Circuit Courier

July-September 2008 Vol. 2008-3

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

Welcome Judge Schramm Cox

Conference of Judges

South County Courthouse move

Dependency Summit

And more...

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2008



On the Cover:

The South County Courthouse entrance at dawn. Photo by Matt Dreiss, Court Technology

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IN OUR COMMUNITY

Lily Chang started her tenure as a law clerk with the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit on June 4, 2007



Lily is the sole law clerk assigned to the

North County courthouse. Primarily, she handles matters in probate, guardianship and family but also works with the civil judges at the Central courthouse on appeals.

Recently Lily and other members of the Palm Beach County Bar's Young Lawyer's Section volunteered at **Café Joshua**, a restaurant for the homeless. John Whittles, President of the Palm Beach County Bar Young Lawyers Section, spearheaded the group's involvement.

The guests at Café Joshua have the privilege of eating at the restaurant because they are taking steps to learn vocational skills in a structured program. As a volunteer, Lily serves as wait staff and sits with the guests. There is a certified chef who prepares a healthful menu with a variety of choices in several courses.

Some of the attorneys who attended also gave practical legal presentations afterwards to the attendees.

Lily said, "I thought it would be an ordinary soup kitchen, but the individuals who came to the meal were well-spoken and respectful. Entire families with young children were there. I could tell it took some pride-swallowing for many of them to come. However, the restaurant helps restore some sense of dignity during a tough time. It was a pleasure to serve them because they are all working hard to get their lives back on track."

We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give. Winston Churchill

CONFERENCE OF CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES 2008

The Conference of Circuit Court Judges was held this year on August 4th-6th in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Florida Statute 26.55, requires that conference members meet regularly to:

- 1. Consider and make recommendations concerning the betterment of the judicial system of the state and its various parts;
- Consider and make recommendations concerning the improvement of rules and methods of procedure and practice in the several courts; and
- 3. Report to the Supreme Court such findings and recommendations as the conference may have with reference thereto.

Not only is this a wonderful opportunity for Florida's Circuit Judges to receive continuing education but it is also their opportunity to make



recommendations to the legislature regarding any "defects in the laws of this state." (F.S. 26.55(3)(b)).

The Conference is attended annually by as many as 400 circuit judges. Many of the circuit judges from the 15th Judicial Circuit, Palm Beach County attended.

At this year's meeting, **Judge Peter Blanc** was voted as Chair-elect, so he will become the Conference Chair next year.

In addition to calling meetings and appointing committees, it is the responsibility of the Conference Chair to report conference recommendations for improvement of the judicial system to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

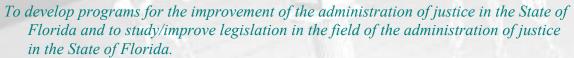
For more information on the Florida Conference of Circuit Court Judges please visit the web site at: http://www.flcircuitconference.com/index.htm

CONFERENCE OF COUNTY COURT JUDGES 2008

The summer meeting of the **Conference of County Court Judges** was held this year on July 23-25, 2008 in Naples, Florida.

Although not required by statute, conference members meet regularly:





To acquire and disseminate information to all County Court Judges for the improvement of their courts, practice and procedure.

To provide a unified voice for the County Court Judges of Florida in their dealings with the Legislature, Executive Branch, Supreme Court, State agencies and the citizenry of Florida.

The Conference is attended annually by many of the county judges from the 15th judicial circuit, several of whom volunteer to serve on committees.



Judge Peter Evans is the Dean of the Traffic Adjudication Lab which is an annual 5 day educational program of the Conference.

Judge Reggie Corlew is the current 15th judicial circuit representative for the Conference

Judge Janis Keyser is the current 4th DCA vice-president of the Conference. **Judge Jeffrey Colbath** and **Judge Edward Garrison** (now Circuit Court Judges) are past presidents of the Conference.

There are nineteen county court judges in Palm Beach County. Their jurisdiction is spelled out in Florida Statute 34.01.

