was the Fifth Circuit’s first continuing interpreter education program.

In addition to developing its first continuing education program for court interpreters, the Fifth Circuit recently offered its first lunch and learn program on court interpreting for its judges, hearing officers and magistrates, and court administration staff. Spearheaded by Judge McCune, this one-and-a-half hour program, called Doing Justice with Court Interpreting, had a far-reaching agenda: topics included the constitutional significance of providing court interpreters; court interpreter



photo courtesy of 5th Circuit

The staff court interpreters of the Fifth Judicial Circuit gather for a photo (l – r): Ana Morales (Lake & Sumter Counties), Ed Fuentes (Marion County), Milena Clark (Lake County), Ana E. Braun (Lake County), Dianne Tornay (Marion County), and Juan Carlos Villanueva (Hernando & Citrus Counties).

roles, duties and ethics; interpreter preparation; interpreter fatigue; appointing multiple interpreters to a proceeding; handling interpreter errors and allegations of error; what not to do as a judge; what should a judge expect from a court interpreter; and what should a court interpreter expect from a judge. The program, which was held in the Jury Assembly Room of the Marion County Courthouse, was conducted largely by Mr. Tuzzolino and two members of the interpreting staff: Ms Tornay and Ms Valentina Wygmans; altogether, 23 judges, four hearing officers and magistrates, and 15 court staff participated either in person or via videoconference.

Nineteenth Circuit: Un-mumble the Jumble of Civil Law, Property Law, Small Claims, Landlord-Tenant Law, Civil Depositions Terminology

June 17, 1:00 – 4:00

Court Interpreters who attended the entire event earned 3.4 credit hours

A free workshop held in the Martin County Courthouse, Un-Mumble the Jumble comprised three segments, each an hour in length. The first, conducted by Judge Kathleen Roberts, provided interpreters with an introduction to civil law; offered definitions of small claims and landlord-tenant law; described the courtroom procedure of various aspects of civil court; broke down the steps involved in getting from conflict to resolution; and defined common terms. The second segment, conducted by Chief Judge Elizabeth Metzger, offered definitions of probate, property law, and civil depositions; explained the Uniform Motion Calendar; and defined common terms. Finally, Ms Rosario Valdiviezo, the circuit's supervising interpreter, conducted a session on vocabulary and research material. Each segment culminated in a question and answer session.

Altogether, 19 court interpreters participated in this program, which they described as "useful," "informative and clear," "well-organized," and "so professional it should be given statewide." It was the third continuing education program the Nineteenth Circuit has created for its interpreters—and it has welcomed certified interpreters from across the state to each of these undertakings.

In addition to developing education programs for its court interpreters, the Nineteenth Circuit has been making efforts to recruit court interpreters. Recognizing that Florida's courts have a considerable interpreter need, Mr. Thomas Genung, the trial court administrator—with the assistance of Mr. Carlos Rivera-Navas (Spanish certified interpreter), Mr. Evens Latortue (Creole certified interpreter), and Ms Valdiviezo—devised a strategy for interesting potential candidates in the profession: a one-hour orientation session called How to Be a Court Interpreter, which focuses on what a court interpreter is, when one is needed, what skills one needs, the Code of Ethics, and the process of obtaining certification. The orientation is advertised in the local Spanish language newspaper and at area colleges, and two have been offered so far. The sessions have drawn 28 prospective interpreters, a number of whom have already signed up to take the two-day statewide orientation (the first step candidates must take in the path toward becoming a court interpreter). Mr. Genung calls these recruitment sessions a way of "actively working to build a pool of potential court interpreters in advance of the statewide orientation."

