

Circuit Courier

October-December 2007

Vol. 2007-4

NEWS BULLETIN OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA



Legislative Delegation

Judicial Rotations

New Magistrate

Delinquency Drug Court

Pilot Project

And more...



On the Cover: Leadership Delray, organized by the Delray Beach Chamber in conjunction with Court Education Program Consultant John E. McGovern, visited the Central Courthouse on January 8, 2008 as part of their government day. The newly restored Historic Courthouse is seen behind them.

In this issue...

Justice Teaching Initiative	2
Report on the Legislative Delegation	3-5
Meet the Judges: Judges Invested in the 1990's	6-8
Judicial Rotations for 2008	9
15th Circuit Welcomes Magistrate Peter Bassaline	10
Judicial Diversity Training	11
Trial Court Law Clerk Program Update	12
New Trial Court Law Clerk Jennifer Fleming	12
Michelle Spangenberg: New Criminal Court Op's Mgr.	13
Pilot Program: Delinquency Drug Court	14
Criminal Div. CLE Seminar	14
UFC Update & Saunders New Justice Svcs. Director	15
Volunteer Mediator Training	16
New Dependency Mediation Model	16
New Staff: Janet Ruth-Leach and Rhoda Jones	17
Court Education Program Events	18
JA Holiday Charity Project	19
Court Admin. Holiday Luncheon	20
Human Resources: H.R. Huddle	21
Upcoming Events & Administrative Orders	22

JUSTICE TEACHING
INITIATIVE IN ACTION

This past November, **General Counsel Amy Borman**, taught seven classes of third graders at Morikami Park Elementary as part of the Justice Teaching Initiative program.

The third graders were given the following challenge: If space aliens invaded Delray Beach and took away all but two of the students' rights, would the students keep the right to read, the right to learn, the right to be respected, the right to eat lunch or the right to have recess? Ms. Borman stated that



the results were no surprise...each class kept the right to have recess! The students also debated about whether school uniforms affect classroom behavior. While there was some disagreement amongst the students, all the teachers agreed that uniforms did affect behavior.

Ms. Borman also took the classes on a tour of the South County Courthouse where they met with **Judge John Phillips, Judge James Martz** and **Judge Charles Burton**. She says, "They were able to watch court, tour the holding cell and ask lots of questions!" After the visit, students wrote about what they would do if they were a judge. One response is shown, above.



Judge Charles Burton answering questions from Morikami Park Elementary Third Graders.

15TH HOSTS ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION



The Fifteenth Circuit welcomed 11 state Representatives and four state Senators, or their staff members, who visited the Central Courthouse on November 20, 2007, for the Circuit's annual Legislative Delegation.

Hosted by the Circuit each fall, the Legislative Delegation is a unique opportunity for legislators to visit the Circuit, to view daily court operations, discuss proposed legislature and hear from the

Attendees & Presenters:

15th Circuit's Office of Court Administration

Trial Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke

General Counsel Amy Borman

Court Consultant Debra Oats-Ducram

Education Consultant John McGovern

15th Circuit Judges/Magistrates

Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll

Judge Ronald Alvarez

Judge Catherine Brunson

Judge Barry Cohen

Judge Jeffrey Winikoff

Judge William Berger

Judge David Crow

Judge John Phillips

Judge Jonathan Gerber

Judge Ted Booras

Judge Kenneth Stern

Judge Robin Rosenberg

Judge Richard Wennet

Judge Karen Martin

Judge Elizabeth Maass

Judge Diana Lewis

Judge Laura Johnson

Judge Timothy McCarthy

Judge Cory Ciklin

Magistrate Diane Kirigin

judiciary as to current priorities and areas of concern for the justice system. In addition to the legislators, representatives from Palm Beach County, the Palm Beach County Bar Association and the Community Alliance also attended. *(A list of attendees and presenters accompanies this article.)*

The half-day event began with an early morning welcoming address and opening remarks from **Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll** in the Judicial Dining Room. The delegates were then escorted to a series of courtrooms, where they had an opportunity to witness the courts at work, as they observed domestic violence injunction hearings before **Judge Jack Cook**, criminal first appearances in front of **Judge Cory Ciklin**, small claims pretrial hearings in front of **Judge Ted Booras** and juvenile detention/shelter hearings in front of **Judge Peter Blanc**. In their materials, they received brief descriptions of the Circuit's current court programs.

The group then progressed to a presentation by several judges, and representatives for the Community Alliance and the Bar, identifying current Legislative Priorities for the Justice System. **Judge Jonathan Gerber** gave a presentation on issues the Supreme Court has identified (his presentation is described further, below). The following judges gave updates on behalf of their areas of the court: **Judge Catherine M. Brunson** (Family), **Judge Ronald Alvarez** (Juvenile), **Judge Karen Martin** (Probate), and **Judge Barry Cohen** (for County Civil and County Criminal). For the Palm Beach County Bar Association, **Karen Rockenbach, Esq.**, represented the Appellate Practice Committee; **Marianne Rantala, Esq.**, represented the Criminal Practice Committee; and **General Magistrate Diane Kirigin** represented the Family Law Section. And **Erin McColskey** and **Ron Zychowski** represented the Community Alliance.

Supreme Court Issues

In his presentation on Supreme Court issues, Judge Gerber underscored the Court's mandate for justice in Florida to be "accessible, fair, effective, responsive and accountable."

