

Circuit Courier

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

Outgoing Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll

Incoming Chief Judge Peter Blanc

New Judges Appointed

Judge Meenu Sasser Investiture

Law Week

South County Courthouse Renovation

Drug Court Month

Foreclosure Case Management

And more...



**On the Cover: South County Courthouse,
Delray**

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The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit has seen many transitions over the past three months. We welcomed news of four judicial appointments to the Circuit; two in County court and two Circuit judgeships, detailed in this issue. Judge Sasser's investiture is complete, with other robing ceremonies scheduled to occur within the next two months. These events are among the most anticipated on the Court's calendar; a rare opportunity for all to welcome new judges and their families to our Circuit.



Barbara Dawicke

Continued expansion of Court operations was seen with the completion of the South County renovations. This beautiful new facility can now accommodate additional County court and juvenile proceedings, with the relocation of two judges, a case manager and administrative support from the Main Courthouse.

The recent session of the Florida Legislature was watched closely and produced several bills that impacted the State Court system. One positive change is the creation of the State Courts Revenue Trust Fund. This fund, created primarily by filing fees, moves the funding of the State Court system from being completely reliant on General Revenue, to what is hoped to be a more stable source of income. Additionally, Senate Bill 2108 creates, for the first time, legislative review and appropriations of the Clerk's court-related expenditures to ensure proper accountability. This is a funding process that all of the other state entities participate in every year. On the down side, the Legislature voted for a 2% pay reduction for state employees and elected officials who make over \$45,000, however state employees, the majority of whom have not seen a pay raise in years, were relieved when the Governor vetoed the cut for state employees. Unfortunately, the judiciary (and other elected officials) were not spared. I remain hopeful that the Chief Justice and OSCA will be successful in restoring the reduction.

Both judges and staff had an opportunity to express their appreciation to Judge Kathleen Kroll for her four years of dedicated leadership, as she stepped down from the Chief Judge's role. Court Administration looks forward to working with Chief Judge Peter Blanc on both current and new projects to enhance the Court's service to the community.

Lastly, as we reflect on Palm Beach County's first 100 years and see the changes in Court operations, we strive to make even more remarkable progress in the years ahead.

JUDGE KATHLEEN J. KROLL CONCLUDES TERM AS CHIEF JUDGE

In the final weeks of her term, the **Honorable Kathleen J. Kroll** was asked to reflect on her four years as Chief Judge of the Fifteenth Circuit.

What objectives did you have in mind when you began as Chief Judge?

Well, I had 3 or 4. UFC (Unified Family Court) was definitely one of them. It was my intent to undertake a few projects to improve the justice system in the Fifteenth, but that is not exactly what happened. Prior to coming in, I was advised not to take on the world, so I planned to limit my focus to a few ideas or projects.

How were those objectives achieved or changed?

Of course, we've made progress with both UFC and the Mental Health Court; however, my plans were definitely changed. Only a few months after I became Chief, the Trial Court Administrator got very ill, which I had not expected, and many of the duties that she performed, I had to learn. I also did not expect to have to deal with the first state audit in many years, an HR department that was in shambles and a finance department that was broken. I was not prepared for that.



Judge Kathleen Kroll

What aspects of the job surprised you the most ?

Mostly, the complexity of the job and the focus on the budget process. As a judge, I was not fully aware of the Court's relationship with the County Commission and the TCBC (Trial Court Budget Commission). There was a big learning curve, especially concerning the interdependence of State, County and local agencies.

What will you miss about being Chief Judge?

The chance to be creative and to make things happen and I will miss the Court Administration staff—all of them. I am now much more conscious of the behind-the-scenes functions of court staff than I was as a judge.

Do you have a message you would like to extend to staff?

I want them to know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. They do a great job and I appreciate them for sticking with us.

What advice would you have for Judge Blanc as he begins his term as Chief Judge?

There are many demands in the job; the job is constantly changing, and the public is becoming more demanding. Remember that you have great judges and great people to help you. Remember that you are part of a bigger system and that every decision you make affects many other things.

Do you have any other comments?

Even though I was the first chief judge not to keep a full docket, due to the fact that I had become so involved in the administrative side of the court, I was glad to be able to fill in for other judges. Returning to judging will feel like going home because that is what I was originally elected to do.

JUDGE PETER D. BLANC BEGINS TERM AS CHIEF

Circuit **Judge Peter D. Blanc** was unanimously elected as Chief Judge of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, to serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2009. Judge Blanc will succeed Circuit Judge Kathleen J. Kroll, who has served the circuit with distinction for the past four years.

Judge Kroll, who did not seek re-election, said “The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit is fortunate to have someone with the qualifications and dedication of Judge Blanc.” Around the courthouse, there is a sense of excitement about Judge Blanc serving as chief and a belief that the great work of his predecessor will continue.

Chief Judges are constitutionally responsible for the administrative supervision of the courts and court staff within their jurisdiction. Their responsibilities include assigning judges to divisions, overseeing the court dockets, regulating the use of courtrooms, reviewing the status of inmates at the county jail, representing the circuit on a statewide basis, and generally providing the leadership necessary for the efficient and effective administration of the circuit.

In 1990, Judge Blanc was appointed to the county court by Governor Bob Martinez. His tenure on the circuit bench began in 1999 after he was appointed by Governor Buddy MacKay. Most recently presiding in the juvenile division, Judge Blanc’s judicial experience also includes county civil and criminal, circuit civil, felony and family divisions.

In addition to his judicial experience, Judge Blanc is involved in continuing education for members of the judiciary and has presented on a variety of topics at the Florida Judicial College and the Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies, as well as County, Circuit and Appellate Judges’ Conferences. He has also developed and taught courses for the Florida Bar and has lectured at various local organizations.

Judge Blanc has been a member of the Supreme Court’s Commission on Diversity and Fairness (2004-2008) as well as the Supreme Court’s Commission on Professionalism (2002-2006).



He has served various other Supreme Court initiatives such as: the Justice Teaching Institute (2000, 2002, 2006), the Summit on Judicial Branch Education (2007), and the Committee on Evaluation and Administration of Judicial Education Programs (1998). Judge Blanc is currently Chair-elect of the statewide 599-member Florida Conference of Circuit Judges and will become Chair of the Conference in Summer of 2009.

