

# Circuit Courier

July-September 2007

Vol. 2007-3

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

**Youth Empowerment**

**FLAG Summit**

**Welcome New Law Clerks  
& Juvenile Alternative  
Sanctions Coordinator**

***And more...***

**The 15th Welcomes New Trial Court  
Administrator Barbara Dawicke**

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## Legislative Delegation to Take Place November 20th

**Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke** has announced the Legislative Delegation will take place Tuesday, November 20, 2007 at the Central Courthouse. This is an annual opportunity for the Fifteenth Circuit to welcome legislators, allowing for a forum for dialogue between the two branches of government.

Check-in will take place in the Judicial Dining Room between 8:30-8:45, then the delegation will observe designated court events from 9-11:00. **Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll** is working with the judges to determine the court events to be observed. Review of proposed legislation, questions, answers and commentary will take place in the Judicial Dining Room and cafeteria from 11:30-12:30, and lunch will follow, from 12:30-1:30.

All judges are invited to attend any portion of the program, and are encouraged to join for lunch, if court calendars prevent participation in the morning sessions.

Lunch will be catered by Cafe Joshua (\$10 per person, checks payable to "Fifteenth Circuit Flower Fund").

*To attend the luncheon, please reply to **Debra Oats-Ducram** no later than November 15, at (561) 355-4495.*

## Alison Litschauer to Serve as Assistant to Court Administrator

**Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke** announced the selection of **Alison N. Litschauer** to fill the position of Administrative Secretary in the Office of Court Administration, beginning October 29, 2007. Ms. Litschauer will act as Ms. Dawicke's assistant.

Ms. Litschauer earned an Associates' degree at Palm Beach Community College, then a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science/Pre-law, from Florida Atlantic University. She was most recently employed with the Palm Beach County Clerk and Comptroller's Office, and has also served as Executive Assistant to Representative Susan Bucher in the Florida House of Representatives.

*Ms. Litschauer can be reached at (561) 355-1872.*

Cover photo features the North County Courthouse



# 15TH CIRCUIT WELCOMES NEW TRIAL COURT ADMINISTRATOR BARBARA DAWICKE

September 17, 2007 marked a significant milestone for the Fifteenth Circuit, as we welcomed newly-appointed **Trial Court Administrator Barbara L. Dawicke** — the first time the Circuit has welcomed a new court administrator in 21 years.

Ms. Dawicke was selected by a panel of judges in the culmination of a nationwide search and made official in July after certification by a vote of all the judges in the Circuit. The selection committee consisted of **Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll** and **Judges Peter Blanc, Peter Evans, Edward Fine, Debra Moses Stephens** and **Jonathan Gerber**.

“Ms. Dawicke was chosen from a group of well-qualified applicants after two rounds of interviews,” Chief Judge Kroll said, adding, “We are all looking forward to working with her.”

Ms. Dawicke brings to the Circuit extensive knowledge of court management and operations. Prior to this appointment, she was Court Administrator for the Third Judicial Circuit, which encompasses seven counties in northern Florida. Before that, she was with the Eighth Judicial Circuit, a six-county circuit with the main courthouse located in Gainesville. There, she was first

*“Ms. Dawicke was chosen from a group of well-qualified applicants after two rounds of interviews,” Chief Judge Kroll said, adding, “We are all looking forward to working with her.”*

employed as a staff attorney for two years, then as a senior manager in court operations, in charge of the criminal courthouse in Alachua, for six years. She holds a law degree from the University of Florida and was a practicing attorney with Jacksonville Area Legal Aid.

The strengths that she brings to the position, in addition to her legal training, include her knowledge of and

extensive experience in the Florida State Court system, and good working relationships with the staff of the Office of the State Courts

Administrator in Tallahassee. She has a broad perspective on the purpose and functions of a trial court, having worked in small- and medium-sized circuits, and now in a large circuit.

She looks forward to the challenges and successes she anticipates meeting as Court Administrator for one of Florida’s largest circuits.

*My overall priority is “continuing the history of the Fifteenth Circuit as one of the model circuits in the state of Florida!”*

**Barbara Dawicke**

Working in a large circuit will bring challenges different than the ones she experienced in a rural circuit. In the Third Circuit, she said the challenge was that “with seven counties, we had seven of everything: seven courthouses, seven county commissions, seven clerks... We had to apportion much of our travel budget to simply getting our staff from county to county.”

From this, she brings experience in balancing competing priorities — a valuable asset for a court administrator, who sits at a crucial junction between all the individuals and programs functioning *within* our courts and all the agencies our circuit interrelates with, as well as changes in legislature and court priorities, and the needs of the citizens the courts serve.

Her first weeks were well-spent meeting the judges and staff, familiarizing herself with the existing programs and policies, touring court facilities, and identifying immediate priorities. She has attended a statewide technology conference, and has been involved in courthouse expansion progress at South County Courthouse and planning for expansion of the West County Courthouse, expected to get underway in 2008.

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# DAWICKE APPOINTED NEW COURT ADMINISTRATOR

(continued from page 3)

As we prepared for this article only three weeks into her role with the 15th Circuit, she was quick to note that it was too early to form any long-range plans — but from the experience she brings with her and from early conversations, she has a sense of certain areas likely to raise her interest.

For example, she would like to look at ways to deliver to the judges, judicial assistants and staff a case management system that is user friendly and effective. To this end, at a statewide technology conference in early October, she introduced our Circuit's technology officers to the technology officer from the Eighth Circuit so he could share a case management program that he developed, which Ms. Dawicke believes could assist in the identification and management of cases loads in all divisions. "It is an exciting prospect," she says.

