

# Circuit Courier

April-June 2013

Vol. 2013-2

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

Outgoing Chief Judge Peter Blanc

Incoming Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath

Law Week

Summer Judicial Interns

*And more...*



Cover: Main Judicial Center Photo by: Deputy LaFlamme

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**Judge Jeffrey Colbath** began his two-year term of office as Chief Judge of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit on July 1, 2013.

Jeffrey Colbath was born in Fulda, Germany. His family moved to Cleveland and then to Singer Island where Jeffrey went to Palm Beach Gardens High School.



Jeffrey Colbath graduated from the University of South Florida in Tampa and then law school at Nova University. At Nova he and a partner opened the Nova Law School Book Store.

After law school Jeffrey Colbath was an Assistant State Attorney for two years under David Blutworth. At the end of those two years he went into private practice joining Metzger, Sonneborn and then later with Adams, Coogler, and finally with Davis, Carroll, Colbath and Isaacs.

In 1992, Jeffrey Colbath ran for a County Court Judge seat. He was elected to the County bench in September 1992 for a term beginning in January 1993. However, in October 1992, Governor Lawton Chiles appointed him to a term commencing immediately. In 2002 he was elected to the Circuit bench.

Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath's judicial assistant is Diana Grant.



# JUDGE PETER BLANC CONCLUDES TERM AS CHIEF JUDGE

In the final weeks of his term, the Honorable **Peter D. Blanc** was asked to reflect on his four years as Chief Judge of the Fifteenth Circuit.

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

In 2009, we were in the midst of a terrible budget crisis. Funding had been cut and additional cuts were being contemplated. Furloughs were being discussed and the new Governor's first budget proposed eliminating 50% of the Judicial Assistant positions throughout the state. At the same time, the courts were overwhelmed with foreclosures. My primary goal was to keep our courts operating smoothly and effectively through those difficult times.

## How were those objectives achieved or changed?

I believe we have survived the worst of the budget years. Although court funding is still not where it should be, I am hopeful that the next few years will be much more stable. By utilizing the additional resources provided by the legislature and through a team approach, we are making tremendous progress reducing the backlog of foreclosure cases. I am grateful to all of those who have helped in our effort to move these cases through the system while protecting the due process rights of the parties.

## What aspects of the job surprised you the most?

I was most surprised by the amazing variety of personalities and perspectives that I have worked with over the past four years.

## What will you miss about being Chief Judge?

I will certainly miss working closely with Barbara Dawicke and her terrific staff. I will also miss working with Amy Borman. Both Barbara and Amy do fantastic work and it has been my privilege to work with each of them. I hesitate to single out anyone else because all those who work in the administrative offices of the court are great. However, I do think it is appropriate to recognize the terrific work of Michelle Spangenberg. Michelle's work ethic, her consistently positive attitude, and her knowledge of court operations make her invaluable.

I will also miss the opportunity to effect positive change. For example, I am most proud of the creation of our Veterans' Court. At the time we opened, we were only the second Veterans' Court in the State and the first to handle both felonies and misdemeanors. Now in its third year, the court is going strong and through site visits and information sharing our court has served as a role model for the many other veterans' courts that have subsequently been established.

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

No doubt, I have not thanked you often enough for your dedication and hard work. Without our dedicated staff the Fifteenth Circuit would not be able to maintain the excellent reputation it has throughout the State. So thank you, thank you, thank you.

## What advice would you have for Judge Jeffrey Colbath as he begins his term as Chief Judge?

I know that Judge Colbath will do an excellent job. I would suggest to him that he enjoy every minute of the job from the most difficult to the most rewarding. If his experience is like mine, at the end of his term he will wonder how the years have flown by so quickly.



*Chief Judge Blanc holds the plaque presented to him by staff of the Fifteenth Circuit.*

## DAVIS PRODUCTIVITY AWARD



*Seated: Chief Judge Peter D. Blanc, Judge Ted Booras. Second row: Jerry Klein, Lead Mentor Program Coordinator. Standing back row l-r: Assistant Public Defender Steve Benedict; Carla-Paula DaSilva, Veteran Justice Outreach Coordinator; Tivi Parks, Clerk and Comptroller's Office; Rosalyn Baker, Department of Corrections; Louis Kurtz, Department of Corrections; Michelle Spangenberg, Director of Case Management; Stewart Saalfeld, Court Administration, and Louis Tomeo, Clerk and Comptroller's Office. Not pictured: Roy Foster, Lead Mentor Program Coordinator*

Representatives from the Veteran's Court Team were among the 80 teams and individuals awarded a 2013 Davis Productivity Award at a ceremony on June 19, 2013.

