

—THE—
15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
—OF FLORIDA—

CIRCUIT COURIER

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023

The 15th Circuit Remembers The Hon. Ronald Alvarez



On August 8, 2023, the Honorable Ronald Alvarez passed away. Appointed to the Circuit Court bench in 1993, Judge Alvarez held assignments in the Civil, Family, and most notably, the Juvenile divisions. He was also responsible for establishing the Juvenile Drug Court and instrumental in implementing the Circuit's Caring Canines Therapy Dog program.

Prior to becoming a judge, he graduated from Indiana University in 1966 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, and in 1969, graduated from the Indiana University School of Law with his Juris Doctor degree. Upon completion of law school, Judge Alvarez went on to serve in the United States Army until 1971. He operated his own law firm until his appointment to the bench in 1993.

Judge Alvarez retired after 21 years on the bench on September 30, 2014. He will be remembered for his work on and off the bench and for his compassion for those he interacted with. He will be greatly missed by his former colleagues as well as the staff of the Circuit.



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The Hon. Laura Johnson Retires



On July 11, a farewell event was held for the Hon. Laura Johnson. Judge Johnson served the citizens of Palm Beach County for over 40 years; more than 20 of those years a judge. The Hon. Sandra Bosso-Pardo, retired judge, returned to bid her friend a happy retirement.

Investiture Ceremony Held for the Hon. Reid Scott



On Friday, September 8th, the Honorable Reid Scott was formally sworn in during his investiture ceremony. The event was well attended both in-person and virtually by fellow judges, family members, friends, colleagues and court staff. Judge Scott was sworn in by former Chief Judge Krista Marx and those that spoke on his behalf mentioned his kindness, friendship and great work ethic. Congratulations Judge Scott.

Judges in the Community



On Thursday, August 17, the Honorable Cymonie Rowe presented to members of the Caribbean Bar Association during their Masterclass Trial Advocacy Series event.

Courthouse Tours



On July 20, the Hon. Cymonie Rowe welcomed a group of young ladies from the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Beach County to the main courthouse. After speaking with Judge Rowe, the students experienced a K-9 demonstration and toured the holding cell, jury room and self-service center.



On September 6, the Hon. April Bristow welcomed students from the Palm Beach Maritime Academy for a courthouse tour. The students experienced a K-9 demonstration, toured the holding cell off of the courtroom, visited the jury room, and finished up with a discussion in the law library.

Judges Participate in Constitution Week



The Hon. Cymonie Rowe, Hon. Stephanie Tew, and Hon. Ashley Zuckerman presided over a “Civil Discourse for Difficult Discussions” presentation. More than fifty students from the 7th Grade, Carver Middle School participated.

The students conducted a case study of the Supreme Court case of *Elonis v. United States*. They were provided a modified fact pattern derived from the case and formulated their arguments from that information. Later during their visit they viewed court proceedings and met with Judges Cheesman and Curley for a discussion of their respective paths to the bench.



On September 19, the Hon. Charles Burton, Hon. Samantha Feuer, Hon. Danielle Sherriff, and Hon. Ashley Zuckerman participated in the Palm Beach County chapter of Florida Association of Women Lawyers’ Constitution Day presentation and panel discussion at FAU Honors College.

Judges Swear In New Attorneys



On September 21, the Honorable Daliah Weiss administered new attorney oath to Noelle Cabral.



On September 28, the Honorable Danielle Sherriff administered the new attorney oath to Winnie Jean-Pierre.

Honoring Judges of the 15th Circuit



On Friday, August 11, the Honorable Daliah Weiss was honored during the Cuban American Bar Association's Judicial Forum & Luncheon.

Our congratulations to Judge Weiss.

Members of Florida's Legislation Visit the 15th Circuit



On Thursday, September 7, the 15th Circuit welcomed members of the legislative delegation to the Main Courthouse. The Chief and the judges in attendance discussed Circuit issues and escorted the group to several courtrooms to view judicial proceedings.

Court Staff Attend Conferences



Court Administration staff attended the National Association for Court Management Conference in Tampa, July 9-13. The conference's theme was racial justice and barriers within the justice system. The week was filled with informative and interactive sessions with court partners from across the United States as well as international attendees.

Pictured here (L to R): Reyaz Ali, Richalyn Miller, Melissa Sotillo, William Hutchings, Sarah Freglette, Bell Cirius and Justin Forest.