Additionally, she has served on statewide work groups for court interpreting and court reporting, so brings an awareness of the issues for these programs.

With the Third and Eighth Circuits she was responsible for implementing court interpreter programs, and she serves on the Court Interpreter Certification Work Group, which is addressing the implementation of certification policies and procedures.

In the Third Circuit, Ms. Dawicke oversaw the deployment of Court Smart, a remote digital recording system with video capacity. She noted, "There has been an emphasis statewide on digital-only recording... but a question for the Court Reporting Work Group has been whether this is the direction the court system should head... There is a belief that capital cases should be covered by stenographers." Ultimately, she says, "I believe in a hybrid system," emphasizing that "it is important that the system we expand continues to be effective and cost efficient."

As for challenges she anticipates in overseeing such a large circuit, she says, "I believe we are understaffed and the court staff, which includes the judicial assistants, are underpaid. Despite the fact that we are a large circuit, we

are restricted by the schedule of positions established by the Trial Court Budget Commission and we are restricted in our ability to offer better salaries by the Legislature."

A benefit she brings to the Circuit is her strong background in criminal law. She says, "The Fifteenth has been successful in its focus on implementing Unified Family Court, and there has been less emphasis on criminal." Along these lines, one position she would like to create within the current budget is a senior staff position dedicated to criminal.

Intriguingly, prior to law, Ms. Dawicke was a biological scientist and a volunteer with the Peace Corps in central Africa. She notes that one of the things that drew her to a career in law was the opportunity for public service. "In entomology, there was little interaction with other people, other than the other scientists." She found that connection to other people and the reward of public service in law, particularly in her first job. Of her service with Jacksonville Legal Aid, she says, "That was my favorite job, because I could feel I was directly helping people — particularly people who otherwise couldn't have afforded the help." In this vein, making sure the courts are accessible to all will be a priority she is eager to uphold.

Similarly, she notes that one of the things she enjoys most about being a court administrator is the camaraderie among the trial court administrators statewide. "It is a supportive, close group," she says, "which makes it really nice. They are a great group of people who are willing to help each other out with issues or questions."

Overall, she says her priority as the Circuit's new Trial Court Administrator will be "continuing the history of the Fifteenth Circuit as one of the model circuits in the state of Florida!"

*Ms. Dawicke can be reached at the Office of the Trial Court Administrator at the Central Courthouse, (561) 355-2431.*

## STAFF HIGHLIGHT: COURT OPERATIONS MANAGER DEBRA OATS-DUCRAM



In the past 18 years with the Circuit, **Debra Oats-Ducram** has been known as Court Analyst, Deputy Court Administrator, Senior Deputy Court Administrator and, most recently, as Acting Trial Court Administrator from June, 2006 until the new Trial Court Administrator joined the Circuit this past month.

Her current, proper title is Court Operations Manager.

As a right-hand position to the Court Administrator, this is really an “umbrella” title covering a dizzying list of roles she is involved in. She is the point person for media relations; is involved in planning and management of court programs and program budgets; monitors program outputs to see that they are meeting their own objectives as well as statutory mandates; coordinates handling of special interest, high profile and change of venue cases; is involved in planning special events such as robings, retirements or the Legislative Delegation... She is involved in specialized reporting, such as judicial certification or EEO compliance... She provides information to judges, court administration, judicial committees and program managers on studies and issues related to court operations and program development... And more.

Whatever her title, those who work with her recognize her as a poised, effective professional with a quiet, elegant demeanor who one can call on when something needs to get done. With quiet professionalism, she balances competing priorities and sensitive issues — a job that, by necessity, gets done without much public notice, but is well-appreciated by those relying on her.

*“I think Debra’s history with the Circuit is invaluable. What I really appreciate is her calm, her ability to get things done and her follow through. She’s been of great assistance to me.”*

**Trial Court Administrator  
Barbara Dawicke**

“She is insightful into the various priorities within and outside of the circuit, and has a great understanding of the subtle, often unspoken dynamics within the court system,” says **Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll**.

For 15 months, while the Circuit was without an active Court Administrator, Ms. Oats-Ducram stepped into the role as Acting Trial Court Administrator. Chief Judge Kroll says, “Debra basically held the ship together. She put in extra hours... We definitely could not have done it without her.”

Debra is a native of Palm Beach County. She earned her Associates and Bachelor of Science degrees from the University of Florida. After graduation, she returned to the area, serving as a customer service representative for the City of Riviera Beach for three years before being hired by **then-Court Administrator Susan Ferrante** as a Judicial Analyst II in 1989.

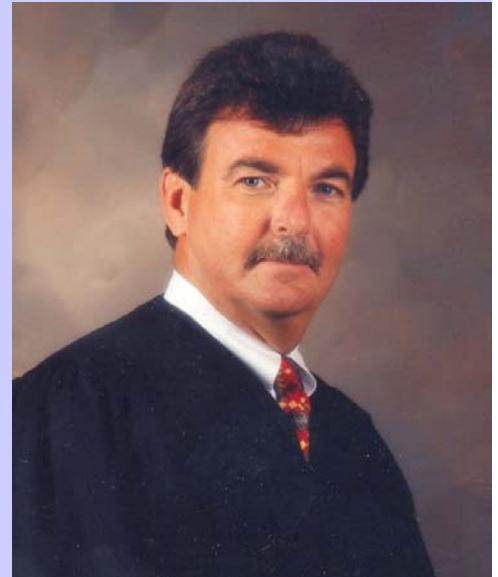
*Ms. Oats-Ducram’s office is in the Administrative Office of the Court at the Central Courthouse; she can be reached at (561) 355-4495.*