Ms Lisa Bell, the senior court operations consultant with OSCA's Court Services Unit who oversees the Court Interpreters Program, is very excited about this expanding roster of continuing interpreter education courses: "Because of the large geographic expanse of our state," she explained, "holding workshops in multiple locations throughout Florida affords more interpreters the opportunity to enhance their professional skills and knowledge, and at the same time assists registered and officially designated interpreters in fulfilling mandatory continuing education requirements." She had special praise for the circuits that are developing their own courses for interpreters: "The fact that nine circuits, to date, have collectively sponsored 29 such programs since continuing interpreter education was implemented in 2010, is extremely beneficial to interpreters and the court system alike." She welcomes "prospective continuing education providers—including other circuits that are interested in developing local programs for their court interpreters—to contact our Court Interpreters Program unit at interpreters@flcourts.org or (850) 922-5107."



photo courtesy of 19th Circuit

Pictured here is Chief Judge Elizabeth Metzger (Nineteenth Circuit), who conducted the Un-mumble the Jumble Workshop with Judge Kathleen Roberts (Martin County) and Ms Rosario Valdiviezo, the circuit's supervising interpreter.

Court Communication

Early this year, to advance the communication-related goals of the judicial branch's recently revised long-range plan, Florida's courts began implementing the new branch-wide communication plan. Developed with the input of judges, court public information officers and other court personnel, and the press, *Delivering Our Message: Court Communication Plan for the Judicial Branch of Florida 2016* strives to help the courts build relationships with a variety of partners, enhance public understanding of and support for the branch, speak clearly and purposefully about the branch, support open lines of communication, and communicate effectively using deliberate, coordinated efforts. The plan is organized around four high priority strategic issues that must be addressed over the long term in order to achieve these levels of meaningful communication: Enhancing Public Trust and Confidence; Speaking with One Voice – Key Court Messages; Improving Communication Methods; and Strengthening Internal Communication. Although each strategic issue identifies a set of goals as well as suggested strategies for achieving those goals, the courts are given discretion to determine how to address them based on local needs and resources. To ensure that each court has the opportunity to develop creative solutions that work best for it, Chief Justice Labarga charged the courts' designated public information officers (PIOs) with putting the plan into effect in their respective circuits/DCAs. ([Take this link to access the communication plan.](#))

Last March, after participating in a two-and-a-half day Court Community Communication Workshop to learn about their responsibilities in implementing the plan and to prepare themselves for this task, the PIOs agreed that one of their first undertakings should be to improve their outreach to the public and to develop effective public information programs. For several courts, this commitment has already been bearing fruit, and, beginning with this edition, the *Full Court Press* will regularly spotlight at least one innovative initiative that a circuit or DCA has introduced in order to fortify court-community communications. In this newsletter, the focus is on the Ninth Judicial Circuit's Juror Appreciation Week.

The Ninth Circuit Celebrates Juror Appreciation Week

The Ninth Circuit has a seasoned history of creating public outreach programs and materials to enhance communication with court audiences and encourage strong court-community relations. The circuit's ongoing efforts include mock trials, Law Day activities, and other civic education programs for children of all ages; day-care facilities; public information booths in its courthouses; courthouse tours; meet your judge programs; town halls; a speaker's bureau; citizen advisory committees; a neighborhood restorative justice program; "judicial ride-alongs" for elected officials; and, of course, the highly popular Inside the Courts program that just celebrated its nineteenth anniversary (see previous article). In keeping with the circuit's commitment to bolster meaningful communication with court audiences, last year, Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten launched a new community outreach initiative—Juror Appreciation Week—and it was so successful that the circuit celebrated it again this May and is considering making it an annual event.

For Chief Judge Lauten, Juror Appreciation Week gives the Ninth Circuit an opportunity to recognize the crucial contributions of its jurors. To mark Juror Appreciation Week in 2015 and 2016, he wrote op ed pieces for the *Orlando Sentinel* in which he emphasizes the importance of these contributions. He calls trial by jury "one of the fundamental features of our legal system" and describes it as "one of the most sacred, time-honored principles of our democracy." And he refers to jurors as "the lifeblood of the justice system"—for, without them, "We cannot dispense justice in our courthouse." He reminds readers that "Jury service is one of the most direct forms of democracy because it is



photo courtesy of 9th Circuit

More than 1,000 jurors reported for service during this year's Juror Appreciation Week at the Ninth Circuit. Jurors, whom Chief Judge Lauten calls "the lifeblood of the justice system," were welcomed with this sign, which thanks them for their service and quotes Thomas Jefferson as saying, "I consider a trial by jury as the only anchor yet imagined by man by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution."

we the people and not someone we elect deciding the fate of a case.” And, for that reason, he adds, “It is vitally important that we have a diverse, representative, engaged group of citizens deciding disputed issues of fact and rendering verdicts in both criminal and civil trials.” He ends his op ed piece by extending his deepest appreciation to all those who have “faithfully reported for jury service throughout the years”: “You have strengthened our nation by fulfilling your civic responsibility,” he concludes.