Among his awards, Judge Blanc has received the 2005 Palm Beach County Bar Association North County Section Jurist of the Year Award; the 2004 Palm Beach County Bar Association Professionalism Award; the 2002 Friend of Law Related Education Association Award; the 2000 South Palm Beach County Bar Association Distinguished Jurist Award; and the 1998 Conference of County Court Judges President’s Award. He has been active in many community groups and is a long-time volunteer who most recently has served as a board member of both the Palm Beach County Chapter of the American Red Cross and SunFest.

Judge Blanc has stated that his priorities are to work to ensure adequate funding for the courts in order to provide the most effective and efficient services to the citizens of Palm Beach County and to explore opportunities for innovative new court programs that may further expand and improve the critical services provided by the court.

Judge Blanc said that he is both honored and humbled by the unanimous show of support by his fellow judges and that he will work diligently to earn their continued confidence while serving the citizens of Palm Beach County.

JORGE LABARGA INVESTED AS FLORIDA'S 84TH SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

Justice Jorge Labarga was sworn in on April 6, 2009, as Florida's 84th Supreme Court Justice.

Justice Labarga's ascent to the high court was unique in state history, as he was initially appointed to a vacant seat on the Fourth District Court of Appeal (DCA). At the same time, his name was on the list of nominees for the seat being vacated by Supreme Court Justice Harry Lee Anstead. He served one day on the Fourth DCA when Governor Crist elevated him to the Supreme Court.

Prior to the appointment, Jorge Labarga was a Circuit Court Judge with the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit for thirteen years.

He received his law degree from the University of Florida and worked as an assistant public defender before going into private practice in 1987.

Jorge Labarga was born in Havana, Cuba. As a young boy he came to Florida, where he lived with his family in Pahokee. He credited much of his success to his parents who "taught him to love his adopted nation."



Justice Jorge Labarga and friends at the swearing in ceremony held at the Florida Supreme Court.
Photo: courtesy of Patience Burns, Palm Beach County Bar Director.

JUDGE JONATHAN GERBER APPOINTED TO FOURTH DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL

Governor Charlie Crist has appointed Circuit Court **Judge Jonathan Gerber** of Hollywood to the Fourth District Court of Appeal.

"Judge Gerber's civil and criminal court experience have prepared him well to serve on the appellate court," Governor Crist said. "His commitment to public service, along with his strong work ethic, will serve the people of the Fourth District well."

Judge Gerber served on the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit bench since 2004. Previously, he served on the Palm Beach County Court from 2002 to 2004. He earned a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and a law degree from the University of Florida.

Gerber filled the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Larry Klein.



Judge Jonathan Gerber

INVESTITURE OF JUDGE MEENU T. SASSER

The investiture of **Judge Meenu T. Sasser** was held June 12, 2009 in the ceremonial courtroom of the Palm Beach County Courthouse. The ceremony opened with remarks by **Chief Judge Kathleen J. Kroll**, followed by the invocation by **Father Clem Hammerschmitt**.

Andrew, Caroline and Will Sasser, Judge Sasser's children, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The presentation of the Judicial Commission was made by **Karen Heidtman**, on behalf of Sharon R. Bock, Clerk and Comptroller of Palm Beach County. **Judge Peter Blanc** presented a desk plate and the Bible was presented by **John G. White III, Esquire**, President of the Florida Bar.

Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll administered the Oath of Office. **Tom Sasser**, Judge Sasser's husband, and their three children were given the honor of the enrobing.

The gavel was presented by **Richard Schuler**, Esquire, President of the Palm Beach County Bar Association, and gifts were given by **Seth Marmor, Esquire**, Director of the South Palm Beach County Bar Association, and by



Judge Meenu Sasser, with her husband and children, is sworn in by Chief Judge Kathleen Kroll.

David Prather, Esquire, President of the Palm Beach County Justice Association.

Remarks on behalf of Judge Sasser were made by **George LeMieux, Esquire**, Chairman of Gunster, Yoakley and Stewart, **John Mariani, Esquire**, co-chair of the Business Litigation Practice Group of Gunster, Yoakley and Stewart, and **Adam Rabin, Esquire**.

Father Clem Hammerschmitt, of St. Matthew's Catholic Church, gave the Benediction.

Judge Meenu T. Sasser took the bench on June 5, 2009 as a Circuit Court Judge in the Foreclosure division.

Prior to her judicial appointment, Sasser was a lawyer with Gunster, Yoakley and Stewart.

Judge Sasser received her bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, and received her law degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

Judge Sasser's first assignment is to Foreclosure Division "FW," on the 4th floor of the Central Courthouse. Her judicial assistant is **Michelle Smith**. They can be reached at 355-7817.

Sasser will fill the vacancy created by the elevation of Justice Jorge Labarga to the Florida Supreme Court.

GOVERNOR CRIST APPOINTS JOHN S. KASTRENAKES TO FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

April 29, 2009

GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE

(850) 488-5394

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today appointed John S. Kastrenakes of Tequesta to the 15th Judicial Circuit Court.

“John is a dedicated public servant who has served as a tough but truthful advocate for the people of Florida in our criminal justice system,” Governor Crist said. “His extensive experience in handling complex cases qualifies him to fairly administer justice and treat all who come before him as a judge with respect and dignity.”

Kastrenakes, 53, has served as an assistant United States attorney with the Southern District of Florida, in Miami from 1995 to 1996, and in West Palm Beach since 1996. Previously, he served as an assistant state attorney in Miami-Dade County from 1981 to 1984 and from 1985 to 1995. In the interim, he practiced with Goodhart and Rosner. He earned a bachelor's degree and a law degree from the University of Florida. Kastrenakes will fill the vacancy created by the disqualification of Judge-elect William Abramson.

COURT MOURNS THE PASSING OF RETIRED JUDGE JOHN D. WESSEL

Judge John D. Wessel, a former Circuit Court Judge, passed away on Wednesday, April 15, 2009, and will be sadly missed by his former colleagues from the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit.

Judge Wessel was appointed to the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, Palm Beach County in 1979 by Florida Governor Bob Graham and served for 26 years until his retirement in 2005.