A 22-page document shared with the legislators provided statistics and research by various governmental and independent agencies supporting the courts' contention that adequate compensation and court funding is essential to ensuring the continuation of what Florida Tax Watch described as Florida's "innovations, groundbreaking achievements and overall excellence"

(continued on next page)

(continued on next page)



(continued from previous page)

Included in the presentation was a summary of the State Court System's Legislative Budget Request, proposed for fiscal year 2008-2009.

A pie-graph demonstrated that the total State Court Budget was only 0.7% of the state's overall \$70.4 billion budget for FY 2007-2008.

As a result of budget cuts in FY 2007-2008, some of the requested increases for FY 2008-2009 are to restore the amounts decreased in these cuts. Other amounts are to address increasing caseloads (such as requests by trial court case management), or increasing demands (such as court interpreting), or new technology (such as digital court reporting, or electronic access for persons with disabilities). Some amounts are one-time expenses.

Major Issue: Pay Equity

At Issue for the Courts: Pay Equity

One of the major issues underscored in presenting the Judicial Branch's proposed budget, is what is described loosely as a goal of *pay equity* – an issue which **Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis** has made the number one issue for the Judiciary.

Florida Tax Watch cited statistics showing State Court System salaries reviewed are, on average, *12.3% lower than their executive branch counterparts*. The Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) has lost employees to the Governor's office, other Executive Branch agencies and the Florida Legislature, some receiving five to 10 percent pay increases, and 100 percent paid benefits.

As the 15th Circuit has experienced, many of the circuits are suffering an increase in turnover. Administrative, professional and management level employees have resigned, many going to local government and private employers where they find significantly higher wages. The 15th Circuit has had seasoned employees leave for private practice and county agencies, or relocate out of the county or out of state due to increased living expenses. An informal poll taken in the Circuit within the past year, showed that 22 of the Circuit's then-52 judicial assistants, and two of the nine magistrate's assistants, routinely worked a second job to meet their expenses.

The Circuit reports increased hiring costs, as vacancies must be advertised multiple times to attract quality applicants. Some circuits report high turnover and difficulty attracting and hiring court reporters and court interpreters, affecting constitutional protections guaranteed to citizens and due process.

What is "equity"?

"Pay equity" becomes the expression, as the Judicial Branch is asking the Legislature to fund a pay plan which will increase pay grades to a rate that is *equitable* with other

Attendees & Presenters

(continued from previous page)

Legislators & their staff

Representative Mary Brandenburg
Coleen Gleason (Brandenburg)

Representative Richard Machek
Beth Hartnett-Murphy (Machek)

Megaan Schraeder (Machek)

Representative Maria Sachs

Rebecca Emrick (Sachs)

Katerina Draganova (Sachs)

*Aaron Blye (for Representative
Kelly Skidmore)*

*Willie Miller (for Representative
Priscilla Taylor)*

*Alberta McCarthy (for Senator
Dawson)*

Representative Susan Bucher

Joanne Little (Bucher)

Audrey Piedra (Bucher)

Representative Shelly Vana

*Joshua Sztore (for Senator Ted
Deutch)*

*Casey Kustin (for Senator Ted
Deutch)*

*Chauncey Graham (for Senator
Dave Aronberg)*

*Aaron Nevins (for Representative
Bogdanoff)*

Representative Carl Domino

Sheri Healy (Domino)

*Rachael Ondrus (for
Representative Hasner)*

*Jody Davis (for Representative
Snyder)*

Palm Beach County

Ed Chase, Executive Director,
Legislative Delegation Office

Todd Bonlarron, Director of
Legislative Affairs

Sherry Howard, Legislative
Coordinator

(continued on next page)

(continued on next page)

Report on Legislative Delegation (cont.)

(continued from previous page)

constitutional offices, and competitive with other governmental and private agencies. For example, an assistant to a judge would be compensated at a rate comparable to an assistant in the executive or legislative branch, etc.

In the portion that applies to judicial salaries, it is emphasized that the need to attract a “qualified, fair and impartial judiciary” is fundamental to democracy. This requires compensation that is “broadly comparable” to attorneys in similar career paths and other public servants with similar responsibility, training and experience; and such compensation should respond to inflation and increased living costs. The information provided includes reference to a report by **United States Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr.**, who identified inadequate judicial compensation as a “direct threat to judicial independence” and “a constitutional crisis that threatens to undermine the strength and independence of the federal judiciary.” Justice Roberts’ report says the situation is even more serious for many state judiciaries, where compensation is said to be inadequate and stagnant over long periods — including Florida.

In addition to recognizing where salary rates are not competitive, the proposed measure asks for Judicial Branch staff to receive equitable benefits as employees in comparable rank in other branches of the state government. This includes 100 percent paid benefits for attorneys and certain management staff, (for example, State Court System attorneys are currently the only attorneys in state government without this benefit), and the same retirement benefits for Senior Management in the courts as those given in the Executive and Legislative Branches.

The budget increase requested is about \$23 million for the Judicial Branch Pay Plan (increased to reach equity), 100 percent paid benefits for specified employees and

retirement benefits for senior management; and another \$16.9 million to increase judicial compensation and give 100 percent paid health for judges. This request has been proposed in the last two legislative sessions without ratification, but will seek approval this year.



retirement benefits for senior management; and another \$16.9 million to increase judicial compensation and give 100 percent paid health for judges. This request has been proposed in the last two legislative sessions without ratification, but will seek approval this year.