This year, the chief judge proclaimed the week of May 2 Juror Appreciation Week; following suit, the Orange and Osceola County Board of County Commissioners issued similar proclamations, which were posted on bulletin boards in each county’s jury assembly rooms. Over the course of the week, more than 1,000 jurors reported for service, and each morning, a number of judges came down to the jury assembly rooms to greet them; the judges talked about the importance of jury service in the justice system, thanked the jurors for reporting for jury duty, and took photos with them. Not surprisingly, during these “meet and greets,” many of the judges came across people they knew—friends, neighbors, former classmates—leading to some very friendly, lively encounters that everyone enjoyed. Each juror received a personalized “thank you” card that emphasized the important role jurors play in the juridical system.

One of the highlights each day of Juror Appreciation Week was a rousing and educational game of Juror Jeopardy, which was conceived by Ms Yesenia Gomez, the Osceola County jury services supervisor, and was developed with the help of other Ninth Circuit court personnel. Jury staff would pick three jurors who wanted to compete in the game, and it was played for the edification and entertainment of the jurors who remained after the early morning panels were sent out. Structured to resemble the TV quiz competition, Juror Jeopardy had four categories—Criminal Law, Jury Duty, Grand Jury, and Around Osceola—and these categories were displayed using an overhead projector. Juror-contestants would take turns selecting categories and be given clues in the form of answers—for instance, A jury that is unable to reach a decision; or The number of jurors selected on a grand jury; or Proof that it is more likely than not that an offense took place and that the defendant committed it. The juror-contestants’ job was to phrase the correct response in the form of a question. Each had a bell to ring to signal his/her readiness to respond, and if none of the contestants got it right, they would move on to another category. Scoring was monitored throughout the game, and when the game concluded, the juror-contestant with the most points would win a small prize. Court support manager Julio Semino called this “a cool, competitive twist to the day that keeps the jurors alert and engaged.” All told, Juror Appreciation Week was “well-received,” and he added that “We believe spotlighting these efforts will help reinforce the idea that jury service is a vital part of our system of justice.”

The court system’s new communication plan recognizes that “communication by all courts in Florida strengthens the public’s trust and confidence in our court system. Courts rely on public trust and confidence as the source of their effectiveness. Public confidence in the judicial branch is directly related to the courts’ ability to fulfill their mission. However, people don’t trust what they don’t understand. Therefore, educating the public about the judicial branch is one important component of increasing support of court-related initiatives which allow the courts to operate more effectively.” Through its celebration of Juror Appreciation Week, the Ninth Circuit has implemented a meaningful and memorable outreach event that is sure to deepen the public’s understanding of the judicial branch.



A juror poses for a photo flanked by Chief Judge Frederick Lauten (Ninth Circuit) and Judge Tanya Davis Wilson (Orange County).

photo courtesy of 9th Circuit

If your court has developed an outreach initiative in support of the communication plan’s goal of improving court-community relations—and if you would like to see it highlighted in the Full Court Press—please contact Beth Schwartz at OSCAPublications@flcourts.org or at (850) 410-3306.