# MEET THE JUDGES

*Our newsletter generally features articles on Judges when they are first invested... So we turn the tables in this issue, highlighting the Judges who have been with the Circuit the longest — those who were first elected or appointed in the 1970's & 80's*



**Judge Edward H. Fine**  
County Judge: 1978-1986  
Circuit Judge: 1986-present  
Chief Judge: 2001-2005  
Current division: Circuit Civil



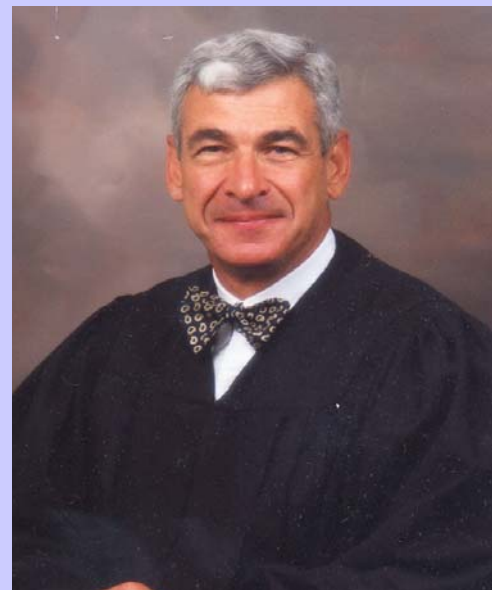
**Judge Edward A. Garrison**  
County Court: 1981-1989  
Circuit Court: 1989-present  
Current division: Circuit Criminal  
(current Circuit Criminal Administrative Judge)



**Judge Jack H. Cook**  
Circuit Court: 1981-present  
Chief Judge: 1993-1995  
Current Division: Family

*(Picture not available)*

**Judge Karen L. Martin**  
County Court: 1981-1987  
Circuit Court: 1987-current  
Current division: Probate



**Judge Richard I. Wennet**  
Circuit Judge: 1985-present  
Current division: Trial Division

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# MEET THE JUDGES

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**Judge Kathleen J. Kroll**

County Judge: 1985-1994  
Circuit Judge: 1994-current  
Chief Judge: 2005-current  
Current division: Chief Judge



**Judge John L. Phillips**

County Judge: 1986-1990  
Circuit Judge: 1990-present  
Current division: Probate (South  
County Courthouse)



**Judge Stephen A. Rapp**

Circuit Judge: 1988-present  
Current Division: Family



**Judge Richard L. Oftedal**

Circuit Court: 1988-present  
Chief Judge: 1995-1997  
Current division: Family, Probate  
(North County Courthouse)



**Judge Peter Evans**

County Judge: 1989-present  
Current division: County Civil  
(current County Civil Administrative  
Judge)

*In the next issue:  
look for Judges  
elected or appointed  
in the 1990's.*

## 15TH HOSTS GENERAL COUNSEL MEETING

On August 27, 2007, **General Counsel Amy Borman** organized and hosted a day-long conference for the General Counsels and Senior Staff Attorneys from around the state.

This was the first such meeting of the General Counsels and focused on various issues facing the judiciary, including implementation of new legislation, public records, ethics, e-filing and the role of the General Counsel.

Presentations were made by **General Counsel Laura Rush** and **Senior Staff Attorney Gregg Smith** from the Office of State Court Administrators, **Attorney Lauren Liebman** of the Fourth District Court of Appeal, **General Counsel Elaine New** of the Sixth Judicial Circuit, and **Senior Staff Attorney Nancy Isenberg** from the Second Circuit.

The Fifteenth Circuit's Technology Department was instrumental in coordinating video conferencing and assembling conference materials.

*Ms. Borman can be reached at (561) 355-1927.*



Elaine New, General Counsel, 6th Circuit.



General Counsel & Senior Staff Attorneys.

## LAW CLERKS' SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

On September 28, 2007, trial court law clerks **Nicole Kantor**, **Jacqueline Wood**, **Enrique Nieves** and **Jessica Packett** were sworn in as members of the Florida Bar at a ceremony administered by **Judge Jonathan Gerber**.

**General Counsel Amy Borman** read a passage entitled "What is an Attorney", and family members from South Florida, Washington D.C. and Atlanta, Georgia were present to show their love and support at this momentous occasion.

The ceremony was attended by **Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll**, **Judge Karen Martin**, **Judge David French**, **Judge Robin Rosenberg**, **Judge Peter Evans**, **Judge Sandra Bosso-Pardo** and **Judge Janis Keyser**.



Jessica Packett, Enrique Nieves, Jaqueline Wood, Nicole Kantor



Judge Jonathon Gerber congratulates Jaqueline and Jessica.



# LAW CLERK PROGRAM: WELCOME NEW LAW CLERKS

On September 4, 2007, the 2007-2009 Trial Court Law Clerks started their clerkships with the court. We are very excited to introduce the following new clerks:



**Enrique Nieves:** Enrique attended law school at Pennsylvania State University where he was a Dean Academic Achievement Scholar, the recipient of the Fine Family Memorial Scholarship, and the Vice President of the Minority Law Students Association. While a visiting student at Emory University School of Law, he was involved in the Hispanic National Bar Association and the 2007 Moot Court Competition. He received his BS in History from Coppin State University in Baltimore, where he was a starting guard in the NCAA Division 1 Men's Basketball and a starting center fielder in the NCAA Division 1 Men's Baseball (great addition to the lawyer-judge softball tournament!). He clerked for Judge Bonapfel of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in the Northern District of Georgia and the Chief Counsel's Office for the Pennsylvania Department of State in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Prior to attending law school, Enrique was a Juvenile Probation and Parole specialist with the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. First assignment: Civil Division.