The judges are: Nelson E. Bailey, Ted Booras, Sandra Bosso-Pardo, Frank S. Castor, II, Cory J. Ciklin, Barry Cohen, Reginald Corlew, Sheree Cunningham, Paul D'Amico, Mark Eissey, Peter Evans, Donald Hafele, Laura Johnson, Janis Keyser, James Martz, Joe Marx, Paul Moyle, Nancy Perez, Debra Moses Stephens.



Judge Ciklin



Judge Evans



Judge Corlew



Judge Keyser

15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT WELCOMES NEWLY APPOINTED JUDGE JACK SCHRAMM COX

Judge Jack Schramm Cox took the bench on September 15, 2008, as a Circuit Judge in the civil division.

Prior to his appointment to the bench, Judge Cox was a sole practitioner specializing in litigation and appeals in the areas of construction law, real estate law and complex commercial litigation. He was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1978 and is admitted to practice in the Federal Courts and the United States Supreme Court.

Judge Cox received his law degree from the Cumberland School of Law, Birmingham, Alabama and undergraduate degree from Florida State University.

Judge Cox's first assignment is to Circuit Civil 'AN' on the 10th floor of the main judicial center.



His judicial assistant is Carol Hall, who has worked for Judge Cox for seven and a half years.

"PUBLIC CITIZEN OF THE YEAR": MAGISTRATE DIANE KIRIGIN

On March 14, 2008 **General Magistrate Diane M. Kirigin** was honored by the National Association of Social Workers, Palm Beach Unit as "Public Citizen of the Year" for her work and efforts on behalf of the mental health community. Specifically recognized was her outstanding service on behalf of individuals afflicted with mental issues or substance abuse who are involved with the Mental Health Division of our Circuit Court.

Senator Dave Aronberg was honored at the same event as "Public Official of the Year" for his legislative efforts in the area of domestic violence protection.

Cynthia Meyers-Rubin, Co-Chair of N.A.S.W., Palm Beach Unit presenting the award to General Magistrate Diane M. Kirigin (right).



SOUTH COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Over the Fourth of July weekend 2008, the South County Courthouse closed and moved into the 75,000 square foot new addition located on the south side of the existing courthouse.

The courthouse reopened Monday, July 7 in the addition connected directly to the existing courthouse built in 1989, which will be renovated in the final phase of the project.

Judge Donald Hafele was pleased with the move and said, "Thanks to the moving team led by Don Droddy, the transition was very smooth. The new courthouse is a great place to work and very much state of the art. I'm glad to be among the first judges to preside here."

Magistrates Diane Kirigin and Tom Baker said, "We love the new Hearing Rooms. They are configured much more like a traditional courtroom."

When the final phase is complete some offices will move once again, however, the judiciary, courtrooms, hearing rooms and law library will all stay in this new addition.



South County Courthouse entrance. Photo by: Linda Sims



Magistrates Diane Kirigin and Tom Baker; Judges James Martz, John Phillips, Donald Hafele and Martin Colin.

Photo by: Linda Sims

Directory:			
Judges:	Assistants:	Phone	
Judge Martin Colin	Sherrie Norton	274-1415	
Judge Donald Hafele	Denise VanVooren	274-1425	
Judge James Martz	Joli Katz	274-1420	
Judge John L. Phillips*	Harriet Merlin	330-1750	
Judge Amy Smith	Dorothy Reitano	274-1487	
*Administrative Judge			
Magistrates:			
Thomas R. Baker	Lori Noel	274-1433	
Diane Kirigin	Rita Sinofsky	274-1410	
Tueffic Me disturbed			
Traffic Magistrate:			
Sara Blumberg		274-1435	
Law Clerk:			
		074.4450	
Elizabeth Woods		274-1459	
Law Library Associate:			
Pat Judge		274-1440	
rat Juuge		214-1440	

SOUTH COUNTY COURTHOUSE: CONT.

SOUTH COUNTY CENTRAL DIGITAL RECORDING GOES LIVE

The South County Centralized Digital Recording System became a reality on July 7, 2008. This newly installed system records audio and video of all seven courtrooms and hearing rooms in the building.