Court Education

The New Appellate Judges Program: A Resource-Full Learning Opportunity

New appellate judges, whether they were appointed directly from the practice of law or from the trial court bench, quickly discover that their new role is significantly different from anything for which their prior vocational experience prepared them. If they were practicing attorneys, for instance, their job was to act on behalf of their clients in legal matters; working largely solitarily, they engaged in the practical application of abstract legal theories to advance those clients' best interests. If they were trial court judges, their job entailed presiding over cases individually, focusing on discovering the facts, which they determined after listening to the evidence presented by both sides; after assessing the facts and determining how the law applied to those facts, they decided the outcome of each case. Serving on the appellate bench has little in common with those professions, however. Typically working in panels of three, appellate judges are responsible for carefully and neutrally reviewing the materials from the original trial to determine whether the lower tribunal made any legal errors; their focus is on questions of law, not questions of facts. Because new appellate judges are likely to encounter few parallels with their former work environments and assignments, the Florida Court Education Council, in 1991, established the New Appellate Judges Program to help them transition to their new roles and responsibilities; in 1996, the program became mandatory for all judges new to the appellate bench.



BC Schwartz

In a session on Opinion Writing—Making Great Writers Better, Judge Jonathan Gerber (Fourth DCA) offers some incisive advice for making one's writing more logical, coherent, accessible, and retainable.

Combining lecture-style sessions and participatory learning activities, the New Appellate Judges Program offers participants a panorama of opportunities to contemplate, analyze, discuss, and put to the test practices designed to help them do their new jobs better. Over the course of the densely-packed three days, attendees are treated to in-depth sessions on matters like Jurisdiction and Scope of Review, Standards of Review, Statutory Construction, Ethics, Certiorari and Writs, Post-Conviction, and Motions and Fees. The program also provides them with a forum for engaging in vigorous discussions about Oral Arguments, Opinion Writing, and Collegiality. This year's program, which took place in Tallahassee in April, was facilitated by the associate dean of the Florida Judicial College, Judge Jonathan Gerber, Fourth DCA, who also served as its lead faculty member.



BC Schwartz

Facilitating a lively colloquy on the topic of collegiality are (l – r) Judge Kevin Emas (Third DCA), Judge Nelly Khouzam (Second DCA), Judge Kent Wetherell (First DCA), and Judge Spencer Levine (Fourth DCA).

The New Appellate Judges Program doesn't often take place in the Capitol City—but, for the second year in a row, the event was hosted at the supreme court. Among the benefits of locating the program in Tallahassee is that the new appellate judges have the chance to see and interact with the supreme court justices. This year, Judge Gerber orchestrated two such occasions: one was an entirely new segment designed to offer insight into the relevance of oral arguments and into the oral argument process, and the other, a Lunch with the Florida Supreme Court, was a repeat of a highly successful activity he introduced at last year's program.

The new segment comprised two parts: for the first, the new appellate judges observed the supreme court justices presiding over a scheduled oral argument; the second part, which took place immediately after, was a session Judge Gerber developed called Oral Argument—Purposes and Professionalism. He added this new segment, he explained, to accentuate the significance of oral argument. “The manner in which we present ourselves in court creates fixed opinions about the court—and about us,” Judge Gerber emphasized—and that is why oral argument is so important. For oral argument provides the public with “a rare opportunity to see us doing what we do”; he called it “the court’s public face.” He then went on to stress the indispensability of behaving professionally, both on and off the bench, and to remind participants that each judge is responsible for “preserving the dignity and respect of the judiciary.” This segued into an animated conversation about the just-witnessed interplay between the justices and the attorneys and the lessons the new appellate judges could take back with them to their own courtrooms.

The other interaction with the justices was the Lunch with the Florida Supreme Court. During this informal lunch hour, after introductions were made all around, Judge Gerber invited the justices to share some “words of wisdom” about being an appellate judge. The justices’ advice was far-ranging, but their counsel tended to fall into three areas: the values of collegiality, the benefits of participating in activities that exceed the normal expectations of judicial office, and the necessity for professionalism.