**Jessica Packett:** Jessica received her BBA, magna cum laude, from James Madison University and her JD from George Mason University School of Law in Arlington, Virginia where she served as a Writing Fellow, a Moot Court Board member, a *Journal of Law, Economics & Policy* member, and the Hispanic Law Students Association Community Services Director. As a Domestic Relations Legal Clinic participant, Jessica assisted pro se clients handle uncontested divorces and shadowed her mentor attorney on several Guardian Ad Litem assignments. Jessica was a semi-finalist in the First Year Moot Court Competition, received an award for Best Appellate Brief, and was selected as the recipient of the Virginia Trial Lawyers' Association Student Advocacy Award in May, 2007. Jessica interned with Judge Andrea M. Simonton of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida and Judge Claude M. Hilton of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. She also worked as a law clerk for the law firm of Finkelstein, Thompson LLP in Washington D.C. First assignment: Probate/Juvenile/Family/County Divisions.



**Nicole Kantor:** Nicole received her BA degree in History from Northwestern University and her law degree from the George Washington University Law School, where she was a Merit Scholar and a member of the Jewish Law Students Association. Nicole served as a judicial clerk for Administrative Judge Abigail Coleman in the Washington, D.C., Field Office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and was a summer associate with the law firm of Sachs, Sax & Klein in Boca Raton. Nicole also worked as a legal assistant for Agora Publishers in Maryland, where she researched the First Amendments rights of publishers. First assignment: Criminal Division.



**Curt Sanchez:** Curt graduated from Georgia State University College of Law where he was on the moot court team and was a graduate research assistant. Curt was part of the Urban Fellows Program in the Center for the Comparative Study of Metropolitan Growth, received the CALI Excellence for the Future Awards for both Criminal Procedure and International Human Rights Law, and was a member of the Student Bar Association and the Environmental Law Society. Curt received his BS degree in Education from the University of Georgia and a MS degree in Public Administration from North Georgia College and State University. He is also a former professional soccer player with the Federacion Venezolana Futbol. First assignment: Probate/Juvenile/Family/County.

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# WELCOME NEW LAW CLERKS

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**Jackie Wood:** Jackie received her law degree from the George Washington University Law School where she was the Notes Editor for the *Public Contract Law Journal*. Her student note, "Government Contractor Ethics: The Need for a More Detailed Regulatory Scheme" was published in March, 2007. Jackie was a member of the Student Bar Association Student Recruitment Committee and a member of the Criminal Law Society. Jackie received her BA in Biology from the University of Miami where she was a National Merit Scholar. She was recently recognized for receiving the highest bar score of all those who sat for the bar with home addresses within the Fourth District Court of Appeal's jurisdiction and was invited to speak at the 4th DCA's induction on October 8th. First assignment: Civil Division.



**Adelina Ruiz Baez:** Adelina graduated Summa Cum Laude from the Herbert H. Lehman College - CUNY with a BA in Political Science and Philosophy. She received her JD from Indiana University School of Law where she was a Notes Editor for the *Federal Communication Law Journal*, a member of the International Law Society, and the Treasurer of the Latino Law Student Association. Adelina has interned with the Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C., the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center in Miami and was a Teaching Assistant in Legal Research and Writing at Indiana University School of Law. First assignment: Criminal Division.

Another new addition to the Trial Court Law Clerks is **Jeanne Bennett, Esq.**, who started working with the court in July. Says **General Counsel Amy Borman**, "While Jeanne was initially brought on just to help out over the summer, we are happy that she became an official part of the program in August."



**Jeanne Bennett:** Jeanne received her law degree from St. Thomas University School of Law where she was Executive Editor of the *Intercultural Human Rights Law Review*, President of International Moot Court and brief writer for the Philip C. Jessup International Moot Court Team. Jeanne was also a summer intern for the Honorable Frank A. Shepherd of the Third District Court of Appeal. Prior to law school, Jeanne was a Vice President of Insurance Archaeology Group in New York City, a consulting firm that reconstructs the historic insurance portfolios of companies with various legal liabilities. Jeanne received her BA degree in English Literature from Fordham University. First assignment: Civil Division.

# JUSTICE TEACHING INITIATIVE

Members of the Florida Bar have registered in record numbers to assist teachers in Palm Beach County Schools with the Justice Teaching Initiative begun this year by Florida's Supreme Court **Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis**.

Attorneys who complete a program of certification become eligible to work with educators in areas such as teaching Civics, which includes an exploration of the judicial branch of government, running mock trials in schools and working with Law Magnate and other special programs. These attorneys bring their expertise to assist teachers in providing instruction in areas involving constitutional issues and questions about the Judicial Branch of government.

Recent surveys (ABA poll) showed that only 59% of Floridians could correctly identify the three branches of government; 22% of Americans gave the answer "Democrat, Republican and Independents" as the most common incorrect response. Similarly, 38% of American adults believe the President has the power to ignore U.S. Supreme Court rulings if the President believes it would impede his desires. A Florida Bar poll showed 46% of Floridians identified "separation of powers" as the system of checks and balances. Thirty five percent of Americans think each branch of government has power but the President has final word.

Four training sessions have been scheduled to help expedite the number of attorneys who need to complete the training process (October 25, November 6, November 15 and November 30). All sessions will be held in the Judicial Dining Room at the Main Courthouse, from 3 – 6 pm. Pre-registration is required by contacting **John E. McGovern, Court Education Program Consultant** (561) 355-1537 or Email: [jmcgover@co.palm-beach.fl.us](mailto:jmcgover@co.palm-beach.fl.us).