"This system produces enormous savings for the Fifteenth" said **Rick Hussey**, Court Operations Manager. All seven courts are monitored and controlled by one Digital Court Reporter. On opening day, For The Record (FTR) representative Ken Cook, was present along with **Les Davis**, **Glenn Reed and Matt Dreiss** from Court Technology and Digital Court Reporter **Susan Permuy**. The first day went off without a hitch.

The system in place is able to expand to the next phase of court construction on the north side of the courthouse.

Anyone wishing to request a CD or transcript from South County may do so in writing to Court Reporting Services, 205 North Dixie Highway, Suite 5.1400, West Palm Beach, Florida 33401

For more information please contact Rick Hussey, 561 355-6398.

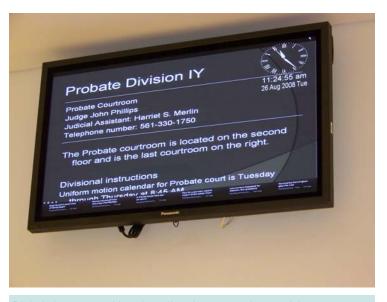


Matt Dreiss and Susan Permuy listen to court proceeding in central recording

Photos by: Linda Sims



Liz Woods, Law Clerk; Judicial Assistants Harriet Merlin and Joli Katz.



Digital signage provides clear direction to courthouse visitors.

SOUTH COUNTY COURTHOUSE: CONT.

THE VOLUNTEERS

For many years the South County Courthouse has depended upon volunteer staff to enhance court services to the public. Some of their many duties include: information, assisting the Public Defenders in the courtroom, traffic court aides and the guardianship visitation program.



Back: Rosemary Mullany, Pearl Kline, Joyce Danielson. Front: Rosemary Lentz, Paula Dent.



Rosemary Lenz and Cynthia Ellowitz

For more information contact Volunteer Coordinator Mary Ellen Feinberg, at 561 355-3574.

Photos by: Mary Ellen Feinberg

Why Do I Volunteer at the Courthouse?

"I think it is important to help our community. I came to the courthouse because I enjoy people and the fact that I speak other languages makes it more interesting. Volunteering has been an important part of my adult life." Paula Dent

"Volunteer work enables me to have a more rounded experience as a retiree."

Pearl Klein

"It started out as a 'sanity day' because of my husband's illness. It evolved into a commitment to a very worthwhile cause. We visit wards in homes and care facilities to see that their needs are met."

Joyce Danielson

"I worked for Palm Beach County for 13 years as an information clerk. Now I am retired I want to help as many people as I can." Cynthia Ellowitz

"I joined the courthouse group of volunteers about 10 years ago. I enjoy the small way I give to the community."

Rosemary Lenz

"I have volunteered for 18 years and feel that it is worthwhile." Marion Block

"I am fortunate enough to be able to donate time to to the Court System especially Traffic Court."

Jerry Pechnik



Jerry Pechnik and Marion Block.

COUNTY AGREES TO FUND TRAFFIC HEARING OFFICER PROGRAM

On September 8, 2008, the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners voted to continue funding the Traffic Hearing Officer program. Since 1991, Traffic Hearing Officers have presided over non-criminal traffic infractions in Palm Beach County.

The hearing officers resolve approximately 3,000 tickets per month which assists the county court judges by providing them the time necessary to preside over the more serious citations and misdemeanor cases. The public is served by this program as it enables those who receive traffic citations to appear at a multitude of locations (either in person or via video) throughout the county instead of having to travel to the main courthouse in West Palm Beach.

The local law enforcement community also benefits by this program in that the Traffic Hearing Officers have the time to preside over pretrial hearings which resolve the majority of traffic cases thereby enabling the officers to remain on patrol instead of spending time in court.

For the past several years, this worthwhile program has been funded by the State of Florida, but due to recent budget cuts, the Traffic Hearing Officer program was slated for extinction. The Board of County Commissioners recognized the importance of maintaining this worthwhile program and agreed to provide funding to continue the program through June 30, 2009.

The Traffic
Hearing Officers
sworn in will
join sixteen
other Hearing
Officers who
preside over
traffic infraction
dockets throughout Palm Beach
County.