For more information on the Legislative Delegation or similar program held for the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners, or regarding the materials referenced in this article, you may contact Debra Oats-Ducram at (561) 355-4495.



Attendees & Presenters

(continued from previous page)

Palm Beach County Bar Association

Attorney Kara Rockenbach,
Appellate Practice Committee

Attorney Marianne Rantala,
Criminal Practice Committee

Attorney Meenu Sasser, PBCBA
President

Attorney Richard Schuler, PBCBA
President-Elect

Attorney Manuel Farach, PBCBA
Immediate-Past President

Executive Director Patience Burns

Community Alliance

Erin McColskey, Legislative Chair

Ron Zychowski, CEO, Community
Partnership for Children

Circuit Hosts Visit with County Commission February 6th

In an event similar to the Legislative Delegation, the 15th Circuit welcomed the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners for a visit to the Central Courthouse on February 6th. More information on this visit will be included in our next issue of the *Courier*.

MEET THE JUDGES

Continuing our series: In this issue, we feature the 15th Circuit's Judges who were first elected or appointed in the 1990's...

Not pictured:

Judge Elizabeth Maass
County Court: Jan. 1990-2001
Circuit Court: 2001-present
Current Division: Circuit Civil
(rotating to Family 2/08)

Judge Sandra K. McSorley
County Court: February 1990-2000
Circuit Court: 2000-Present
Current Division: Circuit Criminal



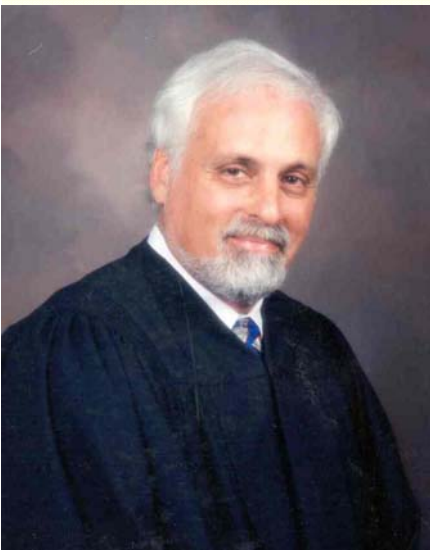
Judge John J. Hoy
Circuit Court: January 1991-present
Current Division: Circuit Civil



Judge Peter D. Blanc
County Court: April 1990-1998
Circuit Court: 1998-present
Current Division: Juvenile



Judge Lucy Chernow Brown
Circuit Court: January 1991-present
Current Division: Circuit Criminal



Judge Barry M. Cohen
County Court: January 1991-present
Current Division: County Criminal



Judge Nancy Perez
County Court: July 1991-Present
Current Division: County Criminal
(Criminal Justice Complex/Gun Club)



Judge Jeffrey J. Colbath
County Court: October 1992-2003
Circuit Court: 2003-present
Current Division: Family (North
County Courthouse) & Foreclosure

(continued on next page)

MEET THE JUDGES

(continued from previous page)

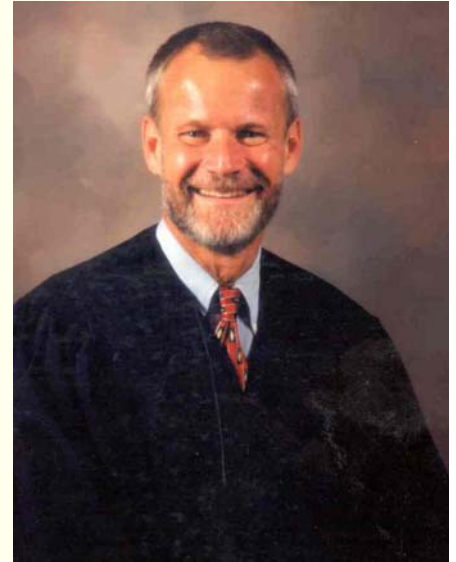
Fast Fact: 21 of the Circuit's 54 Judges were invested in the 1990's



Judge Ronald V. Alvarez
Circuit Court: February 1993-Present
Current Division: Juvenile



Judge Sheree Cunningham
County Court: January 1994-Present
Current Division: Domestic Violence



Judge Paul O. Moyle
County Court: June 1994-Present
Current Division: County Criminal
(Criminal Justice Complex/Gun Club)



Judge Moses Baker, Jr.
Circuit Court: July 1994-Present
Current Division: Juvenile



Judge Catherine M. Brunson
Circuit Court: August 1994-Present
Current Division: Family



Judge Cory J. Ciklin
County Court: January 1995-Present
Current Division: County Criminal &
County Civil (North County
Courthouse)

(continued on next page)

MEET THE JUDGES

(continued from previous page)



Judge Nelson E. Bailey

County Court: October 1995-Present
Current Division: County Criminal &
County Civil (West County Courthouse)



Not pictured:

Judge Kenneth Stern

County Court: 1999-2002
Circuit Court: 2002-Present
Current Division: Circuit Civil

Judge Thomas Barkdull, III

Circuit Court: January 1997-Present
Current Division: Juvenile (rotating to
Circuit Civil 2/08)



Judge Timothy P. McCarthy

Circuit Court: February 1998-Present
Current Division: Circuit Civil



Judge Krista Marx

County Court: 1999-2005
Circuit Court: 2005-Present
Current Division: Circuit Criminal



Judge Donald Hafele

County Court: 1999-Present
Current Division: County Civil
(South County Courthouse)

JUDICIAL ROTATIONS 2008

County Court

County Court judicial rotations and office relocations took place January 18th, 2008, with rotating judges working in their new divisions effective January 22nd (as Monday, January 21st, 2008 is a holiday).