Magistrate Maxine Williams, the Hon. Laura Burkhart, Magistrate Kirigin and Magistrate Marcus attended the Family Law Section's Trial Advocacy Course July 13-16 in Orlando, FL. They served as workshop presenters aimed at assisting the participants increase their family law trial skills related to children and financial issues.



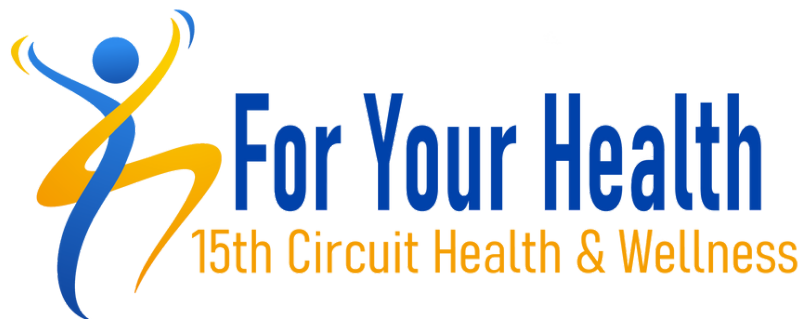
The Circuit's Public Information Officer Richalyn Miller, attended the Conference of Court Public Information Officers Annual Meeting July 30-August 2 in Wilmington, Delaware. The conference brought together 70 court PIOs from across the country, where they participated in several group and breakout sessions on the topics of social media, organizing PR plans, handling high profile cases and AI/ChatGPT. Attendees also toured Historic New Castle, Delaware while learning about some of America's earliest court history.

Court Staff Attend Conferences Continued



On September 13th, Chief Information Officer Noel Chessman gave a presentation on artificial intelligence (“AI”) in judicial viewers at the National Center for State Courts annual Court Technology Conference in Phoenix, Az. The presentation was facilitated by the Hon. Jennifer Bailey, 11th Circuit. Presenters included Parik Chokshi, IT Director, Palm Beach County and Dr. Paula Hannaford-Agor, National Center for State Courts.

The presentation referenced the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit’s recent implementation of an automated process in the Circuit’s differentiated case management solution. Mr. Chokshi discussed the automated docketing of these orders, and Noel discussed the process of identifying, creating, signing and e-serving these orders all using automation.



Summer Step Challenge Winners

The Health and Wellness Committee is proud of the more than 40 Circuit employees that participated in the August Step Challenge. Congratulations to the winners:

Walkers:

First Place: Mordechai Spolter 563,190 steps
Second Place: Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer 482,640 steps
Third Place: Kwamé Ratliff 426,895 steps

Runners:

First Place: Erin Berlingo 310,679 steps

Summer Intern Program



The Circuit completed the summer internship program in July with two events. First, the interns met with Florida Supreme Court Justice, Renatha Francis. During that discussion, they expressed their career aspirations and learned of Justice Francis' career journey. Finally, Judges Feuer and Collins, leaders of the program, hosted a farewell lunch.

Juvenile Drug Court Graduation



On September 20th, the Juvenile division held a juvenile drug court graduation, with the Honorable John Parnofiello presiding.

Many of the community partners' representatives spoke of the graduate's tenacity in completing the program.

15th Circuit Selected to Participate in Implementation Sites Project

The Fifteenth Circuit's Juvenile Division was been selected to participate in the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges' (NCJFCJ) Implementation Sites Project. The NCJFCJ's Implementation Sites Project, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, provides child abuse and neglect courts with training, technical assistance, and tailored support from a site manager to improve the handling of dependency cases and improve the lives of families and children.

The project, which spans over a two-year period, began on September 15. Each site selected will use a judicially led collaborative stakeholder team to assess current practices, identify goals, and implement change to improve their court practices and the delivery of services to families and children. As a selected site, the Fifteenth Circuit is tasked with prioritizing the NCJFCJ's Key Principles of Permanency Planning, some of which include ensuring access to justice, cultivating cultural responsiveness, providing judicial oversight and keeping families together.

Here in the Fifteenth Circuit, Judge Kathleen Kroll, Administrative Judge in Juvenile, is the judicial lead and the collaborative team will focus on improving court hearings, procedures, and services for the youth who are aging out of foster care.