On Friday, July 11, 2008, Lloyd Routman, Ivonne Reynolds, Robin Scher, Cathy Chimera, Mackenson Bernard, and Carol DeGraffenreidt (pictured above) were sworn in by Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll to serve as Civil Traffic Hearing Officers. Photo by: Sara Jones

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Dispute Resolution Center conducted it's 17th Annual Conference for Mediators and Arbitrators from August 28 – August 30, 2008. Fortunately, the entire mediation staff of the Fifteenth Circuit was able to attend in Orlando along with some 800 other mediators and arbitrators from other circuits.

The conference, as always, was well organized and extremely instructive. The workshops provided a variety of educational materials and lectures.

Laverne Mosley, Mediator, and Alan Kahn, Director, participated in an all day meeting of Alternative Dispute Resolution directors and Trial Court Administrators. The meeting was devoted to the changes to mediation funding at the trial court level. The new fee structure now provides that the portion of filing fees collected by the Clerk's office throughout the State, be paid into the Mediation and Arbitration Trust Fund and be apportioned collectively to fund mediation throughout twenty judicial circuits.

Fifteenth Judicial Circuit mediators, **Bill Moreno** and **George Polacek**, volunteered as Proctors for several workshops thereby earning a waiver of the registration fees and hotel costs and **Danni Hoefling** rounded out the full staff in attendance at the function.



Sylvia Wilson, Secretary; Bill Moreno, Mediator; Danni Hoefling, Mediator; George Polacek, Mediator; Laverne Mosley, Mediator; Alice Garfinkel, Secretary; Alan Kahn, Acting Director.

Photo by: Linda Sims

The Standards for Alternative Dispute Resolution Services in Florida's Trial Courts, as recommended by the Commission on Trial Court Performance and Accountability, was reviewed in depth at the conference. The ADR office will be implementing all of the standards set out in this proposal and approved by the Trial Court Budget Commission.

All of the staff mediators in attendance will receive Continuing Mediation Education credits, required for their respective re-certification for the ensuing two year cycle.

Attendance at the program will enable the mediators to deliver more beneficial service to the Courts and the litigants.

For more information on Alternative Dispute Resolution please contact Alan Kahn, Acting Director, at 355-4512.

The ADR office of the 15th Circuit has also increased the number of Juvenile Dependency cases to be mediated on a weekly basis.

Effective, October 6, 2008, 20 mediation time slots per week will be allocated to Dependency cases.

CRIMINAL COURT PROGRAM

CORRECTIONS TASK FORCE

On August 6, 2008 the Corrections Task Force of the Criminal Justice Commission met to discuss the jail population. The Task Force is currently researching alternatives to incarceration as the jail population continues to increase. Topics for discussion included: jail population report, juvenile detention report, pretrial services report and expansion of House Arrest/Ankle Monitoring Program.

Chairman Doug Duncan established a subcommittee to determine the possibility of expanding the House Arrest/Ankle Monitor Program.

For more information about the Criminal Court programs, please contact Michelle Spangenberg at 561-355-6396.



L to r

Major Chris Kniesley, Alan Johnson, Doug Duncan, Jenise Gibson, Mike Rodriguez, Charlie Trotta, Judge Kroll and Rosilyn Baker represent members of the Corrections Task Force.

Photo by: Michelle Spangenberg

MEET OUR SUMMER INTERNS

Danny Devine graduated cum laude from the University of Florida in the Spring Semester of 2008 with a major in Criminology and a minor in Business Administration.

He plans to attend Nova Southeastern law school for the 2008 Fall Semester and will pursue a 3 year Juris Doctorate Degree.



Photos by: Sara Jones

Gabe Blumberg graduated cum laude from the University of Florida with a double major in economics and psychology. He enjoys tennis, bowling, watching all sports, exercising, and obviously working at the courthouse.

He will be attending Duke University School of Law this fall.



UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

DEPENDENCY SUMMIT

Despite the tough economic times, the Florida Department of Children and Families hosted the annual statewide 2008 Dependency Summit. The summit took place August 27 - 29, at the J.W. Marriott in Orlando. It was an exciting opportunity for child welfare professionals throughout the state to share best practices and continue the advancement of child welfare practice in Florida. At the Summit, child protective investigators, community-based care administration and case management staff as well as judges, general magistrates, children's legal services attorneys, law enforcement, medical and mental health providers and child advocates joined together to benefit from increased coordination, communication and creativity amongst their fields.