General information on the statewide Justice Teaching initiative is available at <http://www.justiceteaching.org>

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## JUDICIAL ASSISTANTS PREPARING FOR BENCH BAR



A group of Judicial Assistants gathered with General Counsel **Amy Borman** over lunch on October 2, to coordinate preparations for morning "break out" sessions at the annual Bench Bar Conference, held October 12, 2007.

Judicial Assistants attending the Bench Bar meet with legal assistants from area law firms during morning sessions, which is a tremendous opportunity to share special procedures and issues, seeking to make the judicial process more efficient.



## FLAG Holds Annual Goal Setting Meeting

On September 25, 2007, the Fifteenth Circuit's Family Law Advisory Group (FLAG) held its Annual Goal Setting Meeting for 2007-08 at the Central Courthouse.

FLAG was established in 2002 to identify subject matter and formulate subcommittees who will meet to problem-solve, brainstorm alternative approaches, create learning opportunities, work to settle inter-agency conflicts and resolve questions regarding Unified Family Court processes. Members include judges, court staff, members of the Bar, social service providers, local community leaders and other interested persons and organizations.

The September meeting was well-attended. Two working committees were established: one regarding Unified Family Court and the other regarding Domestic Violence.



Judge Catherine Brunson, Michelle Spangenberg, Nicole Saunders, Tom Sasser, Jean Adel-Williams, Mary Hurm-Quinlan, Tami Augen.

*For more information or to participate on a FLAG committee, please contact Nicole Saunders at (561) 355-1764.*

## CRISTY ALTARO JOINS CIRCUIT AS JUVENILE ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS COORDINATOR



**Cristy Lynn Altaro** joined the Fifteenth Circuit as the new Juvenile Alternative Sanctions Coordinator, starting August 12, 2007.

Born and raised in the Northeast, Ms. Altaro holds a Master's Degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Rutgers University in New Jersey.

She relocated to Palm Beach County three years ago, and began working as a Juvenile Probation Officer in October of 2004. While working at the Department of Juvenile Justice in the Delray Beach Field Office, she supervised an average caseload of 80-100 youth in the Boynton Beach area. In September of 2006, she earned the

Circuit Employee of the Month Award and was later named Employee of the Quarter.

Her past employment included providing counseling services to at-risk youth in a residential facility in Northern Virginia. While in Virginia, she also worked part-time as a community-based therapist, providing intensive, in-home services to at-risk youth and their families. In her spare time, Ms. Altaro has mentored youth, enjoys numerous outdoor activities and is an avid sports and music fan.

*Ms. Altaro's office is on the second floor of the Juvenile Wing at the Central Courthouse. She can be reached at (561) 355-6586.*

## FLAG Summit: The ABC's of Education and Unified Family Court

On Friday, September 14, 2007 the 15<sup>th</sup>'s Family Law Advisory Group (FLAG), hosted a Summit wherein 150 Court-related

*"We are each  
holding a part of  
a safety net, so  
that no child  
falls..."*

*Florida Supreme  
Court  
Justice Barbara  
Pariente*

partners met to discuss the interface between the Court and the School Board. The keynote speaker was **Justice Barbara Pariente** and she indicated that "we are each holding a part of a safety net, so that no child falls." Superintendent **Arthur Johnson** presented on the status of the School District as well as areas needing improvement. The Chief Judge challenged the group with the following statement, "before you leave here today, connect with someone from another group."



Arthur Johnson, Justice Pariente, Chief Judge Kroll, Tami Augen



Judge Martin Colin



Magistrate Tom Baker and Iola Mosley



Tom Sasser

The morning consisted of a policy makers discussion, moderated by **Thomas Sasser, Esq.** The panel included **Representative Susan Bucher, Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll, Justice Pariente, Dr. Cover** with the School District, **Jody Gleason**, Executive Director of the Education Commission, **Iola Mosley**, General Counsel for the School District and **Jose Rodriguez** with the School District. Topics discussed were Domestic Violence Injunctions, access to records (including the most current Court Order), Guardian Ad Litem verses Attorney Ad Litem, social services available to litigants, visitation exchange on school premises and child abduction at bus stops. Many of these issues were tackled at the F.L.A.G. meeting on September 25, 2007.

During the lunch hour, participants were mixed from each sector and were given a "homework assignment" wherein they had to identify three problem areas impacting Unified Family Court and the School Board. Each table was afforded the opportunity to present their issues. Some of the issues raised included, establishment and funding for diversion programs and educating all stakeholders on the Schools' Ed Line program.

The afternoon consisted of a session on Drafting and Interpreting Settlement Agreements and Court Orders by General Magistrates **Diane M. Kirigin** and **Thomas R. Baker, III**. Additionally, Honorable **Martin H. Colin** presented on Interpretation, Application and Enforcement of Domestic Violence Injunctions. Each session was followed by a question and answer session.

Evaluation Forms concluded that the Summit was beneficial and productive.

## Dependency Mediation

As part of the Community Alliance Child Welfare Review Subcommittee, a new dependency mediation process will be instituted in all qualifying dependency cases in the 15<sup>th</sup> Circuit, scheduled to begin November 1st, 2007.

The majority of cases will be referred to mediation at the time of the shelter hearing (with the exception of cases regarding egregious abuse or cases going for an expedited Termination of Parental Rights proceeding.) Within 21 days, the mediation will occur and the mediator will facilitate a meeting where a case plan will be developed based on the maltreatment of the child, with all parties involved working together.

Instituting mediation for all cases this early in the process will allow the case plan disposition and arraignment hearings to be combined into one, saving the family from having to come to an additional court appearance and maximizing judicial resources.

