

—THE—
15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
—OF FLORIDA—

CIRCUIT COURIER

JANUARY - MARCH 2024

Santo DiGangi Appointed to County Court Bench



On January 30, the Office of Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of Santo DiGangi to the County Court Bench. Judge DiGangi previously worked as a staff attorney with the Circuit from 2009 to 2011, served as Assistant State Attorney with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office, and was most recently an attorney with Critton, Luttier & Coleman. In 2019, he served as president of The Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Criminology as well as his Juris Doctor from the University of Florida. Judge DiGangi's appointment fills the vacancy created by the elevation of Judge James Sherman.



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Judges in the Community



On January 15, Judge Cymonie Rowe, served as keynote speaker for the Caribbean American for Community Involvement and Village of Royal Palm Beach's 22nd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration. The event included remarks from community and government dignitaries as well as several music and dance performances. Judge Rowe gave an inspiring speech centered on justice, service, and Dr. King's legacy and his impact on society.



On January 19, Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer, along with several other government leaders, spoke to over 100 students at Palm Beach Gardens High School for "Ethical Governance Day." Judge Feuer provided insight into her career journey and answered questions regarding the judicial system.



On January 24, Judge Cymonie Rowe along with attorney Robert Vaughn, led the Caribbean Bar Association-sponsored masterclass series on voir dire. Held at the Palm Beach County Bar Association office, the event was co-sponsored by the F. Malcolm Cunningham Bar Association.



On January 25, Judges Reginald Corlew and Maxine Cheesman, along with Public Defender Schnelle Tonge, spoke to students at U.B. Kinsey Elementary School. During the visit, live UMC hearings were held via Zoom. Local attorneys also addressed the students. Deputy Cano and Judicial Assistant Monique Harris were on hand to assist.

Judges in the Community



On February 2, several judges from the Fifteenth Circuit spoke to students at Highland Elementary in Lake Worth as part of the “Reading and Robes” program, in conjunction with the Palm Beach County Bar Association Judicial Relations Committee. Each student received a copy of United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s book “Turning Pages.”

Pictured above (l to r): Judge Daliah Weiss, Judge Lisa Small, Judge Sarah Willis, Judge Danielle Sherriff, Magistrate Ilana Marcus, Judge Reid Scott, Judge Sherri Collins, Judge Laura Burkhart, Judge Samantha Feuer and Judge Sarah Shullman.



On February 8, the Palm Beach Guardianship Association hosted “Lunch with the Guardianship Judges” with Judge Charles Burton and Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer as speakers. During the event, both judges answered questions from attendees on the rules and expectation of professional guardianship as well as challenges and ways to improve the process.



Judge Danielle Sherriff and Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer were featured guests for Career Day at Palm Springs Elementary. Both judges spoke to the students about their career journeys and their current role as judges.

Celebration of Life for Jan Leslie

On January 26, a celebration of life for former Judicial Assistant, Jan Leslie, was held in the Main Courthouse. Family members, friends, retired judges, retired judicial assistants, along with current judges, judicial assistants, and court staff gathered to celebrate Jan's life and to pay their respects.



Pictured (l to r):
Judges Phillips, Oftedal, Wennet, Chief Judge Kelley, Crow, Barkdull, Colton, Rapp, McCarthy, Cook, and Cox.



Pictured: Back row (l to r): Back row: Kim Wolf, Diana Grant, Amy Tracy, Marilyn Greathouse and Judy Lane.
Front row (l to r): Johnna Hochella, Rebecca Ricker, Laurel Skyer, Stefanie Lee, Harriet Merlin, Katherine Matthews, and Debbie Bradley.

Mock Trial Competition



On February 2, the Circuit hosted the 2024 High School Mock Trial Competition. The largest competition to date, with 120 students representing 10 local high schools. Judge Sherri Collins was instrumental in the coordination of the event, while Judges Daliah Weiss, Stephanie Tew, Bradley Harper, and Reid Scott were among those that presided over the trials. After three rounds of fierce arguments, American Heritage was deemed the winner.