Judge Wessel graduated from the University of Florida in 1958 and then served in the Army until 1964. After the Army he attended law school at Loyola University in New Orleans, LA, where he served as the Associate Editor for the Loyola Law Review.



GOVERNOR CRIST APPOINTS AUGUST A. BONAVIDA AND CAROLINE CAHILL SHEPHERD TO PALM BEACH COUNTY COURT

GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE
(850) 488-5394

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today appointed August A. Bonavita of Jupiter and Caroline Cahill Shepherd of Palm Beach Gardens to the Palm Beach County Court.

“Augie has spent 12 years of his 16-year legal career in public service, both as a prosecutor and defense attorney, giving him balanced insight that will help him apply the law in a consistent and fair manner,” Governor Crist said. “In addition, his teaching experience and commitment to public service have helped him gain experience in effectively communicating legal principles to citizens.”

Bonavita, 45, has been an assistant attorney general in West Palm Beach since 1999. Since 2005, he has also taught undergraduate courses concentrating in paralegal studies at Palm Beach Community College. After relocating to Florida from New Jersey in 1997, he served as an assistant public defender in Tampa from 1997 to 1999. Previously, he was a sole practitioner in New Jersey from 1993 to 1996. He earned a bachelor's degree from Seton Hall University in New Jersey and received his law degree from Seton Hall Law School.

“Caroline's experience as an attorney in high-volume practices that demand thorough consideration and attention to detail makes her an ideal choice for this post,” Governor Crist said. “I am confident that she will rule from the bench with the same high-level of respect that she has always demonstrated for individuals and her community.”

Shepherd, 46, has served as an assistant state attorney in the 15th Judicial Circuit since 2003. Previously, she served as assistant United States attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia from 2000 to 2002. From 1997 to 2000, Shepherd served as an assistant state attorney for the State Attorney's Office in the 11th Judicial Circuit. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California in 1986 and graduated from the New England School of Law in 1996.

Bonavita will fill the vacancy created by the elevation of Judge Cory J. Ciklin to the Fourth District Court of Appeal. Shepherd will fill the vacancy created by the elevation of Judge Donald W. Hafele to the 15th Judicial Circuit Court.

JUSTICE TEACHING

On May 13, 2009, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit **Judge Lucy Chernow Brown** and **Amy Borman**, General Counsel for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, presented a Justice Teaching Day interactive program for all third-grade classes at Everglades Elementary School in Weston, Florida.

Judges and attorneys wishing to participate in this program may obtain more information at www.justiceteaching.org.



Judge Lucy Chernow Brown

AROUND THE CIRCUIT:

JUDGE DAVID CROW: NORTH COUNTY SECTION OUTSTANDING JURIST OF THE YEAR 2009

On Thursday, May 21, 2009, **Judge David Crow** was honored to receive the Jurist of the Year Award, presented by the Palm Beach County Bar Association, North Section.

The presentation was made at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in Palm Beach Gardens.

The crystal gavel was passed on, as tradition requires, by last year's winner Fourth District Court **Judge Jonathan Gerber**.

"I want to thank the North County Bar for this honor, it was a surprise," said Judge Crow, "and I have truly enjoyed serving as a judge with the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit."



Judge David Crow

JUDGE DIANA LEWIS HONORED

The University of Notre Dame honored Fifteenth Judicial Circuit **Judge Diana Lewis** by electing her to be a "Fellow of the University" at its Board meeting in April. The 12 Fellows, six lay people and six priests, are the University's governing body.

Judge Lewis has been a member of the Notre Dame Board since 1994.

She earned her bachelor's and law degrees from Notre Dame and her master's degree from Florida Atlantic University. Lewis has been a Circuit Court Judge since her election in 2003.



Judge Diana Lewis

JUDICIAL ROTATIONS

The Fifteenth circuit has several new divisional assignments or reassignments, as part of three separate recent rotations:

May

Judge Perez moved from the Gun Club facility to the Main Courthouse and is presiding over County Civil division RE in courtroom 4C.

Judge K. Marx moved from the Main Courthouse to the Gun Club facility and is presiding over First Appearances, Felony cases, Drug Court and the new specialty Mental Health court at the Gun Club Annex in courtroom 2.

Judge Evans is presiding over County Criminal division B in courtroom 2E.

Judge Bonavita is presiding over County Criminal division P, in courtroom 4D.

Judge Rapp is presiding over Criminal division U in Courtroom 11G.

Judge Lewis will continue to preside over Circuit Civil division AF, but has moved to courtroom 6M.

Judge Eissey is presiding over County Criminal M in courtroom 9A.

June

Judge Phillips moved from South to North County; however, Judge Phillips will temporarily work out of the Main Courthouse and preside over division FA, until the Governor appoints a new judge. He will utilize hearing room 6K.

Judge Colin now presides over Probate division IY in South County courtroom 8.

Judge Sasser is presiding over residential and commercial foreclosure cases in division AW, courtroom 4A.

Judge Shepherd assumed responsibility for County Civil Division RB. The court events for RB were moved to hearing room 6J.

Judge Kastrenakes presides over Circuit Criminal division V in courtroom 10E.

Judge Keyser moved to South County and is presiding over County Civil division RS in courtroom 5.

Judge Burton moved to South County and presides over Family Division FY in courtroom 2.

July

Judge Kroll now presides over Juvenile division JL, formerly the division of **Chief Judge Peter Blanc**, in courtroom 2B. Judge Blanc relocated to the administrative offices of the court on the 5th floor.

Judge Baker moved to South County and presides over Juvenile division JS in courtroom 4.