There was a variety of representation from Palm Beach County, including DCF Circuit Administrator Perry Borman: Children's Services Council Chief Executive Officer Tana **Ebbole**; Child & Family **Connections Chief** Executive Officer **Judith** Warren: The Haven Executive Director **Don Stewart**. in addition to many other welfare professionals. Representing Court Administration were: Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll, Judge Ronald Alvarez, Judge Peter Blanc, Judge Karen Martin, Magistrate Leonard Hanser, Kathy Sanchez, Cristy Altaro

and Gabriel Munoz.



(L to R) Tana Ebbole (Chief Executive Office, Children's Services Council), Perry Borman (DCF Circuit Administrator), Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll. Photo by: Cristy Altaro.

The statewide summits began in August 1997 and continued through 2004, while regional summits were held from 2004 through 2006. In 2007, the Department reinstated the statewide summit with more than 1,500 professionals in attendance. We look forward to continued events like this to increase interagency collaboration throughout the State!

DEPENDENCY SUMMIT

VIDEO JUDICIAL REVIEWS

WHY...

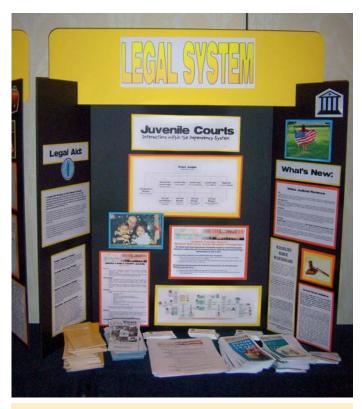
At the 2007 Dependency Summit Circuit break-out session, an idea was proposed concerning youth appearing by video at Judicial Reviews (JRs). This was intended to encourage youth to be more involved in the dependency process, however they always retain the right to appear in person if preferred.

HOW IT CAME TO BE...

A committee was composed of representatives from the School District, Case managers, Court Administration, Social service agencies, Court and School District technology staff, Directors of licensed group homes, Guardian Ad Litem's (GAL), Legal Aid Society, Department of Children and Families, Private dependency attorneys and Regional Conflict Counsel. Several meetings were held to discuss the proposal and the committee was in full support of the idea.

THE PROCESS...

For the pilot, youth were selected from one licensed group home, who all attended the same high school. After working with technology staff, the youth came to the office of an Assistant Principal where the equipment (computer, monitor, camera attached to the computer screen) had been set up. During the JRs, the only individuals present were the youth and GAL. The youth's image and voice were broadcast into the JR hearing room and the youth was able to see and hear everyone present. The goal was to provide the youth the same experience as if he/she had been physically present at the JR.



The 15th Judicial Circuit Juvenile Courts display.

THE RESULTS...

The pilot began in April and the feedback received is that the youth thought the process was "pretty cool". It did not appear that the technology inhibited the youth's participation at all. Overall, the loss of class time was much shorter than if the youth had been transported to the courthouse for the hearing. Other advantages include: reduction in the amount of staff time spent in transport, as well as a reduction in risk by not driving the youth 25 miles to the courthouse and then back to the group home. There was also no interference with after-school activities.

This program is expected to expand to include an additional group home in late September. Where it goes after that will be up to the committee and available resources. The program helps send the message to the youth that the dependency process is something that is done for them, not to them and to encourage the youth to know it is their statutory right to be engaged in this process, and indeed, the Court values their opinions.

HUMAN RESOURCES

State-wide Budget Cuts

The State-wide budget cuts that became effective on July 1, 2008 had a serious impact in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. Sixteen positions were permanently lost from the staff complement. In addition, funding for the Mediation Department was transferred from General Revenue to the Mediation Trust Fund.

In anticipation of the layoff, six vacant positions were reserved and used to contribute to the dollar target of \$767,000 that the Circuit had to remove from its salary costs. Ten additional positions were cut, resulting in loss of staff from Court Administration, from the Magistrates' complement, from Unified Family Court and from the Law Clerk group. The "due process" positions, those in Court Reporting and Court Interpreting, were spared in this reduction.