Circuit staff attend Florida Court Personnel Institute

Our Circuit was well represented at the annual Florida Court Personnel Institute held in Kissimmee, Florida, during the week of February 12. The training included programs for Law Clerks, Judicial and Magistrate Assistants, Public Information Officers, Managers and Supervisors. It also included a section for new court employees.



Pictured above:

Back row (l to r): Shanece Coppin, Dani Arcos, Erin Berlingo, Kelly Rowley, Anastasia Pierik, Richalyn Miller, Magistrate Maxine Williams and Brianna Brandt.

Front Row (l to r): Dyman Roye, Christina Marrasquin, Stefanie Thomas, Dylita Maharaj, Rachel Lively, Amber McConlogue and Dani Hoefling

Fifteenth Circuit Recruitment Efforts



On February 14, General Counsel Katherine Mullinax and Chief of Personnel Services William Hutchings, Jr., attended the University of Miami's Public Interest Fair to engage with law students about our Circuit and employment opportunities offered.



On February 15, Katherine Mullinax, General Counsel, and Justin Forest, Human Resources Manager, attended Nova Southeastern University's Public Law Interest Fair to engage with students who are interested in working in the public sector.

This recruitment effort was one of many conducted by Human Resources and General Counsel in an attempt to bring the best and the brightest to the Circuit.

Trauma Training



On February 19, the Circuit hosted a “Compassion Resiliency” training for employees, led by compassion fatigue specialist and trauma informed care trainer, Kay Glidden. The half-day event included defining and identifying burnout and compassion fatigue, as well as ways to incorporate self-care into our daily routines. The course was held to assist those court staff who must read, record or interpret traumatic litigated events, as part of their responsibilities with the courts as case managers, court reporters, or court interpreters.

Certified Court Interpreter Exams held at the 15th Circuit



Pictured l to r: OSCA Staff members Ellie Westbrook, Ashlee Williams and Lisa Bell



Pictured l to r: OSCA Staff member Ahjia Ponders with 15th Circuit Digital Court Reporter Nicolas Salvador

The Fifteenth Circuit welcomed the Office of State Courts Administrator staff to the Main Courthouse February 20-23, as they hosted the Oral Performance and Oral Proficiency Exams for prospective certified court interpreters. Candidates appeared from all sections of the State in the hopes to successfully pass the exam as one of the final steps to becoming a certified court interpreter. The salary for a Certified Court Interpreter with the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit is \$73,205.76. The Circuit hopes to fill the Certified Spanish Court Interpreter positions and encourages qualified candidates to apply.

Guest of Honor and Co-Founder of Mark Garwood Foundation Attends Drug Court Graduation

Judge Donald Hafele welcomed Erica Garwood as a guest of honor to speak at the Adult Drug Court graduation ceremony held on February 22.

Erica Garwood, along with her husband John, founded the Mark Garwood Foundation to honor the life of their son who tragically lost his life at the age of 24 due to complications from addiction and diabetes.

The Foundation provides educational scholarships to individuals in Florida who are recovering from substance use. To date, the Foundation has awarded over \$435,000 in scholarships. Mrs. Garwood joined Judge Hafele in the celebration of a Drug Court graduate who received the Mark Garwood Foundation scholarship.



Youth Law Day



On March 2, over 80 students gathered at the Main Courthouse for the annual Youth Law Day event, coordinated by Judge Sherri Collins. Students were introduced to the legal system and legal career paths. The students joined in discussions with judges and attorneys and participated in a mock trial with the attorneys and Judges Cymonie Rowe and Samantha Schosberg Feuer. The event was presented by the Palm Beach County Bar Law Related Education Committee, chaired by John Webber, with sponsorship and support from Andrew Kwan of Pankauski, Hauser and Lazarus.