The following judges rotated to new divisions:

Judge Nancy Perez -- to the Gun Club Complex into division W132K

Judge Cory Ciklin -- to the North County Complex (office on the first floor) into divisions RH/NC/H

Judge Paul Damico -- to County Civil Division "RL"

Judge Keyser -- to County Criminal Division "P"

Additionally, it was necessary to relocate the actual office location of the following judges, although their division assignments did not change:

Judge Peter Evans relocated to room 4.2604

Judge Keyser relocated to room 4.2606

Judge Marx relocated to room 9.2202

Judge Damico relocated to room 6.1204

Judge Castor relocated to room 6.1203

Circuit Court

The Circuit Court Rotation will occur on Friday, February 15th, 2008, with the rotating judges working in their new divisions on Tuesday, February 19th.

Judge Burton will go to Judge Garrison's Division, Circuit Criminal Division "U"

Judge Garrison will go to Judge Maass's Division, Circuit Civil Division "AI"

Judge Maass will go to Judge Colin's Division, UFC Family Division "FD"

Judge Colin will go to Judge Burton's Division, UFC Family Division "FY"

Judge Martin will go to Judge Barkdull's Division, UFC Juvenile Division "JO"

Judge Barkdull will go to Judge Crow's Division, Circuit Civil Division "AO"

Judge Crow will go to Judge Cook's Division, UFC Family Division "FB"

Judge Cook will go to Judge Martin's Division, Probate Division "IB / IC"

Administrative Orders

and updated court

directories can be found

online to reflect the new

division assignments,

alternates and duty judge

assignments.

<http://15thcircuit.co.palm-beach.fl.us>

Thanks go to...

Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll expressed appreciation to the judges for their help and cooperation in coordinating the changes.

Appreciation also goes to the staff, who attend to all the details to complete the moves within a single business day. Thanks go to **Donald Droddy, James Montada** and **Felix Omar Rodriguez**; Court Technology staff including **Les Davis, Noel Chessman** and **Glenn Reed**; and to other staff members who helped coordinate this effort.

15th WELCOMES MAGISTRATE PETER BASSALINE



Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll announced the selection of **Peter Bassaline** (pronounced “bass-a-leen”) as Magistrate, joining the 15th Circuit on December 17, 2007.

A graduate of the University of Florida, Mr. Bassaline earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1989 and was awarded the degree Juris Doctor in 1992. He was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1992 and admitted to practice before the U.S. District Courts for the Southern District and Middle District of Florida in 1993 and 1996, respectively.

For the past seven years, he has been an Assistant Attorney General with the Office of Attorney General in West Palm Beach. From 2000 to 2004, he was

Managing Attorney for the Child Support Enforcement Section. Most recently, he served in the Economic Crimes Division.

Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll said, “He brings to our Circuit extensive trial experience and a great enthusiasm for becoming part of our Magistrate group,” and added, “Please join me in wishing Peter all the best as he takes on this challenging new role.”

Magistrate Bassaline is currently assigned to handle Department of Revenue (DOR) hearings, along with Magistrate Maxine Williams.

His office is on the 6th floor of the Central Courthouse. **Rosalie Cruz** (formerly assistant to Magistrate Patti Velasquez) is his assistant. They can be reached at (561) 355-4200.

JUDICIAL DIVERSITY TRAINING

The Judges, Magistrates and 80 members of the 15th Circuit's court staff completed a mandatory, six-hour diversity training course during the fall of 2007.

The Florida Supreme Court had mandated that each circuit complete at least one training session prior to December 31, 2007. The Fifteenth Circuit is committed to the goal of diversity training as an on-going aspect of professional staff development for our Judges and court employees.



The program was conducted by noted diversity trainer and facilitator **Wilhelmina Tribble** of Lowe, Tribble Associates, of Orlando. Ms. Tribble developed two training manuals for the program. As seen from comments taken from evaluations conducted after the program (sample at right), the program was very well received.

The goals of the diversity training program are to:

- Define diversity and its various dimensions
- Describe the opportunities and challenges of diversity as they affect court operations
- Develop and enhance skills in valuing diversity
- Explore how "-isms" can compromise quality workplace relationships which, in turn, rob the court of quality service to the citizens of Florida
- Identify strategies and techniques for communicating effectively with others who are different from you

Specific topics addressed in the sessions included: customer service in the courts; awareness of diverse customers; handling irate, contentious, and intimidated customers; words that make a difference; recognizing bias; persons with disabilities; and culture and religion.

Court Education Program Consultant, **John E. McGovern** has conducted a statistical analysis of the program evaluation results in an effort to set goals for the future of this training program based on the needs and desires of circuit personnel.

For more information about this, or other court education programs, please contact: John McGovern at (561) 355-1537.

Comments from participant evaluations

"One of the best trainings I have ever participated in."

"This training could easily have been given more time and attention."

"We need more training of this nature to help us do our job better."

"Raised my insight into sensitive racial and ethnic issues"

"One of the best presenters I have ever heard."