The goal of dependency mediation is also to engage the family more quickly and to develop specialized case plans that meet the needs of the family with the hope that reunification may be achieved sooner.

In addition to mediation, it is the desire of the Community Alliance subcommittee dealing with Child Welfare Reform that families are referred to up-front services at the time of shelter. Since Domestic Violence and Mental Health or Substance Abuse are the issues bringing the majority of children into care, these are the primary services that will be offered at the time of the shelter hearing. The goal is to have services in place for families as soon as possible so that (if indicated) reunification of the family may be achieved in a more timely manner which will reduce the length of time a child is in the care of the state.

*If you have any further questions, please contact **Nicole Saunders** at (561) 355-1764.*

## 2007 Dependency Summit

The statewide 2007 Dependency Summit occurred on September 5-7, 2007.

Attendees had the pleasure of listening to speakers **Governor Charlie Crist**, **Robert A. Butterworth** (Secretary of the Department of Children and Families) and **Justice Peggy A. Quince**.

Participants were given the opportunity to choose from several workshops. Circuit Breakout sessions enabled all of the conference participants from the Fifteenth Circuit to collaborate regarding an Action Plan on pertinent issues in the Dependency System.

**Nicole Saunders** (Operations Manager of Unified Family Court), **Mary Quinlan** (Social Services Coordinator) and **Michelle Spangenberg** (Family Court Manager) presented on Unified Family Court Social Service Coordination-Intersection of Dependency, Delinquency, Domestic Violence and Family Systems.

Attendees learned how to design and structure a system of coordination and collaboration between multiple agencies and professionals, why such a system is beneficial to all the parties involved, and strategies and tools to help them implement a similar program in their jurisdictions.

*If you have any further questions, please contact **Nicole Saunders** at (561) 355-1764, **Michelle Spangenberg** at (561) 355-4657, or **Mary Quinlan** at (561) 355-1925.*



## New: Independent Living Court

**Judge Peter Blanc** demonstrated his passion and commitment for children aging out of foster care by initiating the establishment of an Independent Living Court in his division.

Judge Blanc recognized the need for foster care youth to have individualized attention during this critical turning point as they transition out of the Dependency system.

Implementation meetings began March, 2007 and consisted of stakeholders from Legal Aid Society, Department of Children and Families, social service agencies, Guardian Ad Litem, Court Administration staff, Department of Juvenile Justice and the Clerk's Office. Meetings were held on a monthly basis and everyone was afforded the opportunity to provide input.

The first Court docket consisted of approximately half a dozen cases. All of the stakeholders and participants uniformly praised Judge Blanc for his ability to connect with the youth and for creating an environment that allowed the youth to voice their concerns.



Judge Peter Blanc, Juvenile Division

By way of example, one case in particular was a child on “runaway” status since April 28, 2006. She appeared before Judge Blanc and immediately the judge was able to engage her and gain her trust. Preceding this intervention, several agencies have tried to assist this child without success. In fact, during a prior Court hearing this same child had become so agitated by the judicial process that she flipped over a table and absconded from Court. During the Independent Living hearing Judge Blanc ascertained her interest in culinary arts and has gone the extra step of looking into the possibility of funding for her to attend culinary school.

Across the State, jurisdictions have recognized the need for Independent Living Courts and have found that they are truly beneficial.

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## Family Connection

The Keeping Children Safe Act was signed into law by **Governor Charlie Crist** on June 12, 2007 and went into effect on July 1, 2007.

This act includes many new protections for children in sexual abuse cases and also includes provisions for the development of new statewide standards for supervised visitation.

One such standard is that all supervised visitation programs are to be in compliance with the Florida Supreme Court's Minimum Standards for supervised visitation programs until statewide standards are developed. Family Connection is proud to report that the program is in compliance with the minimum standards and continues to strive to enhance services to better serve the children and families ordered into the program.

*If you have any further questions, please contact Mary Quinlan at 355-1925.*

## PARENTING COORDINATOR TRAINING

The 15th Circuit's Alternative Dispute Resolution **Director Tom Caprio** welcomed 23 outstanding mental health professionals to its Parenting Coordinator Training on August 3-5, at the Central Courthouse.

The parenting coordination program focuses on protecting children from parental conflict and parental alienation when the parents are no longer together; it supports healthy child development by educating the parents in this new role of co-parenting. The goal is to minimize the damage done to children during and after a divorce.

**Connie Ingram, Ph.D., LMHC** spoke on the psychological issues inherent in separation/divorce, and the changing family dynamic, and the positive impact a parenting coordinator can have on the well being and behavior of the children. Dr. Ingram outlined the many harmful effects divorce has on children – such as a pervasive sense of loss, anxiety, a feeling of rejection, conflicted loyalties, etc.



ADR Director Tom Caprio welcomes attendees.



Parenting Coordinators enjoying the training.

**Paul Schweinler, LMHC, DAPA** addressed the techniques and strategies that can be used when dealing with high conflict families during parenting coordinating sessions, and what issues might arise or effect the parents in the process.

The role of the parenting plan in the PC process and the sensitive issue of where and how to use outside experts effectively was discussed by **Donna Donato, LCSW, CAP**, who has a wide area of expertise providing therapeutic services to clients involved in the judicial system.

**Hugh Leavell, Ph.D, LMFT**, spoke plainly and definitively about structuring the process, and the importance of redefining the parent's relationship towards the "business" of securing the best interest of the children. The parenting coordinator makes it clear in the initial session that courtesy and respect is expected of both parties. Negotiation and cooperation are desired behaviors; insult and conflict are not. Attention is kept on the task at hand, a parenting agreement that allows for the best interest of the child. This, he said should be made clear at the start of the process and should be emphasized throughout subsequent meetings.