For a complete Court Directory please visit the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit website at:

www.15thcircuit.com

THE COURTS IN PALM BEACH COUNTY- A HISTORICAL TIMELINE-100 YEARS

On July 1, 2009 Palm Beach County celebrates 100 years as a County. Here is a brief timeline of the evolution of the courts in West Palm Beach:

1823	Florida becomes a territory.
1823	The only South Florida town of significance was Key West.
1830	First census has population of South Florida at 517.
1836	Dade County is created, extending from approximately Vero Beach to Miami, including all of what is now Palm Beach County.
1845	Florida admitted to the Union as the 27 th State.
1861	Florida secedes from U.S., joins Confederacy.
1880	Dade County pays \$5 a month to use an old Army barracks room as a place to conduct county business and for use as a courtroom.
1886	Dade County joins the Seventh Judicial Circuit. The Circuit Judge is John D. Broome. The first lawyer in this area, Allen E. Heyser, builds a 20 room hotel on the west side of Lake Worth and names it the Riviera Inn. This was the namesake for Riviera Beach.
1889	The county seat is moved from Miami to Juno, despite the fact that Juno is an unincorporated village with no doctor, school or bank.
1900	The Dade County Courthouse is moved back to Miami.
1909	Palm Beach County is created. On July 6, the Board of County Commissioners, at its' first meeting, designates West Palm Beach's original wooden school building, located on the corner of Clematis and Poinsettia (Dixie), as the courthouse.
1911	County purchases the land on which a permanent courthouse is to be built.
1914	County Court Judge is John B. Adams. He is followed by Judges D.F. Patershall, Edgar C. Thompson, Jerome E. Wideman, Rufus M. Robbins, C.E. Chillingworth and Richard P. Robbins.
1916	New Palm Beach County Courthouse opens.
1925	Criminal Court of Record is created. Judge A. G. Hartidge presiding. He is followed by Judges, J. Stockton Bryan, John L. Moore, Raymond C. Alley, and Edward G. Newell. (Note: Each court had a single judge until 1943 when a second Circuit Court Judge was added.)
1927	An addition to the courthouse is built which houses the Circuit Court.
1943	An additional Circuit Judge is added making it 2.
1951	Small Claims Court is created.
1953-1956	The courthouse is completely remodeled, and during this time the signs are removed that segregate the restrooms by race.
1960's	Talks begin about a courthouse addition or "wraparound". (Judge Culver Smith-Circuit Judge)
1969	The 1916 courthouse and the 1927 additions are renovated with a "wraparound".
1972	The old courthouse's "wraparound" is completed.
Late 1980's-1995	County Courts are housed in the old D&D Centre
1995	The current Palm Beach County Judicial Center is completed and becomes the new county courthouse.
2007	Restoration of the original courthouse is completed and now hosts County offices and the new Palm Beach County History Museum.

SOUTH COUNTY COURTHOUSE RENOVATION COMPLETED

Palm Beach County's South County Courthouse, located at 200 West Atlantic Avenue in Delray Beach was closed on Friday, May 22, and reopened on Tuesday, May 26 to allow for the move into the renovated space that was once the "old South County Courthouse."

Construction on the new building started in 2006, and in July of 2008 the first phase, which included a 75,000 square foot addition, was completed. At that time, all court services moved from the "old courthouse" into the new addition. The renovation almost doubled the space of the previous facility.

This expanded facility will house nine courtrooms and five hearing rooms for civil, criminal, domestic relations, juvenile, and probate matters. Expanded work areas will allow for the addition of a juvenile court, and offices for mediation, court interpreters, court reporters, court technology, and case managers.

Also housed in the Courthouse are the judicial and magistrate offices, the Clerk of the Court offices, the Law Library, Traffic Magistrates, State Attorney, Public Defender, and the Court Volunteer Program.

Judges currently presiding in the South County Courthouse are: Administrative **Judge Charles Burton, Judge Martin Colin, Judge Reginald Corlew, Judge Janis Keyser, Judge James Martz, and Judge Kenneth Stern.**

Magistrates assigned to South County are **Magistrate Diane Kirigin and Magistrate Maxine Williams.**

For additional information on the court operations in the South County Courthouse, please contact Debra Oats-Ducram at (561) 274-1456



The South County Courthouse entrance is located on 2nd Avenue facing east.



The South County Law Library was expanded as a part of the renovation of the courthouse in Delray Beach.



Traffic Hearing Officer Lloyd Routman in the new traffic courtroom. Right: Deputy Don Donnenberg

South County Traffic Court has a new home!

The newly completed renovations to the South County Courthouse included a new courtroom for traffic court. Courtroom 9 is the largest courtroom in the South County courthouse and now can amply accommodate all parties to the civil traffic infraction hearings. This courtroom features two separate anterooms that may be used by witnesses, parties, or attorneys waiting for their cases to be called. The two rooms have large windows overlooking the courtroom and are wired for sound. This enables people who want to talk on their cell phones or to one another, while awaiting their case to be called, to monitor what is going on in court without disrupting the court proceedings. The Traffic Hearing Officers truly appreciate the county and circuit's consideration of the special needs of traffic court in creating this courtroom and look forward to presiding in it for years to come.

LAW WEEK 2009

A Legacy of Liberty was chosen as the motto for Law Week 2009, in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. To celebrate, the Fifteenth Circuit hosted events on April 21-23, 2009. Over 100 students, largely from Suncoast and Forest Hills schools, spent a day at the Main Courthouse to learn first-hand about the functioning of the third branch of government.

Chief Judge **Kathleen J. Kroll** welcomed the students each morning and explained the role of the judiciary. Various representatives of the Clerk & Comptroller's office then spoke on the Clerk's office duties and provided a tour of several clerk departments. For the remainder of the morning, the students toured the Courthouse and observed court proceedings. Over lunch, smaller groups had the opportunity to meet with judges, who spoke on the specific areas over which they preside and answered questions.

Career profiles in the judicial system was the topic for early afternoon, as several staff members made presentations on their job positions and their educational and work backgrounds. The days concluded with a re-enactment of excerpts from the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, by Lynn University students.

The students commented that they enjoyed this informative "behind-the-scenes" glimpse of court.

Special thanks to all those whose contribution made this such a memorable event **Chief Judge Kroll; Judges Jeffrey Colbath, Jack Cook, Peter Evans, Edward Fine, Donald Hafele, Janis Keyser, and Robin Rosenberg; Law Clerks Devon Bennett-Ward, Jennifer Chamagua, Cristina DeCelestino, Enrique Nieves, Jennifer Printz and Adelina Ruiz Baez; staff members Jakobie Alexander, Trevor Davis, Mary Ellen Feinberg, Rick Hussey, Celia Munoz, Glenn Reed, Rebecca Storrow, Michelle Spangenberg, and Letitia Warren; Joyce Conway, Marie Clerger, Karen Heidtman, Cynthia Oziros, and Jessica Smith** of the Clerk's office; Lynn University students **J. D. Ospina, Daniel Kaufler and Robert Nobrega** and advisor **Dr. Weston**; volunteer tour guide **Terry Mahoney** and **Tanique Lee** on behalf of the PBC Bar.