Trial Court Law Clerk Program

This past fall was busy for the trial court law clerks. In October the law clerks took part in the Palm Beach County Bar Association's Bench/Bar conference at the Palm Beach County Convention Center as well as the Trial Court Staff Attorney Conference.



The law clerks ended 2007 with a holiday party at Hotel Biba in West Palm Beach, organized by Jessica Packett, Shaib Rios, Curt Sanchez and Jenn Fleming. *Pictured: back row: Enrique Nieves and Curt Sanchez; front row: Jeanne Bennett, Niki Kantor, Amy Borman, Jackie Wood, Jenn Fleming, Jessica Packett, Shaib Rios, Adelina Ruiz Baez, Shavarne Dahlquist, Lily Chang & Ashley Cross-Rappaport*

In November and December, the law clerks attended "brown bag" lunch and learn sessions at the Courthouse. Experienced local attorneys shared their insights, answered questions, and provided learning materials and case law updates. Attorney **Leonard Singer** spoke about the Probate and Real Estate practice, attorney **Michael Gelfand** gave a presentation on Homeowner and Condominium Association law, and attorney **Gregory Bloshinsky** shared his experiences as a Trusts and Estates attorney.

The law clerks also went on a tour of the Palm Beach County Jail in December.

*Questions regarding the Circuit's General Counsel or Trial Court Law Clerk program may be directed to **General Counsel Amy Borman** at (561) 355-1927.*

Law Clerk Jennifer Fleming Joins the 15th

Jennifer ("Jenn") Fleming joined the Trial Court Law Clerk Program on October 9th.

Ms. Fleming received her bachelor's degree in Finance from the University of Florida, where she was a Florida Bright Futures Academic Scholarship recipient. She then received her law degree from the University of Miami, where she was on the *Business Law Review* and served as an Article and Comments editor. Her note, *The Blurred Line Between Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities: How Limited Medicaid Funding of Assisted Facilities Can Save Tax Dollars While Improving the Quality of Life of the Elderly*, is published at 15 U. Miami Bus. L. Rev. 245.



Prior to coming to the 15th Circuit, Ms. Fleming worked as an intern with the Guardian Ad Litem program in Miami, the Brevard County Legal Aid program and the 11th Judicial Circuit Domestic Violence Case Management Unit. She was also a Florida Bar Foundation 2006 Legal Services Summer Fellow and the recipient of the Terry Russell Fellowship.

Ms. Fleming, is assigned to the Probate/Family/Juvenile/County division through February 2008, and will then rotate into the Civil Division. Her office is located on the 9th floor of the Central Courthouse.

Michelle Spangenberg Becomes 15th's First Criminal Court Operations Manager



Michelle Spangenberg has been selected as the 15th Judicial Circuit's first Court Operations Manager dedicated to criminal issues.

Ms. Spangenberg has been employed in various Family Court roles over the past 13 years, including Senior Court Program Specialist from 2000 to 2004 and Family Court Manager from 2004 to the present. In that role, she was instrumental in assisting in the development of the Circuit's Unified Family Court.

While in Family Court, Ms. Spangenberg's duties were expanded to include criminal issues as well as issues arising in the county civil, civil traffic, guardian and probate divisions. Currently, Ms. Spangenberg

serves on various criminal committees including the Criminal Justice Committee, the Jail Committee, the Bond Review sub-Committee, and the Supervised Own Recognizance (SOR) sub-committee.

As **Trial Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke** identified in her interview with the *Courier* last fall, she believed it was important for the Circuit to dedicate a manager to criminal issues (and allow the family court manager to address family issues). Ms. Dawicke said of Ms. Spangenberg's selection to the position, "Please join me in wishing her success as she undertakes this new challenge."

Ms. Spangenberg's responsibilities may continue to transition from UFC to criminal, during the period while vacancies remain in UFC.

Her office is in room 5.2207, located on the fifth floor of the Central Courthouse, and her telephone number is (561) 355-6396.

"The application of case management principles to the criminal court marks a new direction for the Fifteenth Circuit."

Trial Court Administrator

Barbara Dawicke

Coming Pilot Project: Delinquency Drug Court

The 15th Circuit is preparing to launch, as a pilot project, a Delinquency Drug Court with the goal of reducing juvenile crime and drug use. Juvenile drug courts have been implemented in other circuits of the state and around the nation; Palm Beach County has a successful adult drug court, but not one for juveniles.

Delinquency Drug Court will be an eight-month (minimum) program, comprised of three phases. The target population will be youth (ages 12-16) who have violated their probation, often as a result of misdemeanor drug-related charges, positive drug screens or failure to comply with treatment. It requires participation from both the youth and his or her family throughout the program. Participants will work with treatment providers to develop an individualized treatment plan and will receive individual, group and family counseling. Other components include regular court appearances, frequent and random urinalysis, written assignments and attending school daily. Participants will be involved in activities such as after school programs, employment, participation on athletic teams and other community-based activities. Progress will be reviewed weekly by the Drug Court Team.

Juvenile Alternative Sanctions Coordinator Cristy Altaro says the program gives these juveniles “a chance for more strict supervision and accountability while remaining in the community.”

The Delinquency Drug Court is a collaboration between the State Attorney’s Office, Administrative Office of the Court, Public Defender’s Office, School Board, Treatment providers, Adult Drug Court, Unified Family Court, Law enforcement, MIS, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Office. The Implementation team continues to meet regularly in preparation for launching the Delinquency Drug Court.