**Laurie Pine Farber, LCSW**, a veteran parenting coordinator, who has had many experiences with high conflict clients shared her "bag of tricks" for dealing with this type of behavior.

**Doreen Bonadies Halickman, R.N., Esq** spoke about the parenting coordinating program from an attorney's perspective. She also addressed the local/ State/ Province Family Law as it may pertain to the parenting coordinating process.

Other presenters included **Beth Cutler, LMHC**, and ADR director Tom Caprio, who moderated the training and spoke of the court-specific procedures.

*For more information, contact Tom Caprio at (561) 355-2739*

## VOLUNTEER MEDIATOR TRAINING



**Judge Janis Brustares Keyser** and **Judge Peter Evans** open the volunteer mediators' training on "Current Issues Affecting Small Claims Court" on September 28, 2007.



Small Claims Mediators learn about anger management skills from expert, **Caryn Immler** at a training session held July 27th, 2007.





## CRIMINAL DRUG COURT REPORTS SUCCESSES

*“Once our participants become involved in treatment and begin working a strong recovery program, there are no limits to what they can accomplish.”*

**Dorrie Tyng**  
Drug Court Coordinator

The Fifteenth Circuit’s Criminal Drug Court has significantly impacted our community by reducing incarceration costs and jail overcrowding, reducing the impact of repeat offenders on the criminal justice system and freeing jail space for more serious offenders.

The benefits of Drug Court to the offender are clear: break the cycle of drug addiction, end drug-related criminal activities, retain/obtain employment, maintain

driver’s license, avoid incarceration, and resolve criminal charges without a conviction. To date, 778 participants have successfully graduated from the Drug Court Program, with a recidivism rate of only 8%.

A September, 2007 graduate, who was once a heroin addict, is now married, employed and has just purchased his first house. A 35-year old male graduate was proud to let us know that, for the first time in his life, he has his own apartment and pays all of his bills by himself. With 99% of our graduates employed or enrolled in school, they are actively participating in society and not becoming a tax burden, thereby benefiting the entire community.

Another current participant reports that she had an 8-year, daily crack cocaine habit and had just learned she was pregnant when arrested for drug possession. In August 2007, she gave birth to a healthy, drug-free baby girl and remains in our program, working hard towards graduation. Since 2000, 25 drug-free babies have been born to female participants, thus obviating the substantial medical and social service cost (estimated at a minimum of \$250,000 per baby) required to care for a drug-addicted infant.

*For more information, contact **Dorrie Tyng, Drug Court Coordinator** at (561) 688-4530*

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM RECRUITING

Special recruitment is underway for volunteers to assist with the Courthouse Tour Program (three to six hours per week, working in a team of three persons) and the Volunteer Guardianship Court Visitor Program, which renders service to the Guardianship Division of the Court. Fingerprint and background screen are required for participation in these two programs.

Monthly statistics for the volunteer program indicate that, on average, 85 volunteers donate approximately 1,100 hours each month to various court programs and activities. The courts would benefit from nearly double that, in order to fully meet all current needs.

Our dedicated volunteers donate approximately \$250,000 of contributed services each year to the courts in Palm Beach County. The Volunteer Office also accepts referrals from the Area Agency on Aging in its recruitment of volunteers.

Anyone interested in more information can visit the website listed below, where a listing of all current volunteer opportunities is available, as well as a Volunteer Services Application Form.

[http://www.pbcgov.com/cadmin/court\\_programs/volunteer/index.html](http://www.pbcgov.com/cadmin/court_programs/volunteer/index.html)

*A completed volunteer application may be sent to: **John E. McGovern**, 15th Judicial Circuit Volunteer Program Supervisor, 205 North Dixie Highway, Room 5.1709, West Palm Beach, FL 33401; or call: (561)355-1537.*

# COURT EDUCATION: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The Office of Court Education collaborated with the Criminal Justice Commission and several municipalities during the summer months to bring youth groups to the Main Courthouse for the purpose of learning about the judicial branch of government. These anti-gang and anti-violence initiatives within the various major municipalities brought 150 youth to the court for an experience of judicial education provided by **Court Education Program Consultant John McGovern**, a courthouse tour, a mock trial and a meeting with one of the Juvenile Judges. **Katherine Hatos, Criminal Justice Analyst with the Criminal Justice Commission**, assisted in coordinating the visits.

The municipalities of Lake Worth, Riviera Beach, West Palm Beach and Boynton Beach participated in the program during the summer. Their efforts on behalf of youth will continue throughout the school year when they hope to continue their connections with the courts.

Each participant completed an evaluation at the conclusion of the visit. Some responses included:

## *The best part of this experience?*

- “The visit to the holding cell...a place I want to avoid!”
- “When I got to play the part of the Judge”
- “When I got to talk to the Judge and he had me sing for him”
- “When Judge Baker talked to us about our education.”

## *What new information did I acquire from this visit?*

- “The jury duty part of being a citizen”
- “How many different courts there are in the system”
- “How on top of things the judge needs to be”
- “I learned what it takes to be a Judge”
- “That there were very few black judges”

*Groups wishing to arrange for a courthouse tour should call the Office of Court Education at (561)355-1537.*



Lake Worth Youth Empowerment Group visited the Courthouse for summer tour experience



Riviera Beach Youth Empowerment Group poses for group photo prior to meeting with Judge Moses Baker.



Court Education Program Consultant John McGovern coaches Defense Attorney Tamika while Judge Adria prepares to rule.



West Palm Beach Youth Empowerment Mock Trial-Witness Shameka listens as Judge Adria rules on objection by prosecution.

## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

On September 28, 2007, court employees were honored for their long-standing service at the annual employee recognition breakfast.

**Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll** addressed the group, praising the employees for choosing a career in public service.



**Laverne Mosley**, Family Mediator (15 years) and **Sean Logsdon**, Court Interpreter (5 years)

**Court Administrator Barbara L. Dawicke** awarded certificates and service pins to those who had attained 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 or 35 years of service.

Approximately 100 employees marked a milestone in their service with court at this year's event.



**Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll** congratulates **Phil Smith** for 36 years of service.

## 2007 Open Enrollment for State Employees

The Human Resource Department would like to thank each of you for your participation during the 2007-2008 Open Enrollment for State Group Insurance.

As a reminder, benefits confirmation statements will be mailed to anyone who made election changes. Individuals will have until 5:30 p.m. Eastern Time, Friday, November 9, 2007, to make corrections to confirmation statements.

*You can contact the People First Service Center at (866) 663-4735 to speak to a specialist Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Eastern Time.*

## Automated Attendance Reporting System

By now all state employees should have access to the web-based Automated Attendance Reporting System. The system was designed to provide an automated solution for tracking leave and attendance information. The new system has allowed each State employee to submit a time sheet electronically. Therefore, employees will no longer be required to send their individual time sheets to HR for processing. It has also helped our agency to eliminate the storage of paper timesheets. Once you get the hang of the system you will enjoy it.

The URL is:

<https://timeattendance.flcourts.org/timeattendanceC15>.

If you are unable to log into the system due to technical issues or you have lost your User ID, or Log In password, please email Letitia McDonald and the information will be provided to you.

*If you need assistance, please contact Letitia McDonald at (561) 355-1847.*

## Insurance, Retirement & DROP

We would also like to thank those who met with our local Capital Insurance Representative Christopher Nelson. Christopher Nelson is available throughout the year to help you with portable life insurance, retirement planning and DROP issues.

If you would like to schedule an appointment with Mr. Nelson, please contact him directly at (800) 940-5656 or (954) 218-9959.

*If you have any questions regarding these, or other HR issues, please contact Krista Garber, Human Resources Manager at (561) 355-2154.*



## New Hires

Juan ("Juan Carlos") Alvarado  
Court Interpreter  
8/20/07

Adelina Baez  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
9/4/07

Jeanne Bennett  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
7/2/07

Donna Blanco  
Administrative Assistant II  
9/24/07

Barbara L. Dawicke  
Trial Court Administrator  
9/10/07  
(see article, page 3)

Jacqueline Wood  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
9/4/07

Andrea Grimes  
Administrative Secretary I  
7/16/07

Johnna Hochella  
County Court Judicial Assistant  
8/22/07

Ryan "Curt" Sanchez  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
9/4/07

Kalli Archondis  
Legal Secretary  
7/6/07

Kim Rosin  
Circuit Court Judicial Assistant  
9/4/07

Nicole Kantor  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
9/4/07

Rhoda Jones  
Budget Specialist  
8/20/07

Lorenzo Lowe  
Administrative Secretary I  
7/16/07

Gabriel Munoz  
Court Program Specialist I  
9/24/07

Enrique Nieves  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
9/4/07

Jessica Packett  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
9/4/07

## Transfers

Sharon Davis  
Accountant I  
7/12/07

Julia Wyda Ledis  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
8/2/07

## Separations

Linda Brown  
County Judicial Assistant  
7/31/07

Andrea Gardner  
Circuit Court Judicial Assistant  
7/19/07

Linda McGowen  
Court Program Specialist I  
7/13/07

Gail Tindel  
Administrative Secretary I  
7/13/07

Jennifer Hogue  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
8/31/07

Sara Leroy Jones  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
7/24/07

Rangile Santiago  
Trial Court Law Clerk  
7/31/07

Dorothy Schwab  
Senior Secretary  
7/31/07

Farhana Peck  
Budget Specialist  
7/13/07

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### November

**6th** Justice Teaching Training  
(3-6 p.m., *Judicial Dining Room* )

**12th** Courts Closed

**15th** Justice Teaching Training  
(3-6 p.m., *Judicial Dining Room* )

**22nd & 23rd** Courts Closed

**28th** Diversity and Fairness Training  
(*Court Staff Group Two, Central Courthouse 5th floor,*  
9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.)

**30th** Justice Teaching Training  
(3-6 p.m. *Judicial Dining Room*)

### December

**7th** Diversity and Fairness Training  
(*Judges/Magistrates Group Two, with Safety & Security*  
*presentation at lunch*)

**12th** PBCBA/Forum Club of Palm Beaches luncheon  
with guest speaker U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence  
Thomas  
(*limited seating; Judges must r.s.v.p. to attend*)

**24th & 25th** Courts Closed

## ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

### Reminder:

A.O. 2.033-8/93 specifies that "All judgments and/or orders filed in this Circuit shall specify the name and address of all persons who are to receive copies." The Chief Judge has issued a reminder to court staff and attorneys that listing "copies supplied to all counsel" or similar is not acceptable.

The following Administrative Orders are new or were recently updated:

Administrative Order 2.009-6/07: Companion, Refiled, and Transferred Cases has been amended

Administrative Order 2.011-8/07: Court Reporting Services has been amended

Administrative Order 3.021 - 9/07: Uniform Motion Calendar Practice in Circuit Civil

Administrative Order 5.006-7/07: Temporary Relief In Family Division, has been amended, with request from Chief Judge that this change be posted in relevant divisions

Administrative Order 6.012-7/07: Matters to be filed in Probate and Guardianship Division has been amended

For a complete list of Administrative Orders, visit:  
[www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/cadmin](http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/cadmin)