Four of the justices called attention to the importance of collegiality on the appellate bench. Justice Perry, who began the roundtable discussion, encouraged the new appellate judges to “learn to disagree without being disagreeable.” At the same time, however, he cautioned them to “try not to be a herd follower: exercise your own best opinion about what the law says.” Chief Justice Labarga noted that, “As a trial judge, everyone is his own island, but at the appellate level, collegiality is everything.” And he added that the new appellate judges should “be careful with emails, as it’s so easy to be misconstrued; remember to keep it friendly.” Quoting from every parent’s playbook, Justice Pariente began by saying, “Niceness counts!” Gesturing toward her supreme court colleagues, she explained, “We don’t always agree, but we are always collegial.” She also called attention to “the importance of being willing to listen, learn, dialogue.” Listening is an elemental component of collegiality, and it was the topic Justice Canady chose to discuss with the new appellate judges: “One of the most important qualities in a judge is to always be listening. Be the best listener you can be. Never stop listening both to the lawyers who are advocating and to your colleagues.” He also recommended that they “Try to put aside your preconceptions about cases. Most of the time, your preconceptions will end up being right—but not always!”—hence the gravity of being a good listener.



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During Lunch with the Florida Supreme Court, the justices offered the new appellate judges some “words of wisdom” about being an appellate judge. Among the topics they discussed are the values of collegiality, the benefits of participating in activities that exceed the normal expectations of judicial office, and the necessity for professionalism.

Several of the justices also emphasized the values of serving on court and/or legal committees and of engaging in other activities that improve the justice system. Justice Polston encouraged the new appellate judges to “participate in activities involved in the governance of the branch, like committees. A lot goes on that you don’t see from outside that you’ll get to know about” if you get involved, he added. Justice Pariente also urged them to “get involved in other activities—like judicial education, rules committees, supreme court committees.” In addition to getting involved in court-related activities, Justice Perry urged them to “get

Listening is an elemental component of collegiality, and it was the topic Justice Canady chose to discuss with the new appellate judges during an informal Lunch with the Florida Supreme Court: “One of the most important qualities in a judge is to always be listening. Be the best listener you can be. Never stop listening both to the lawyers who are advocating and to your colleagues.”

involved in your community and make yourself known to your community” as well. This will enable the new appellate judges to make important contributions to their neighborhoods, he pointed out—but also, “When you are up for merit retention, voters will know something about you.”

Participating in extracurricular activities can put a huge strain on an already-busy judge, and Justice Quince and Justice Pariente both had practical suggestions for mitigating this stress. Knowing that a

multitude of demands will be made on the new appellate judges’ time, Justice Quince noted “the importance of having good staff. Try to pick a good judicial assistant who will keep you on task, especially as you begin to do more work outside the court.” And Justice Pariente, anticipating the “volume of things demanding your attention,” urged the new appellate judges to pay careful attention to their time management.

Finally, several justices accentuated the need for professionalism and the duty of each judge to maintain the honor of the branch and of the legal profession. Justice Lewis urged the new appellate judges never to forget that “You do the people’s business. Ask yourself, would you say or do that in front of your child? If you’d be embarrassed about it, you need to say or do something else.” And Chief Justice Labarga noted that, “On the trial court bench, the judges are getting younger and younger: people are applying for a seat at a very young age these days, and they do not have a lot of experience yet, which can lead to problems with misbehavior on the bench. I urge all of you to get involved in court education....Teach these young people who are new to the bench, talk to them, help them avoid mistakes.” Toward this end, he encouraged them to take a faculty training course; offered at least once every year by the Florida Court Education Council, this course teaches judges how to plan a successful course based on adult education principles.

When the discussion came to a close, Judge Gerber thanked the justices for sharing their professional and personal insights and for showing the new justices “the human side of the supreme court.” This roundtable, which was the opening session of the program, perfectly set the tone for the frank, varied, and challenging discussions in which the new appellate judges were about to participate.

Judicial Excellence Awards

The Chief Justice Awards for Judicial Excellence, established in 2015, recognize one county court judge and one circuit court judge who demonstrate exceptional commitment to the judicial branch and who personify judicial excellence, embodying qualities such as strength of character, integrity, fairness, open-mindedness, knowledge of the law, sound judgment, professional ethics, intellectual courage, compassion, and decisiveness. These prestigious awards are presented by the chief justice at the annual education programs for each level of the trial court. At this year’s Annual Education Program of the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida, held in early July, Chief Justice Labarga presented the 2016 Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence to Judge Robert W. Lee, Broward County. And at this year’s Annual Education Program of the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges in early August, Chief Justice Labarga presented the 2016 Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence to Judge Stanford Blake, Eleventh Circuit.