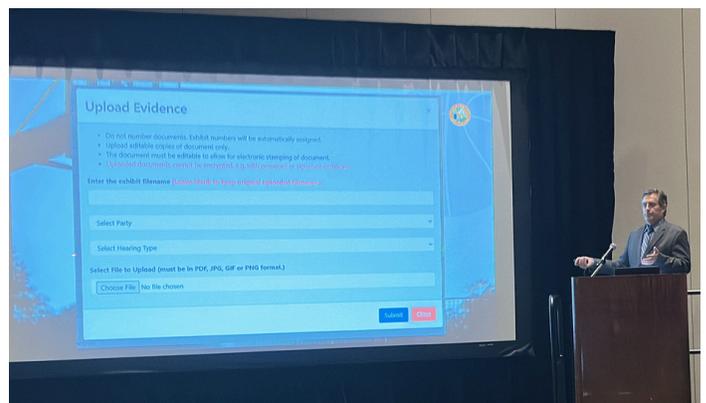
Fifteenth Circuit at the 2024 Bench Bar Conference

The 2024 Bench Bar Conference was well attended by local attorneys, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Judges, court staff, and court partners. Judges and staff participated on panels aimed at assisting the legal community understand the policies, programs, and direction of the courts. Chief Judge Kelley provided a “State of the Court” address. At the start of his speech, the Chief Judge noted the retirement of Judge Laura Johnson and the elevation of Judge Sherman from the County to Circuit bench. The Chief also welcomed our new judges and magistrate. In his presentation, the Chief focused on the diligence and efficiencies of the Bench, noting that the clearance rates of all divisions were close to 100% or higher. He also touched on courthouse facility upgrades including the buildout of the Main Courthouse 7th and 8th floors, and the new juvenile hearing room and courtroom, set to open in May. Finally, he discussed the successful judicial branch requests that were funded by the Legislature, including a statewide increase of personnel in court reporting, court interpreting and case management.

Shown here: panel members of “Professionalism and the Local Professionalism Panel of the 15th Circuit” Katherine Mullinax, General Counsel; Kara Rockenbach Link; Chief Judge Glenn Kelley; Justice Renatha Francis; Sia Baker-Barnes; Judge Carolyn Bell and William Pruitt.



The Court Administration Court Technology Team has significant involvement in the Bench Bar Conference. For many years, the Team has assisted the Palm Beach County Bar by providing the equipment and staffing needed to support the technology needs of each venue. This year, conference attendees were able to test some of the newest courtroom technologies including OWL cameras, Wolfvision Cynap evidence presentation system, Hovercams, and Barco wireless projectors. The new technologies are available for use, now, and part of the “forward thinking” Circuit plan.



Noel Chessman, Chief Information Officer and Ken Blanck, Senior Programmer partnered with Amy Borman, Clerk’s Office Chief Legal Officer, to present a joint session explaining “How Clerk and Court Technologies Work Together”.

Attendees were given a “behind the scenes” look at JVS, OLS and Showcase to better help them understand the workflows and processes between these applications. Ken, who is the creator of the digital evidence portal used by the 15th Circuit, gave a brief demonstration of the evidence portal from the filers and attorney’s perspective. Many people followed up with questions after the well-attended session.

Florida Judicial College

The Hon. Santo DiGangi, Hon. Danielle Sherriff, and the Hon. Reid Scott, recently attended the 2024 Florida Judicial College, Phase II. The two-part program was developed for new judges and is sanctioned by the Florida Supreme Court. The first phase, a pre-bench program, addresses the art and science of judging using a series of orientation sessions, a mock trial experience, and a trial skills workshop. Phase II of the program continues with topics relevant to newly appointed judges with a focus on substantive and procedural matters. Other Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Judges were present at the College as instructors: Judge Bradley Harper, Judge James Nutt, Judge Cymonie Rowe, Judge James Sherman, and Judge Debra Moses Stephens.



Pictured l to r: Judges Santo DiGangi, Danielle Sheriff and Reid Scott II.



Pictured l to r: Judges Reid Scott II, Cymonie Rowe, Debra Moses Stephens, Danielle Sherriff, James Nutt, James Sherman, Santo DiGangi and Bradley Harper.