Enrique Nieves (l) and Jennifer Chamagua (r) guide students on a tour of the courthouse during Law Week Events.



County Court Judges Peter Evans and Janis Keyser address students over lunch in the Law Library Conference Room.



Mary Ellen Feinberg (l) sets the stage for Lynn University students (l-r) Daniel Kaufler, J. D. Ospina, and Robert Nobrega.

JUDGE MARTZ PRESENTS AT LAW DAY LUNCHEON

As a part of Law Week, the Palm Beach County Bar Association held its Law Day Luncheon on May 1, 2009 at the Marriot Hotel in West Palm Beach. **Judge James Martz** was guest speaker and discussed some of his international efforts in teaching emerging democracies how to fight corruption and reinvigorate the rule of law.

This past year Judge Martz assembled and led a Diplomatic Delegation, at the request of the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and the United States Ambassador to the Bahamas, to assist them in addressing an explosion of criminal activity resulting in a critically high crime rate highlighted by a homicide rate that is ten times that of Palm Beach County. The Delegation met with the Chief Justice, Attorney General, Appeals Court, Police Department, Defense Attorneys, and community and business groups to evaluate and formulate recommendations for reformation of the Bahamian Justice System.

Judge Martz was also part of a team of four judges and elected legislators who traveled to the Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (CEELI) Institute in Prague, Czech Republic, to assist democracies in Eastern Europe to implement effective strategies in their Ministry of Justice and Courts systems.



Bryan Poulton (Abraham Lincoln) and Judge James Martz.



Judge Martz addresses Palm Beach County Bar members at the Marriot in WPB.

JUROR APPRECIATION MAY 2009

In recognition of the contributions and importance of all jurors, the Clerk & Comptroller **Sharon Bock** and Chief Judge **Kathleen Kroll** hosted a recognition ceremony, May 4, 2009 in the Jury Room of the Central Courthouse in West Palm Beach.

The Clerk & Comptroller and Chief Judge host this event each May to mark the beginning of Juror Appreciation Month. Palm Beach County Commission Chair **Jeff Koons**, State Attorney **Michael McAuliffe**, Public Defender **Carey Haughwout**, West Palm Beach Mayor **Lois Frankel** and Palm Beach County Bar Association President-elect **Michelle Suskauer**, were among the guest speakers for the ceremony.

Prospective jurors called to serve that day were guests of honor.

Judge Kroll welcomed the jurors and spoke to them about the three branches of Government: the legislative, executive and judicial, emphasizing the importance of each.



l-r: Lois Frankel, Sharon Bock, Carey Haughwout, Kathleen Kroll, Jeff Koons, Michael McAuliffe, and Michelle Suskauer

As part of Juror Appreciation Month the Palm Beach County Bar Association provided continental breakfast to the jurors each morning on May 4-8.

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT SUMMIT

On April 24th, the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit's Unified Family Court (UFC) hosted a training event at the Kravis Center in West Palm Beach entitled, *"Increased Violence in Stressful Times: Coordinating a Community Response to Domestic Violence."* There were over 200 individuals in attendance. The goal of the event was to educate professionals on the complex issues associated with child abuse and family violence, to broaden each professional's knowledge in multiple areas, and to increase understanding of other agencies' roles and responsibilities, thereby developing a coordinated community response for Palm Beach County to assist children and families involved in the criminal justice system.

Chief Judge Kathleen J. Kroll welcomed the participants during the opening ceremony, followed by spoken-word poetry from performed by **Mr. Wispers**. The summit kicked off with a keynote address from **Mr. David Mandel**, a nationwide recognized domestic violence consultant.

Four separate breakout sessions, which occurred throughout the day, addressed the following subject matters:

The keynote speaker, Mr. David Mandel explored how to implement a coordinated community response using the Safe and Together Model.

Ms. Barbara Carter, Government Operations Consultant with the Office of Domestic Violence, discussed "The Effective Use of Certified Battered Intervention Programs in the Community."

Mr. William Booth, Attorney with Legal Aid Society, discussed the "Representation of Children in Dependency and Domestic Violence Cases", an overview of representation of children in all court cases including domestic relations, probate, custody, paternity, adoption, visitation, civil, and criminal proceedings, both when children are victims or witnesses.

Ms. Pamela Cochran, Community-Based Care (CBC) Trainer with Child & Family Connections (CFC), presented on "Children in Dependency Cases: Where It All Starts". This session reviewed Florida Statutes regarding child Abuse/neglect, the definitions of abuse and how to recognize signs/indicators and report child abuse/neglect.

In addition, a presentation was made by **Ms. Melinda Lis**, Child and Family Resource Center from the University Of Illinois School Of Social Work, who presented on a national project: "Adoption Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS)", which provides insight into how the state child welfare system and the courts have served their needs. **Judge Martin H. Colin** concluded the event with presentations of the certificates and closing remarks.

The training event was coordinated by **Maria Giuliano**, UFC Operations Manager; **Michelle Spangenberg**, Criminal Court Operations Manager; and **Cristy Altaro**, Juvenile Alternative Sanctions Coordinator.

For those who were unable to attend, the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit's website will soon feature video and resources from the event.



L-r: Maria Giuliano, Nicole Saunders, Michelle Spangenberg, Chief Judge-elect Peter Blanc, Judge Kathleen Kroll and Cristy Altaro.



Mr. Mandel



Mr. Wispers

JUVENILE COURT



As our youth continue to enter the juvenile justice and/or court system, there is an overwhelming need to provide support and assistance to these members of the community and their families. Juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, poor economic times, substance abuse problems and educational concerns plague our young people. Without interventions, the future is grim.

Operation Hope is the community coming together to assist some of the most needy and challenged families in Palm Beach County. This multiple-agency collaboration, led by the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, provides support and resources to court-involved youth and families.