Judge Robert W. Lee, Broward County, Receives the Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence

Appointed to the Broward County bench in 1997, Judge Lee is called "a dedicated individual who has worked tirelessly towards improving our legal system and educating the public that he serves." Judge Lee's accomplishments are indeed far-ranging, but his achievements in two areas especially stand out: he has authored numerous informational and educational guides to support the work of his fellow judicial and quasi-judicial officers, and he has created several innovative court programs.

A prolific author, Judge Lee conceived and regularly compiles the *Florida Small Claims Rules Annotated*, which provides comprehensive summaries of every reported case to date involving each Small Claims Rule. Now in its fifth edition, this document is made available without charge to county court judges, law libraries, and attorneys affiliated with the Small Claims Committee of The Florida Bar; it is also posted on The Florida Bar and the flcourts websites.



Rose Patterson, OSCA

The county court judge who received this year's Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence is Judge Robert W. Lee (Broward County); he is pictured here with (l - r) Judge Augustus Aikens (Leon County), then president of the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida; Chief Justice Labarga; and State Courts Administrator PK Jameson.

a driving course in person rather than taking it online, attend traffic school, perform community service, abide by a curfew, and/or write essays or letters of apology. So far, more than 1,500 teens have successfully completed the program, which is now in its second year. In addition, as a Jury Qualifying Judge for the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, Judge Lee designed a program to increase juror yield by holding jury duty scofflaws accountable.

Judge Lee is also a judicial mentor, a Judicial Management Council member, the chair of the Civil Division of the Broward County Court, a faculty member of the Florida Judicial College, and the chair of the Education Committee of the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida. He is described as "always trying to make things better, not only for his colleagues, but for the legal system and public as well." And as his nomination letter states, "He does all of the above quietly, without any expectation of or need for recognition." To read more about Judge Lee's accomplishments, [please follow this link to the press release.](#)

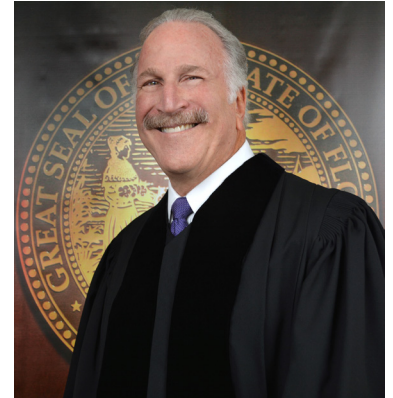
Judge Lee also drafts the annual *Civil Traffic Infraction Case Law Update*; now in its eighth year, this indexed update is made available to judges and civil traffic hearing officers who attend the annual DUI Traffic Adjudication Lab. In addition, he just completed the *Judge's Guide to Florida PIP Discovery* for presentation at the 2016 Annual Education Program of the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida.

Judge Lee has also devised various court initiatives and programs to improve the administration of justice. Most notably, in 2013, he instituted the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit's Teen Traffic Court, a unique program that focuses on education over punishment in an effort to improve teen behavior. For teens who participate in Teen Traffic Court, the consequences, which are designed to reflect their age and the nature of their infraction, fall within a wide range: they may be required to pay a fine, attend

Judge Stanford Blake, Eleventh Circuit, Receives the Chief Justice Award for Judicial Excellence

Judge Blake was appointed to the Eleventh Circuit Bench in 1995. Letters supporting his nomination for this award praise him for his “fairness and efficiency” and for his “genuine compassion for the people and parties that appear before him.” They commend his “rare mix of humor, intelligence, courage and diplomacy” and call him “a man of stature, a man of compassion, of a strong ethical and moral compass and one who has a unique understanding of the human condition.” And they appreciate him for having “improved our court system, our community and our world.” Judge Blake is widely acclaimed both for his efforts to “advance the highest ideals of justice” and for his service outside the justice system, “as a member of the larger community.”