For more information, you may contact Juvenile Alternative Sanctions Coordinator Cristy Altaro, at (561) 355-6586.

Criminal Division CLE Seminar & Luncheon



On December 13th, the 15th Circuit’s Criminal Division Judges presented a seminar on “Tips for Trial Practice in Criminal Court,” which allowed attending members from the Palm Beach County Bar Association an opportunity to meet the judges and earn continuing legal education (CLE) credits over lunch in the Judicial Dining Room.

Judge Karen Miller, Judge Laura Johnson, Judge William Berger and Judge Barry Cohen participated in the presentation.

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT UPDATE

Families and Children in the Court

On October 15th and 16th, the Supreme Court's Steering Committee on "Families and Children in the Court" met at the Crown Plaza Hotel. Agenda items included: A Youth Panel from Florida's Children First, Inc.; Proposed Rule Change (regarding children appearing at Court Hearings) and presentation of the new Dependency Video. **Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll** requested that Court Administration staff attend several portions of the meeting. As a result of the meeting, the 15th formed a committee to discuss the possibility of children appearing for Judicial Review Hearings, with initial committee meetings held on November 30th and January 11th.

UFC Case Management

On October 4-5, 2007, the 15th Circuit sent **UFC Case Managers Paula Carvajal** and **Jacquie Marshburn** to a Case Manager Meeting hosted by the Office of State Court Administrator (OSCA) to discuss details of managing crossover dockets. The meeting was held in Miami and involved case managers from across the state. Each Circuit presented on their case management model and exchanged contact information. Both case managers reported that the meeting was helpful and will continue to communicate with their counter-parts across the state.

Individuals interested in participating in the Families and Children in the Court committee, or with other questions about Unified Family Court, may contact 355-4657.

Nicole Saunders Leaves UFC to be New Justice Services Director for Palm Beach County

Nicole Saunders, who was employed with the 15th Circuit since 1999, left her position in December to become Justice Services Director for Palm Beach County.

For the past two years, Ms. Saunders was the Court Operations Manager in the Family Court and served as Domestic Violence Coordinator. She was instrumental in assisting with the Circuit's Unified Family Court and will be missed — although she will continue to be involved with the courts. In her new role with the County, she will oversee Pre-Trial Services, Drug Court, Elder Justice, Family Violence Intervention and Court Psychology.

"Please join me in wishing the best for Nicole," said **Trial Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke**. "We look forward to continuing a productive relationship."

Volunteer Mediation Training: “Ethics”



At the bi-monthly training for small claims volunteer mediators, held November 26, 2007, **Tom Caprio**, then-Director of the Alternative Dispute Resolution office shared with mediators the program he presented at the Dispute Resolution Center’s annual Conference for Mediators and Arbitrators held in Orlando in August, addressing various scenarios involving ethical dilemmas encountered during mediation. The mediators assembled in small groups and actively discussed the ethical dilemmas, then compared the different options considered by the various groups.

On January 11, 2008, the new year’s schedule of trainings began with **Alan Kahn** presenting “Landlord/Tenant—A Two-Way Street,” addressing issues frequently encountered by county mediators.

Mr. Caprio has recently announced his resignation. Mr. Kahn will act as Director of the ADR Office in the interim.

*Questions about the Mediation Program may be directed to **Mary Ellen Feinberg**, Mediation Program Coordinator, at (561) 355-3574.*

New Dependency Mediation Model

As part of the recommendations of the Community Alliance Subcommittee on Child Welfare Reform, the 15th Circuit has a new Dependency Mediation model.

The Court now orders all new dependency cases (with the exception of cases regarding egregious abuse or cases going for an expedited Termination of Parental Rights proceeding) to mediation within 21 days of shelter with the goal of more specialized case plans and more engagement with the families.



On October 26, 2007, a large group meeting was held at the Central Courthouse to address the new Dependency Mediation process.

The meeting was well attended, with over 100 stakeholders present. The meeting sought to inform all interested parties about the new procedures and answer any questions they may have. The new mediation order was presented which will now provide families with one court order containing all hearing dates and times (mediation, arraignment and judicial review). Additionally, a handout detailing “the nuts and bolts” of dependency mediation was provided. Dependency Mediation continues to be a collaborative process with frequent dialogue between all the parties involved.

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Spector at 650-6896 or Mary Quinlan at 355-1925.

Janet Leach-Ruth is New Administrative Services Manager



Janet Leach-Ruth has been chosen to fill a vacancy as Administrative Services Manager, joining the 15th Judicial Circuit on November 19, 2007.

Ms. Ruth brings to the Court extensive experience in financial and administrative management. After obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in Accounting, Ms. Ruth held progressively responsible positions in the Employment Security Division of the State of Washington, including Acting Assistant Commissioner of the Administrative Services Division.

Since returning to Florida in 2002, she has been employed as a Revenue Administrator for the state's Department of Revenue in West Palm Beach.

Ms. Leach-Ruth's office is located on the 5th floor of the Central Courthouse. She can be reached at (561) 355-1541.