There are two main components: *Mentoring* and *Family*. Services will include: mentoring in the community, Detention Center and with the Guardian Ad Litem program, teen parenting resources, basic needs for families, workshops on relevant topics, referrals to community providers, domestic violence assistance and family support.

This initiative will work in conjunction with local agencies and partners to ensure that youth and families are assisted.

A youth and his/her family may be referred to the program by a number of sources, including but not limited to the Courts and the Department of Juvenile Justice. He/she will then be directed to the central office for an intake appointment. At this meeting, information will be gathered and a decision will be made about what services and/or resources are most appropriate for the youth and family. Detailed information will be provided about how to engage in the services.



In a time of dwindling resources and funding, the community must pull together. The faith-based community has stepped up and is bringing hope back to our youth and families. On May 17th, this program was unveiled to the community at Hurst Chapel in Riviera Beach. Juvenile **Judge Peter Blanc** was there to provide insight on the needs of youth and families.

The event was covered by the Palm Beach Post and featured in an article on May 30th. During his presentation, Judge Blanc stated “we can’t rely on government anymore to provide all the solutions, we have to rely on ourselves.”

“We can’t rely on government anymore to provide all the solutions, we have to rely on ourselves.”

Judge Blanc

Operation Hope will begin in this Circuit in the next few weeks.

For additional information, please contact Cristy Altaro at (561) 355-6586.

JUDGE MARVIN MOUNTS' ANNUAL PRISON TOUR

The annual Prison Tour was held on March 25 & 26, 2009. For over thirty years, Judge Marvin Mounts led a group of judges, lawyers, and others interested in the criminal justice system on an annual two-day tour of major correctional institutions around the state.

Before Judge Mounts passed away in 2003, he asked **Judge Jonathan Gerber** and **Judge Bill Bollinger** to continue the tour's tradition. Upon Judge Bollinger's retirement three years ago, **Judge Moses Baker** volunteered to participate in his place. Judge Gerber stated, "Although we cannot fill Judge Mounts' shoes in terms of his knowledge and experience, we believe that it is important to build upon Judge Mounts' legacy by continuing to arrange the tour for those who are interested in learning more about the State's correctional institutions. We have had very successful tours the last five years."

Some of the 2009 participants included: **Judge Jeffrey Colbath**, **Judge Amy Smith**, Criminal Court Operations Manager **Michelle Spangenberg** and Mental Health Case Manager **Marcela Millett**.

The tour began very early on March 25th at Loxahatchee Road Prison on Southern Boulevard just west of the South Florida Fairgrounds. After breakfast and a brief tour of that institution, participants began carpooling upstate to various institutions, with those who were not driving switching cars at each stop so that, per Judge Mounts' wishes, participants could have the opportunity to get to know each other during the tour.

From Loxahatchee they traveled to Indian River Correctional Institution, a Level One Youthful Offender Facility just west of Vero Beach, where lunch was provided. As it was discovered by the participants, prison food is very bland due to various inmates' possible health or religious differences. They then drove to Lake Correctional Institution at Clermont, which contains a mental health care hospital. From there, they also visited Sumter Correctional Institution which contains a boot camp for males and various vocational industries, such as a printing company, which is utilized by several local organizations. The day ended in Ocala where the group stayed on Wednesday night.



I-r: Marcela Millett, Warden Randy Bryant and Michelle Spangenberg



I-r: Mark Broderick, Michelle Spangenberg, and Judge Moses Baker

On Thursday morning, the participants made an early departure for the Florida Correctional Institution (commonly known as Lowell), Florida's first women's prison. A group of Juvenile Inmates performed a military-style drill routine for the participants as part of the tour. From there, they drove north to the Reception and Medical Center where inmates are received and classified. While at the Reception Center, participants were exposed to the process inmates go through when they are incarcerated and awaiting placement into a specific facility. Afterwards, they went to the most high-level security facilities in the state, Union Correctional Institution and Florida State Prison. At Union, participants received a tour of the license tag factory where all license tags for the Department of Motor Vehicles are made in the state of Florida. While at Florida State Prison, participants were able to understand the process it takes for those inmates who are on Death Row and ultimately executed.

The tour conductors were **Warden Randy Bryant** of Florida State Prison, Classification Supervisor **Margaret Kovacs** of Zephyrhills Correctional Institution, and retired Senior Sentencing Specialist **Pat Fleck**. They were a wealth of knowledge and very much appreciated by all participants.

DRUG COURT MONTH MAY 2009

The **10th Annual Statewide Drug Court Graduation** was held May 15, 2009 in the Miami-Dade County Commission Chambers, and marked the 20th anniversary of the creation of the nation's first Drug Court in Miami, Florida, and one of the most progressive changes ever made to the criminal-justice system.

Senior **Judge Jeffrey Rosinek** and Circuit **Judge Deborah White-Labora** presided over the ceremonies, and Florida Chief **Justice Peggy A. Quince** addressed the newest graduates -- 265 people in 33 different drug courts from the Panhandle to the Keys.

In addition to Florida Chief Justice Quince, speakers include retired **General Barry McCaffrey**, former Director of the National Office of Drug Control Policy, and **Bill Janes**, Director of the Florida Office of Drug Control.