As a jurist, Judge Blake has consistently been a teacher, mentor, and role model for many of his circuit colleagues. In many ways, he is the consummate judicial resource: when his fellow judges seek advice and assistance on issues of procedure and substance, they go to Judge Blake, whom they call “a judge’s judge” and their “go-to judge.” But Judge Blake is also admired for his efforts to improve the justice system outside his circuit. For instance, his colleagues appreciate his many years as a judicial leader and educator: he served on the executive board of the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges (20 years) and has been a faculty member for the Florida Judicial College (20 years) and the College of Advanced Judicial Studies (10 years), and he has taught numerous courses for the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges.



Moreover, he is committed to sharing his knowledge and expertise with future lawyers: he has taught litigation skills at the University of Miami Law School (18 years), “helping law students hone their skills and nurturing the ideals of professionalism as they prepare to enter the practice of law.” And the lawyers who appear before him also appreciate his knowledge of the law and procedure—and his courtroom demeanor: “His reputation in the legal community for fairness and diligence ranks him among the very finest trial judges in the State of Florida”—indeed, he “is always the top rated judge in the local judicial bar polls,” the letters of support disclose.

In addition to serving the justice system with the highest distinction, Judge Blake generously shares his time and energy with numerous civic organizations, among them, the Haven School for the Developmentally Disadvantaged, the Biscayne Bay Kiwanis Club, and the Transplant Foundation (he even donated one of his kidneys to his brother in 1996).

As several letters of support emphasize, Judge Blake’s “contributions have been made without any desire or expectation of recognition. This is the truest measure of an outstanding public servant—to find reward in the very act of service.” To read more about Judge Blake’s accomplishments, [please follow this link to the press release.](#)

Turning Points

Awards and Honors

Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson, Leon County, received the Tallahassee Bar Association's inaugural Martha Barnett Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, which was established to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women lawyers from the Second Judicial Circuit.

Judge Alice L. Blackwell, Ninth Circuit, was honored with the James G. Glazebrook Professionalism and Service Award from The George C. Young American Inn of Court; the award honors a current or former Inn member (including lawyers and judges) whose combination of service to the Inn and professionalism and integrity in practice display a course of excellence.

Judge Shawn Crane, Sixth Circuit, was the recipient of the annual Judicial Professionalism Award granted by the Pasco chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers. The award recognizes a local judge who best exemplifies service to the community, profession, and legal system and who has demonstrated diligence in inspiring others to the mission of legal professionalism.

Judge Jack Day, Sixth Circuit, received the Judicial Appreciation Award, conferred by the St. Petersburg Bar Association. Among the factors the association considers are the nominee's courtroom demeanor, his or her judicial experience, helpfulness to lawyers and litigants, and activities off the bench that promote the administration of justice and civic participation.

Judge Renee Goldenberg, Seventeenth Circuit, was presented with the Florida Association of Women Lawyers 2016 Jurist of the Year Award; this award, established in 2015, recognizes jurists who have "consistently, fearlessly, and impartially promoted the rule of law respecting the equal rights of all" who come before them.

Judge Jack Helinger, Sixth Circuit, was recently awarded the 2015 Canakaris Award for Judicial Excellence in Family Law. The award is presented by the Canakaris Inn of the Court, a group of area lawyers and judges whose mission is to promote professionalism and legal excellence in the practice of family law.

Judge Nicholas Lopane, Seventeenth Circuit, was honored with a 2016 EPIC Award, sponsored by the Mental Health Association of Southeast Florida. Exceptional People Impacting the Community (EPIC) honorees are chosen by the organization each year for their advocacy in mental health and its impact on the community, and Judge Lopane was selected for his "ability to recognize patterns of behavior and his understanding of how best to structure his courtroom to manage communications with individuals who have mental health issues."

Retired Judge Raymond McNeal, Fifth Circuit, was honored with the Richard D. Custureri Pro Bono Service Award from Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida. Conferred upon a local Florida Bar member for outstanding pro bono outreach, this award recognizes Judge McNeal's service to the organization and to his church's homeless program; currently blending these two interests, he is now working with Community Legal Services to establish a homeless legal advice clinic.