Men of Court Reporting Department Honor Women Co-Workers for International Women's Day



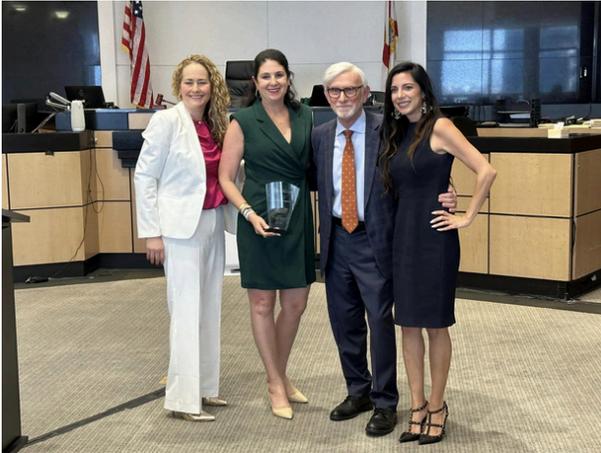
Pictured l to r: Nancy Fisher, Yvonne Williams, Michelle Voce, Stephanie Miele, Megan Spangenberg, Le'Andrea Boggs, Lisa Miskanic, Susan Catucci, Abigail Mitchell, Catherine Dore, Jeanne Navarro and Melissa Sotillo



Pictured l to r: Joey Hyppolite, Adrian Becerra, Kwamé Ratliff and Nicolas Salvador

On March 8, to recognize the contributions of women on International Women's Day, Digital Court Reporters Joey Hyppolite, Adrian Becerra, Kwamé Ratliff, and Nicolas Salvador handed out roses to the women in their department, and also provided an assortment of pastries. Our thanks to all of the women of the Circuit for their contributions.

Pro Bono Committee Awards & Ice Cream Social



On March 13, the Circuit's Pro Bono Committee held its annual award ceremony & ice cream social. The event was well attended and included remarks by Chief Judge Glenn Kelley, President-Elect of the Florida Bar Sia Baker-Barnes, Pro Bono Committee Chair Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society Bob Bertisch, and retired Florida Supreme Court Justice Barbara Pariente. Judge Feuer was also surprised with an award, honoring her 10 years of service on the committee. Congratulations to the attorneys and the Palm Beach County Justice Association for the recognition of their work, as well as to Judge Feuer for her special honor.

Health and Wellness Committee Activities

Activities put on by the Circuit's Health and Wellness Committee have been in full swing. The year started off with the "New Year, New You" Step Challenge. Circuit judges and staff signed up to participate as walkers and runners, tracking their steps for the month of January. On February 29, the committee held an awards ceremony to recognize the top three winners in each category. In the walkers' competition, Systems Administrator II, Mordechai Spolter placed first, followed by Judge Burton, and Program Coordinator Reyaz Ali placed third. In the runners' category, Digital Court Reporter Kwame Ratliff placed first, followed by Digital Court Reporter Jeanne Navarro who came in second.



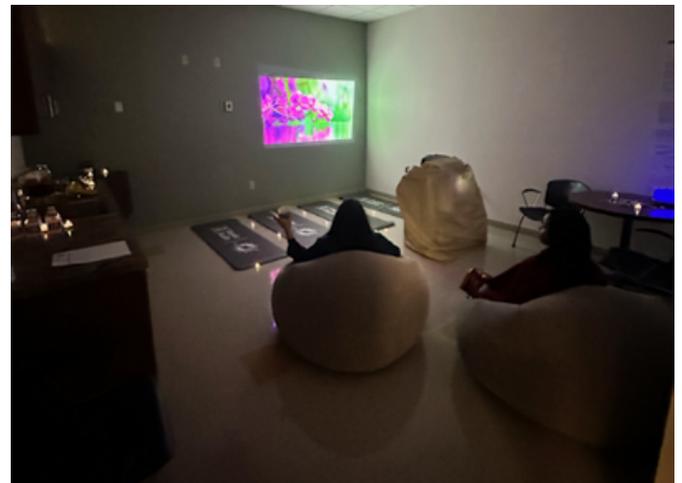
Pictured here is Systems Administrator II Mordechai Spolter and Program Coordinator Reyaz Ali.