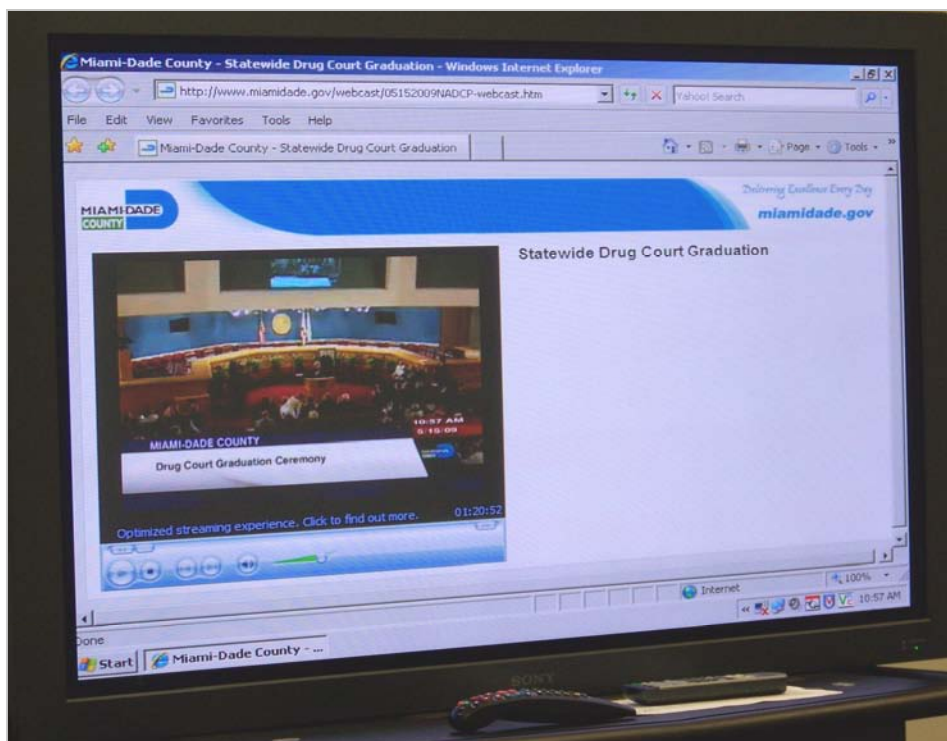
Florida was the first state to develop a treatment-based drug court. Drug courts provide non-violent

drug-related offenders with intensive treatment and judicial supervision in lieu of incarceration. Since the first drug court was created in Miami 20 years ago, tens of thousands of Floridians have graduated from drug courts all around the state, saving lives, healing families and strengthening communities.

Twenty years later, drug courts continue to demonstrate their effectiveness through significant reductions in recidivism. Drug courts have also proven to reunify families and restore justice within the community. There are more than 2,300 drug courts across the country.

In Florida, more than 25,600 people have graduated from a drug court in just the last five years. Florida currently has 108 drug courts within the state's 20 judicial circuits representing 46 of its 67 counties.

For more information on the Drug Court Program please contact Dorrie Tyng at (561) 688-4493.



The 10th Annual Statewide Drug Court Graduation was broadcast via video live feed to multiple locations throughout Florida allowing 265 graduates to participate from 33 different Drug Courts.

FORECLOSURE CASE MANAGEMENT

On May 19, 2009, Administrative Order 3.306-5/09 was entered which created a Foreclosure Case Management Status Conference Pilot Program. The purpose of the pilot program is to have court staff meet with parties in foreclosure actions to explain options available to them under Administrative Order 3.305-1/09. Administrative Order 3.305 sets forth procedures that attempt to facilitate dialogue between the financial institutions and owners residing in homesteaded property regarding the owner's eligibility to rework the loan or complete a short sale.

The Pilot Program commenced on June 11, 2009 and will continue until July 30, 2009. The case management conferences are run by General Counsel **Amy Borman** and the circuit's staff attorneys and summer judicial interns.



Law clerks and summer judicial interns assist the public with foreclosure paperwork.



Law clerks Jackie Wood and Devon Bennett-Ward assist a homeowner.



Law clerk Lily Chang assists a homeowner.

SUMMER JUDICIAL INTERNS

On May 20, 2009 the Trial Court Law Clerks welcomed the summer 2009 judicial interns. During the first six weeks of the program, the interns toured the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Eagle Academy, watched court in Belle Glade and lunched with **Judge Nelson Bailey**, observed shelter and delinquency hearings and juvenile drug court with **Judge Ronald Alvarez**, had a brown bag lunch with Circuit Civil **Judges David Crow, Donald Hafele, Robin Rosenberg, Meenu Sasser, Timothy McCarthy, Jack Cox and Glenn Kelley**, toured the Palm Beach County Jail and met with **Judges Marx and Booras** to watch and learn about first appearances. The interns have also watched adult drug court, family court with **Judge Elizabeth Maass**, and observed criminal and civil 8:45 Motion Calendar hearings, special set hearings and trials.

In addition to the above, the summer interns prepared and presented appellate bench memoranda, researched issues, worked on a civil case management review, and led foreclosure case management conferences as part of the summer pilot project created in Administrative Order 3.306-5/09. The internship program runs through the beginning of August.



Pictured l to r:

James Maynor, University of Texas

Veronica Limia, Florida Coastal School of Law

Chase Wiley, University of Florida

Nicole Grassi, Nova Southeastern University

Melissa Cohen, Stetson University

Raul Novoa, Emory University

Lauren White, University of Miami

Aaron Draizin, Nova Southeastern University

Mallory Keyser, Stetson University

Michael Quintero, University of Florida

Not pictured: **Courtney Tie**, University of Miami

TRAFFIC HEARING OFFICER PROGRAM

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit welcomes seven new Traffic Hearing Officers and begins Inaugural Webcast Training.

Before becoming eligible to preside over traffic cases, the new Traffic Hearing Officers, **Dana Collier Herst, Parnel Auguste, John Kurtz, Leonard Singer, Steven Miller, Sherea-Ann Ferrer, and Lisa Small** must attend a rigorous training program that consists of over 40 hours of training. The training includes time in a classroom setting, various participatory exercises, courtroom observations, mentored sessions in court, as well as a ride-along with the Florida Highway Patrol.

The 15th Circuit was awarded a grant from the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) which enabled them to offer long distance training for newly appointed Traffic Hearing Officers around the state. Having never broadcast webcasts before, our circuit's technology staff worked tirelessly to enable us to transmit our training sessions to other circuits.

Each training session that has statewide applicability, such as evidence, traffic defenses and offenses, jurisdiction, ethics, courtroom demeanor, speed measuring devices, how to read a driving record, and the like, was broadcast from the judicial dining room to as many as 17 other circuits from around the state. At one point in time, participants at the Florida Supreme Court also logged in to watch.

Court Technology set up a devoted website for the training that enabled the participating circuits to not only download all the materials in advance of the training, including each PowerPoint presentation, but to also instant message any questions directly to the speaker so they could be answered during the live presentation.

Not to be left out, the veteran Traffic Hearing Officers also got a first hand look at distance learning on June 22, 2009, when the Fifteenth Circuit benefitted from another OSCA grant, with the all-day presentation by renowned speaker, Selma Sauls.