Judge Edward Nicholas, Twelfth Circuit, received the 2016 Manatee County Bar Association's Community Service Leader Award; this award honors members of the bar association who provide service to the community through participation in organizations and activities beyond the scope of the bench.

Retired Judge Frank A. Orlando, Seventeenth Circuit, was selected for induction into the University of Florida's College of Health and Human Performance Alumni Hall of Fame. He is being honored for a host of accomplishments; among them, since retiring from the bench, he has been instrumental in introducing juvenile detention reforms in Florida; has coordinated technical assistance for the Annie E. Casey Foundation for Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative; and has served as the director of the Center for the Study of Youth Policy at Nova Southeastern University School of Law.

Judge James Pierce, Pinellas County, was honored by Fresh Start Innovative Mentoring, a non-profit organization that matches mentors with teens and adults on probation, for "exemplifying extraordinary service to the community." Among other accomplishments, he was recognized for starting Boys Court: an effort to steer wayward youth to productive lives through the use of motivational speakers, mentors, journaling, community service, and close monitoring.

Judge Steven Rogers, Fifth Circuit, was recognized as the 2016 Justice Teaching Select Committee Judge of the Year by Justice Teaching, the statewide law-related education initiative established by Justice R. Fred Lewis in 2006 that aims to partner a legal professional with every elementary, middle, and high school in the state.

Judge John Schaefer, Sixth Circuit, was selected for the John U. Bird Judicial Excellence Award by the Clearwater Bar Association; the award was created to recognize a local judge for his or her honor, high ideals, personal character, judicial competence, and service.

When judges and court personnel receive honors or acclaim
for their contributions to the branch,
please share that information with OCAPublications@flcourts.org

In Memoriam

Retired Judge Charlotte Anderson served on the bench in Hillsborough County from 1994 – 2009.

Retired Judge Marcia Beach served on the bench of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit from 2000 – 2012.

Retired Judge Mark E. Polen served on the bench of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit from 1979 – 1988 and on the bench of the Fourth District Court of Appeal from 1989 – 2013.

Retired Judge James Whatley served on the bench of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit from 1989 – 1995 and on the bench of the Second District Court of Appeal from 1995 – 2012.

August

- 8 – 10 Florida Conference of Circuit Judges Annual Education Program
- 8 – 10 Trial Court Administrators Annual Education Program
- 11 Trial Court Budget Commission Meeting
- 11 Trial Court Administrators & ADR Directors Meeting
- 11 – 13 24th Annual Dispute Resolution Center Conference
- 18 Florida Courts Technology Commission Meeting

September

- 7 – 9 Florida Conference of District Court of Appeal Judges Annual Education Program
- 7 – 9 Court Interpreter Oral Performance Exam Administrations
- 7 – 9 Department of Children & Families 2016 Child Protection Summit
- 13 – 15 Court Interpreter Oral Performance Exam Administrations
- 19 – 20 Annual Reporters Workshop
- 22 – 23 Florida Trial Court Staff Attorneys Association Annual Conference
- 27 – 30 Judicial Assistants Association of Florida Annual Conference
- 27 – 30 Dispute Resolution Center County Mediation Training
- 28 – 30 Florida Association of Family & Conciliation Courts Annual Conference

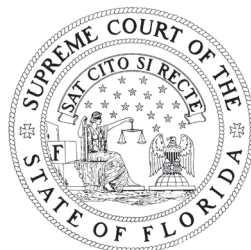
October

- 16 – 17 Trial Court Administrators Meeting
- 19 – 21 Early Childhood Courts Cross-Sites Meeting
- 27 – 28 Court ADA Coordinator Education Program

November

- 3 – 4 Faculty Training
- 14 – 18 DUI Adjudication Lab
- 15 – 18 Dispute Resolution Center County Mediation Training
- 18 Florida Courts Technology Commission Meeting

ON
THE
HORIZON



Under the direction of
 Supreme Court Chief Justice Jorge Labarga
 State Courts Administrator Patricia “PK” Jameson
 Deputy State Courts Administrator Blan L. Teagle
 Publications Managing Attorney Susan Leseman

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