Health and Wellness Committee Activities Continued



During February and March, the Health and Wellness committee hosted a lunch and learn series with author and Master Certified Coach Minx Boren as guest speaker. The two-part series centered on identifying and incorporating wellness habits into our daily routines, taking time to invest in all aspects of health, and ultimately reducing stress in our lives.

The Health and Wellness Committee also launched the pop-up Zen Room during the month of March at the South County Courthouse. The pop-up Zen Room will be set up in each of the courthouses, offering all Circuit judges and staff an opportunity to enjoy a few moments of relaxation.



Courthouse Tours



Students from Boca Prep International School paid a visit to the Main Courthouse on January 16. During their visit, they heard from Judge Coates and experienced a K-9 demonstration.



On February 28 and March 7, students from Pahokee High School visited the Main Courthouse and had the opportunity to speak with and sit in with various judges and court administration staff. Their visits also included observing judicial proceedings and learning about the jury duty process.



Students from Poinciana Elementary School paid a visit to the Main Courthouse on March 6. During their visit, they were able to speak with Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer and ask questions.

Students from Keiser University Flagship Criminal Justice Program paid a visit to the Main Courthouse on March 13, where they spoke with Judge Lauren Burke and discussed opportunities in the legal field.



Human Resources Events

Deferred Compensation: On March 12, HR hosted its first Deferred Compensation workshop. The workshop included a live presentation and gave attendees the opportunity to meet with investment provider representatives to discuss available plans and benefits.



Lunch & Learn Dates:

January 2024: On January 18, Amber Sneeden, M.A., of PBC Youth Services Department's Education & Training Center presented on the topic "Work Hard, Self-Care Harder."

February & March 2024: In partnership with the Health and Wellness Committee, HR hosted a two-part lunch and learn series called "Getting Healthwise: It's a Choice We Make" with Minx Boren as guest speaker.

New Employee Orientation



Several new Court employees attended the Circuit's employee orientation course on March 16. During the course, the employees were introduced to the Circuit's Mission and Vision, the Circuit's Core Competencies, the structure of the judicial branch, and their role as officers of the Court.

New Hires | Employees On the Move

Welcome to the Circuit's newest Judge and employees

January 2024

Jodi Cason, Hearing Officer
Tiffany Metz, Guardianship Court Case Manager
Keith Clervil, Microsoft System Administrator
Christie Soule, Trial Court Staff Attorney
Jessie Browning, Trial Court Staff Attorney

March 2024

Santo DiGangi, County Court Judge
Noelle McFarlane, Administrative Assistant II, HR
Evan DaCosta, Student Technologist

Employees on the Move

January 2024

Sue Ling Curtis, Administrative Assistant III
Alexi Abril, Court Program Specialist II, Civil

February 2024

Debra Oats, Director of Administrative Services

March 2024

Karrington Taylor, Digital Court Reporter
Connie Thomas, Court Program Specialist III, Family
Emily Maberry, Court Program Specialist II, Family

Administrative Orders

The following AOs were updated or created January - March 2024 (most recent to oldest):

03-25-2024	12.512	CARES Act Information Sheet for Residential Eviction Cases	(Vacated)
03-19-2024	11.109	Duty Judge Roster	
03-06-2024	11.804	BANNER-Filing of Cases with more than 999	(Vacated)
03-06-2024	11.803	JIS System Security	(Vacated)
03-01-2024	11.106	Alternate Assignments	
03-01-2024	11.104	Seniority Listing Of Judges	
03-01-2024	11.101	Assignment of Judges	
02-01-2024	12.708	APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY MAGISTRATES	(Vacated)
02-01-2024	12.504	County Canvassing Board	
02-01-2024	12.301	Order Temporarily Assigning the Honorable Sherri Collins as an Acting Circuit Judge	
02-01-2024	11.110	Appointment of Circuit Judges as Acting County Judges; Appointment of County Judges As Acting Circuit Judges	
02-01-2024	6.305	Civil Drug Court	
02-01-2024	5.104	UFC Magistrates	
01-24-2024	10.401	Assignment of Civil Traffic Infractions	
01-11-2024	4.202	Schedule of Bonds	
01-02-2024	11.203	Appointment of Magistrates	



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