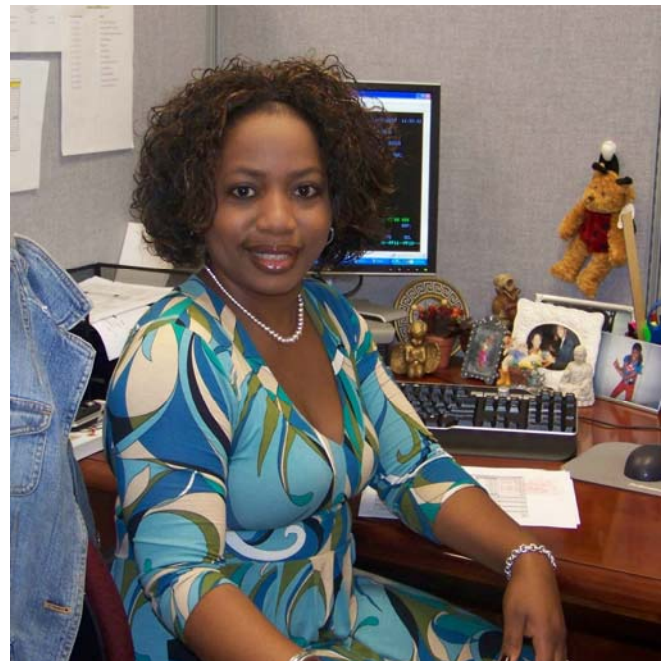
Rhoda Jones is New Purchasing Manager

Rhoda Jones has been selected for promotion to fill a vacancy as Purchasing Manager. Ms. Jones has been employed as a Budget Specialist in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit since August 20, 2007.

Previous to her employment with the courts, Ms Jones worked for the Palm Beach County School District as the School Treasurer for Morikami Park Elementary School for almost five years.

Ms. Jones holds an Associates Degree in Paralegal Studies from Palm Beach Community College. Her accounting background and proficient computer skills combine to greatly benefit the Administrative Office of the Court.

Ms Jones' office is located on the Fifth floor of the Main Courthouse. Her telephone number is (561) 355-2012.



RECENT COURT EDUCATION PROGRAMS



Summit Christian middle and senior high students visit court during inter-term government course.



Seagull Academy, a charter school in Palm Beach County which specializes in vocational training and independent living skills for persons with special needs, visited the courthouse on 10/11/07. Said one student: "We learned things about jury that we did not know." The group plans a return trip to focus on Guardianship.



Jupiter Christian School teachers and students visited the Main Courthouse for a tour and seminar conducted by John McGovern, Court Education Consultant on Tuesday, November 6, 2007.



International Students from Boca Prep engage Judge Wennet in an *in camera* discussion of US system of justice as compared to those of their countries of origin.



Above, and on the cover: Delray Beach Chamber "Leadership Delray" visit court during Government Day for Judicial Seminar. The group plans to return to the court in the near future for a full day seminar and to visit courtrooms. Court Education Program John McGovern, formerly an educational administrator and Superintendent of Schools in NY, was surprised to find in the group one of his former students!

Judicial Assistants' Holiday Project for Guardian Ad Litem Children

For many years, 15th Circuit's judicial assistants have collected money each holiday season to donate to a worthy cause involving children.

The JA's chose a new recipient in 2007. As announced by judicial assistant **Maureen Carroll**, "This year we are spreading the holiday joy 'in house' and are 'adopting,' through the Guardian Ad Litem office, children in the court system who are abused, neglected or abandoned." Many of the children are living in foster homes or group homes.

The judicial assistants collected \$1,461.00 in donations, which were used to purchase toys, clothing, gift cards and toiletries. **Stephanie Lee, Maureen Carroll** and **Erin Brandt** spent more than 6 hours "power shopping" for the children, selecting items to buy from each child's wish list. The JA's wrapped and delivered the gifts to the Guardian Ad Litem office, to be distributed to the children by their appointed guardians.

Ms. Lee said, "I just wanted to thank everyone who contributed to the Palm Beach County Judicial Assistants' Holiday Project. Thanks to all of you it was a tremendous success... bringing a smile to 30 children's faces this holiday season!"

In addition to this generous and worthwhile contribution, the judicial assistants also held a teddy bear drive, collecting stuffed animals at the Judicial Assistants' Holiday Party on December 12th. Stuffed animals not going to the Guardian Ad Litem project were taken by Ms. Carroll to the WAY-FM Urban Youth Impact Program, which was in unusually dire need of toys for their collection this year and expressed gratitude for the donations.

The New Year: A Good Time for "Housekeeping"

Depending on your office or department's area of concern, you may need to pay attention to the following updates, and post or update your forms accordingly:

Administrative Order 2.031 regarding notice per the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 was recently revised, updating the language for who a party should contact in the Administrative Office of the Court, when seeking assistance to appear at court proceedings. This notice is required to be included on all notices for court events, and supersedes the last time change to the wording, in August of 2006. Staff should make sure forms are updated to contain the correct language. (*Formatting tip: if you have converted forms from WordPerfect to Word, you may need to manually correct some punctuation or accent marks, which convert to incorrect characters in the language translations.*)

The Palm Beach County Bar Association's Standards of Professional Courtesy were approved by the judiciary at the Full Court Luncheon in October. The Circuit's General Counsel, Amy Borman, circulated the standards to all judicial offices and suggested posting this on the bulletin board outside courtrooms.