Juvenile Education Clinics

The Juvenile Division continues to facilitate Juvenile Education Clinics, structured, topic-specific sessions for youth, which have returned to in-person. From July through September, 40 youth attended the clinics and earned a total of 200 community service hours. During the Cyber Safety clinic held in July, youth learned the importance of creating and maintaining a positive digital footprint, as well as how to stay safe online.

Youth who attended the Unlock Your Potential clinic in August learned how to conquer setbacks in life and use them as motivation to set and reach goals. In September, youth who attended the Jobs 101 clinic learned proper job interview etiquette, how to complete a job application and resume, and how to address questions pertaining to a criminal record on a job application.

Upon successful attendance and completion of a Juvenile Education Clinic, youth are provided with a certificate of completion and awarded five hours of community service. There are five Juvenile Education Clinics remaining for 2023, including the three topics mentioned above, and a fourth topic, Know Your Record, which addresses the juvenile justice system.



Human Resources Lunch & Learn Recaps

July 2023: On July 17th, the West Palm Beach Fire Department hosted a CPR, AED and First Aid training for Circuit Employees.



August 2023: On August 21st, representatives from Valley National Bank presented on the topic of homeownership to Circuit employees.



Other Lunch & Learn Date:

September 2023: What is a Deferred Compensation Plan, presented by Stacey Sherbinsky, Voya Representative

New Employee Orientation



Several new employees attended the Circuit's quarterly new employee orientation, and were introduced to the Mission and Vision of the Court, the Circuit's Core Competencies, the Judicial Branch, and their role in the Circuit as Court Administration staff.

Pictured here (l to r): Michael Ficarra, Sandra Picchiello, Shawnte Neeley, Kenthia White, and Adrian Becerra.

New Hires | Employees On the Move

Welcome to the Circuit's newest employees:

July 2023

Reid Scott, Circuit Court Judge
Melissa Williams, Judicial Assistant to Judge Reid Scott
Dani Arcos, Judicial Assistant, Circuit to Judge Karen Miller
Adrian Becerra, Digital Court Reporter

August 2023

Sandra Picchiello, Family Mediator
Shawnte Neeley, Court Program Specialist II, Civil
Michael Ficarra, Digital Court Reporter
Ebony' Hutchins, Court Program Specialist II, Civil, OPS
Abigail Mitchell, Digital Court Reporter
Stephanie Swantner, Trial Court Staff Attorney

September 2023

Brianna Brandt, Assistant to Magistrate Marcus
Stuart Rimland, Supervising Trial Court Staff Attorney
Julia Saldaña, Trial Court Staff Attorney, OPS
Maritza Velez, Court Program Specialist II, Probate
Alexi Abril, Court Program Specialist II, Civil, OPS
Rossiland Johnson-West, Court Program Specialist

Employees hired into a new position/position reclassified:

July 2023

Robin Shevock, Senior Court Operations Consultant
Renee Ward, Program Coordinator, Civil
Macsson Etienne, Desktop Administrator
Kerby Pierre, Systems Administrator I

August 2023

Colette Mediavilla, Administrative Assistant – Mediation, OPS

September 2023

Debbian Livingstone, Court Program Specialist II, Probate

Administrative Orders

The following AOs were updated or created July - September 2023 (most recent to oldest):

| | | | |
|------------|-------------|--|-----------|
| 09-28-2023 | 11.109-2024 | Duty Judge Roster 2024 | |
| 09-01-2023 | 3.108 | Adoption and Implementation of Retroactive Civil Differentiated Case Management Plan for Cases Filed on or Before April 29, 2021 | (Vacated) |
| 09-01-2023 | 3.107 | Adoption and Implementation of Civil Differentiated Case Management Plan for Cases Filed on or After April 30, 2021 | (Vacated) |
| 08-23-2023 | 5.115 | Assignment of Cases Involving the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspect of International Child Abduction | |
| 08-23-2023 | 2.309 | Exemplification Certificates | |
| 08-15-2023 | 5.910 | Alternative Consequences Program for Juvenile Offenders | |
| 08-07-2023 | 12.301 | Order Temporarily Assigning the Honorable Sherri Collins as an Acting Circuit Judge | |
| 08-07-2023 | 11.110 | Appointment of Circuit Judges as Acting County Judges; Appointment of County Judges As Acting Circuit Judges | |
| 08-03-2023 | 3.110 | Adoption and Implementation of Civil Differentiated Case Management | |
| 07-27-2023 | 2.108 | Judicial Portraits for Judges Retiring from the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit | |



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