L-r: Sherea-Ann Ferrer, Lisa Small, Steven Miller, John Kurtz, Leonard Singer, Parnel Auguste, Dana Collier Herst



The new Traffic Hearing Officers listen intently as Steven Miller practices his opening remarks during their course on courtroom procedure. Critiquing the session was Judge Debra Moses Stephens.

Ms. Sauls addressed the unique issues related to both the elderly and the teen driver/defendant. OSCA provided the funding to bring Ms. Sauls to this circuit to teach veteran Traffic Hearing Officers, as well as those that were newly-hired. This seminar was also webcast around the state to both Traffic Hearing Officers and Judges.

For more information on the Traffic Hearing Officer program please contact: Sara Blumberg at (561) 274-1435

ANNUAL JUDGES/LAWYERS SOFTBALL GAME

On Saturday April 25, the 14th annual Judges v. Lawyers softball competition was held at John Prince Park. This was the second year that the two teams lined up as mixed judges and attorneys, as opposed to the traditional attorney / judge competitions of the past.

Participating in this event were: **Judges Mark Eissey, Jim Martz, Richard Oftedal, David French Judge Richard Oftedal, Federal District Judge Kenneth Marra, and retired Judge Richard Wennet.**

Immediately following the game, the judges and lawyers enjoyed a picnic lunch provided by the Palm Beach County Bar Association and coordinated by Executive Director **Patience Burns.**



Judge French



Judge Martz



Judge Eissey



TRAINING

Microsoft Word 2007 Training

In accordance with the recommendation by the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) and Palm Beach County, the Fifteenth Circuit moved towards making Microsoft Office 2007 the word processing standard.

To this end, 25 one-hour training sessions were conducted throughout the month of May by CJIS trainer **Terry Stanley**.



l-r: Erin Borden, Lorenzo Lowe, Magistrate Judette Fanelli, Terry Stanley, Jennifer Drewery, Erin Brandt.

For more information on training, please contact Terry Stanley at (561) 355-6745.

Pandemic Presentation

On May 22, 2009 the Emergency Coordinating Officer for Palm Beach County, Al Grasso, made a presentation to judges and court staff on the progression of the avian influenza pandemic.

Rick Hussey, Emergency Coordinating Officer for the Fifteenth Circuit said, "The presentation was well received by those in attendance and each attendee received an informative CD on pandemic flu and tips on how to prepare."

For more information on pandemics and other emergency preparations please contact Rick Hussey at (561) 355-3745.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

On April 29, volunteers for the information desk, traffic court and guardianship visitors' programs at South County gathered to be honored for their hours of selfless work.

At a recognition luncheon at Duffy's Restaurant in Delray Beach, **Judge John Phillips** praised the group for their dedication and effort over many years of volunteer activity. "Although we do not often have the opportunity to say thank you, we want you to know how important you are to the functioning of the South County Courthouse," Phillips said. Each volunteer was presented a Certificate of Appreciation, signed by Judge Phillips and **Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke**, on behalf of the Circuit.

In preparation for the opening of the South County expansion, **Chief Deputy Court Administrator Krista Garber** explained upcoming changes to the group and reviewed a floor plan of the expanded facilities. An additional information desk is slated to be staffed on the second floor of the South County Courthouse in July.

John Cohen, a retired Judge from England, was recognized by the Palm Beach Post for his work with prisoners in South Bay Correctional Center. John has developed five programs, in which he teaches mediation skills to inmates who then act as mediators.

Although he uses standard mediation principles, he has modified them to become core life skills that teach communication, negotiation, and listening abilities. The more the inmates are able to express themselves, the fewer conflicts. John is also using a similar program in the community, and has volunteered to take over the Court's pre-filing program for the Bar.



He believes in encouraging people to communicate before moving to either violence or the courts. As for inmate Kempst Gilles, 30, of Haiti, he wishes he'd met Cohen long ago. "If I knew before what I have learned here," he says, "I wouldn't be in here."

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

Dedicated volunteers **Gordon Cohen & Terry Mahoney** now conduct tours of the main courthouse



for students and civic groups every Tuesday and Thursday morning. Gordon's background as a probation officer provides valuable knowledge of the Court's functions. Terry excels with younger students and also volunteers at the Wellington civil traffic hearings and in the Administrative Office.

RoseAnn Raymond brings excellent customer service skills, acquired over a long career with the telephone company, to



her role helping callers to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) telephone line. Each Wednesday, RoseAnn's expertise calms and informs those who call this special phone line, as she answers questions on court facilities, ADA services and jury duty.

HR HUDDLE

On June 30, 2009, Law Library Associate **Patricia Judge-Delatorre** retired after 19 years of assisting patrons at the South County Law Library.

Judicial assistants assuming new roles in the Fifteenth Circuit in June were: **Marion Barclay, Jeri Fickes, Donna Holden and Michelle Smith**. In addition, new employees **Kristin Colbath, Jessica Wolfkill and Blanche Scaccia** joined the Circuit as judicial assistants.



Department Directors hosted a lunch for outgoing **Chief Judge Kathleen J. Kroll** and Judicial Assistant **Rebecca Ricker** on June 24, 2009, followed by a cake-and-punch reception for judges and staff. This event provided an opportunity for all staff to personally express their thanks to Judge Kroll and Becky for their leadership and support over the past four years.

In Memoriam

Mary Landford passed away on January 15, 2009, at her home in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Mary was the first Spanish Interpreter to work for the Fifteenth Circuit in a career that spanned from 1963 to 2003.

Mary was known for her professional skills as well as her warm personality and will be fondly remembered by all who had the pleasure of working with her.



UPCOMING EVENTS

July

10 Judge August Bonavita investiture ceremony
9,14,16,21,23,28,30 Foreclosure Case Management Conferences

August

10-14 Supreme Court Dependency Mediation Certification training
21 Judge Caroline Shepherd investiture ceremony
28 Judge Spencer Levine investiture ceremony
Open enrollment begins

COURT HOLIDAYS JULY-SEPTEMBER

July

3 Independence Day observed

September

7 Labor Day
28 Yom Kippur

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

For updates to the latest Administrative Orders (AO's) for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, please see our website at: <http://15thcircuit.co.palm-beach.fl.us/web/guest/ao>.

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