The statutory interest rate, officially announced each year by the state's Chief Financial Officer, has been set as **11% per annum for 2008** (equal to a daily rate of .0003014%). This rate is effective from January 1st through December 31st, 2008. *Did you know?* The statutory rate was also 11% for 2001 and 2007, ranging between 6% and 9% for the years in between. The lowest recent rate was 6% in 2003, and the highest was 12% in 1994.

Court Administration Hosts Holiday Luncheon

On December 14, 2007, human resources hosted a pot-luck holiday luncheon for Court Administration staff.

Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll addressed the group, praising the employees for their outstanding service and wishing them “Happy Holidays”.

Court Administrator Barbara L. Dawicke thanked staff for all their support during the first few months of her administration at the Fifteenth Circuit.



Meet Our Staff: Alison Litschauer



As announced in the last issue of the *Courier*, **Alison Litschauer** has joined the Circuit as administrative assistant to **Trial Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke**.

Ms. Litschauer’s office is in the Administrative Office of the Court, on the 5th floor of the Central Courthouse. She can be reached at (561) 355-1872.

New Hires

Jennifer Fleming
Trial Court Law Clerk
10/9/07

Alison Litschauer
Administrative Assistant II
10/29/07

Janet Leach-Ruth
Administrative Services Manager
11/19/07

Linda Harris
Judicial Assistant
11/01/07

Susan Wiggins
Court Reporter II
12/3/07

Anthony Gregory
Clerk Typist
12/11/07

Peter Bassaline
Magistrate
12/17/07

Rhonda Dardashti
Budget Specialist
12/27/07

Separations

Giev Askari
Trial Law Clerk
10/5/07

Trinidad Parham
Court Specialist II
10/12/07

Karen Taylor
Judicial Assistant
11/01/07

Patti Velasquez
Magistrate
11/9/07

Amy Robinson
Administrative Services Manager
11/16/07

Amanda Morales
Scopist
11/30/07

Chris Steichen
Circuit Judicial Assistant
11/30/07

Donna Blanco
Court Program Specialist I
11/30/07

Jack Winn
System Administrator I
12/3/07

Juan Alvarado
Court Interpreter
12/6/07

Mary Jaffe
Court Program Specialist I
12/07/07

Nicole Saunders
Court Operations Manager
12/12/07

Special Thanks!

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit's Human Resource Department would like to extend a special thanks to everyone who contributed to the Florida State Employees' Charitable Campaign.

With your support we were able to collect a total of \$6,281.00!

Thanks for your continued support.

For Human Resources questions, contact Krista Garber, Human Resources Manager, at (561) 355-2154 or Letitia McDonald, Personnel Management Analyst at (561) 355-1847

Reminder: Automated Attendance Reporting

All state employees are required to submit their monthly time sheets via the Automated Attendance & Leave System. We ask that you complete your time sheets no later than the 10th day of the upcoming month.

The URL is: <https://timeattendance.flcourts.org/timeattendanceC15>.

If you are in need of a one-on-one tutoring or other assistance, please contact Letitia McDonald at (561) 355-1847.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

The following Administrative Orders are new or were recently updated:

Administrative Order 2.002 - 12/07: Assignment of Judges (*supersedes A.O. 2.002-1/07*)

Administrative Order 2.003-12/07: Alternate Assignments (*supersedes A.O. 2.003-12/06*)

Administrative Order 2.029-11/28/07: Duty Judge Roster (*supersedes A.O. 2.029-9/07, with corrected version issued 11/28/07*)

Administrative Order 2.031-1/08: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (*supersedes A.O. 2.031-8/06 and the revision 2.031-11/07*)

Administrative Order 2.070 - 12/07: Appointment of Circuit Judges as Acting County Judges / Appointment of County Judges as Acting Circuit Judges (*supersedes A.O. 2.070-6/07*)

Administrative Order 2.072-12.07: Compensation of Staff Interpreters for Depositions (*new administrative order*)

Administrative Order 5.001 - 12/07: Unified Family Court Jurisdiction (*supersedes 5.001-3/07; changes relate to zip codes*)

Administrative Order 5.024: Assignment of Family Law Cases (*supersedes A.O. 5.024-9/92*)

Administrative Order 5.025-12/07: Family Mediation Program (*supersedes A.O. 5.025-6/04*)

Administrative order 6.001 - 12/07: Probate and Guardianship Division (*supersedes 6.001-11/06*)

Administrative Order 6.003: Ex Parte Probate and Guardianship Hearings, North County Courthouse (*this administrative order has been vacated*)

For a complete list of Administrative Orders please go to:

www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/cadmin

UPCOMING EVENTS

February

6th County Commission Visit

15th Circuit Court Judicial Rotation (Moving Day)

18th Courts Closed — Presidents' Day

26th Florida Assoc. Women Lawyers, South Palm Beach Chapter, Judicial Reception (*Contact: Tanya McConnell, Esq. (561) 955-9939, ext. 223*)

March

21st Courts Closed (Good Friday)

April

3rd-6th National Law Student Mock Trial Competition (*Central Courthouse — Use of 7 courtrooms and the jury room has been requested; Hosting Atty. is Stacey D. Mullens of Lavalley, Brown, Ronan & Mullins, P.A.*)

The Circuit Courier

Published by the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit

Kathleen J. Kroll, Chief Judge
Barbara Dawicke, Trial Court Administrator

205 North Dixie Highway
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401
(561) 355-2431

Newsletter staff: Linda Sims and Elissa Thompson