The process of reassigning the duties of employees who were lost has been difficult and remains under close review. The strain is exacerbated by the subsequent departure of other staff that cannot be replaced due to the ongoing hiring freeze. The goal of maintaining service levels to the public remains paramount during these difficult budget times.

Having so recently experienced the pain of the July layoff, it was an enormous relief when the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) announced that additional layoffs anticipated to be announced on September 2, 3008 had been canceled. Through the cooperative efforts of Chief Justice Peggy Quince, OSCA and Florida legislators, a holdback in funds for the second quarter of this fiscal year has been averted. Circuits are still very restricted in their spending levels but grateful that staffing levels will be preserved.

Of course, the current economic downturn is being felt throughout many sectors in the state. If any employees are feeling overwhelmed and wish to inquire about psychological or other counseling services, a new no-cost Employee Assistance Plan is available to help. Please call the referral line at 800-860-2058 to be scheduled with a local service provider, or go online at www.floridaeap.com. All State employees and their family members, whether living in the same household or not, are eligible for this service.

Open Enrollment

(State Employees)

9/22/08-10/17/08

This year HR staff will be making a presentation to assist you with your open enrollment selections. Visits to the satellite facilities will occur at the times and locations listed below:

10/3 12:00 noon

South County Courthouse

10/7 12:00 noon

Gun Club Courthouse

10/7 3:00pm

Belle Glade Courthouse

10/8 12:00 noon

North County Courthouse

Sessions in the main courthouse will be held at the following times:

9/25 4:00pm

Judges

Judicial Dining Room

10/2 12:00 noon

Judges

Law Library

10/2 4:00pm

Judicial Assistants

Judicial Dining Room

10/6 4:00pm

All other staff
Judicial Dining Room

10/14/12 00

10/14 12:00 noon

All other staff

Law Library

Enrollment forms will be available so you may conclude all of your paperwork in one stop. HR will also be happy to answer questions concerning deferred compensation, long term disability coverage, tuition reimbursement and the automated attendance and leave system.

For Human Resources questions please contact Krista Garber, Chief Deputy Court Administrator at 355-2154 or Letitia Warren, Personnel Management Analyst at 355-1847.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

The Administrative Orders (AO's) for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit have been revised to be more user friendly. This revision includes restructuring and renumbering the administrative orders. The conversion of the Administrative Orders is expected to occur on October 1, 2008. You can find the new AO's, along with a conversion chart, on our website at: http://15thcircuit.co.palm-beach.fl.us/web/guest/ao.

The topics for the new series are listed below:

Series 1: Local Rules (no change)

Series 2: General Administrative Orders (applicable to all

Divisions of the court)

Series 3: Civil Administrative Orders (county and circuit)

Series 4: Criminal Administrative Orders (county and circuit)

Series 5: Unified Family Court Administrative Orders (domestic relations, dependency, delinquency)

Series 6: Probate and Guardianship/Mental Health/Substance

Abuse Administrative Orders

Series 7: Writs, Post Conviction and Prisoner Litigation

Series 8: Appeals (county to circuit and administrative appeals)

Series 9: Open

Series 10: Traffic Administrative Orders (criminal and civil Infractions)

Series 11: Internal Policies and Procedures

Series 12: Special Appointments



Ashley Cross-Rappaport (former law clerk), Jackie Wood (current law clerk), Kim Massingill (JA to Judge French) at a 5K run for The Jeff Annas Memorial Firefighter 5k Run which took place on Saturday, September 13, 2008, at Okeeheelee Park.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October

Domestic Violence Awareness Month 9th-11th Florida State Court and County Law

Librarians (FSCCLL) annual meeting

November

7th Bench Bar Conference14th National Adoption Day21st Judge Cox Investiture

COURT HOLIDAYS

October

9th Yom Kippur (Court Closed)13th Columbus Day (Court Closed)

November

11th Veterans Day (Court Closed)
27th-28th Thanksgiving (Court Closed)

December

25th-26th Christmas (Court Closed)

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

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

Editor: Krista Garber Newsletter staff: Linda Sims