On November 10, 2010, **Chief Judge Peter D. Blanc** entered Administrative Order 4.905, creating the first Veterans' Court in the Palm Beach County. Modeled after successful drug courts across the Country, Veterans' Court provides much needed assistance to Veterans at no additional cost to Palm Beach County or the State of Florida. The Court, spearheaded by Judge Blanc, involves a myriad of volunteer and agency participants. County Court **Judge Ted Booras**, a former Marine, presides over this specialized docket. The Veteran Justice Outreach Coordinator, Carla-Paula DaSilva, who is funded by the Veterans Health Care Administration, links Veterans to services available at the VA and in the local community.

A critical component of the success of Veterans' Court is the volunteer "Mentor Program." The Mentor Program provides volunteers who support each Veteran Court participant as they navigate through the court proceedings and who also assist each participant with their individualized treatment plan. The volunteer mentors are Veterans interested in helping their fellow Vets, guided by the principle of "no man left behind." The Mentor section of the Veterans' Court is coordinated by Roy Foster, founder of Stand Down House, and Jerry Klein President of the VVA Florida State Council.

The fiscal benefit to the County and the State, as a result of Veterans' Court, is substantial. It is estimated that the Court has saved approximately \$923,880 since inception by addressing the Veterans' issues in court and providing them with the services they need.



## LAW WEEK AT THE FIFTEENTH

In May, 2013 the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit participated in the Palm Beach County Bar Association's Law Week by hosting the "Shadow a Judge" program. The program allows a group of high school students with an interest in the legal profession an opportunity to interact with the court system and individuals within the legal field. This year's participants were from Palm Beach Lakes, Berean Christian, American Heritage and Inlet Grove High Schools.

The program consisted of a welcome address by then **Chief Judge Peter Blanc** who spoke about the court system and shared his robe with the teacher to signify the neutrality of the judiciary.

A tour of the courthouse included juvenile court observation. After the tour a panel discussion was held with Juvenile **Judges Kathleen Kroll, Ronald Alvarez and Donald Hafele**. Included on the panel was an Assistant Public Defender and an Assistant State Attorney.

The tour included visits to the clerk's office, jury office and the law library. Court Technology Officer, Noel Chessman, discussed technology in the courts while Alternative Dispute Resolution Director, Bill Moreno, finished the presentation by holding a mock mediation.



*Chief Judge Peter Blanc shares his robe with Charles Rawls, a teacher from Palm Beach Lakes High School.*



*L-r: Assistant Public Defender Danielle Williams; Judge Kathleen Kroll; Assistant State Attorney Lindsey Marcus; Chief of Personnel Germaine English.*



*The ADR Office of the Court participated in Law Week activities. On May 2, 2013, Bill Moreno, ADR Director, spoke to students about the Court's mediation program, and about a career in mediation. The presentation included a mock mediation in which students participated as litigants.*

### North County

On May 16, 2013, **Judge Richard Oftedal** was presented with the 2013 Distinguished Jurist of the Year Award by the North County Section of the Palm Beach County Bar Association.

The ceremony was held at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in North Palm Beach.



*Judge Richard Oftedal*

### South County

On June 8, 2013, **Judge Meenu Sasser** was presented with the 2013 Distinguished Jurist of the Year Award at the 52nd Annual Installation Gala of the South Palm Beach County Bar Association (SPBCBA).

The ceremony was held at the Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton.



*Judge Meenu Sasser and Tom Sasser*

### Judge Peter Evans Presides Over New Wage Dispute Division

**Judge Peter Evans** now presides over the newly formed Wage Dispute docket, a specialized docket which handles pre-suit and pre-trial mediations. Palm Beach County and the Legal Aid Society entered into an agreement aimed at assisting individuals who are involved in disputes with employers involving unpaid wages. Volunteer mediators from the Fifteenth Circuit Alternative Dispute Resolution Office provide the mediation services.



*Judge Peter Evans and Walter Colbath, III, discuss the merits and benefits of mediation for the new Wage Dispute Division.*

### Chief Judge Peter Blanc swears in a new attorney



As one of his final acts as Chief Judge, Peter Blanc swore in new attorney and former law clerk Nick Sabella.



### South County Judges Host “Professionalism Seminar”

On Friday May 31, 2013 the South County Judges hosted a seminar entitled “A View From The Bench.”

Administrative **Judge Moses Baker, Jr.**, welcomed the guests, mostly made up of members from the South Palm Beach County Bar. **Judges Timothy McCarthy, David French, Moses Baker,** and Magistrate Diane Kirigin gave presentations on civility and professionalism. **Judge Daliah Weiss** presented on the Rules of Evidence and Judicial Notice and Hearsay.

Due to busy court dockets **Judges Reginald Corlew and Martin Colin** were unable to attend.



*L-r: Judges Daliah Weiss, Moses Baker, David French, Timothy McCarthy*



*Judge Timothy McCarthy finds a lighter moment while discussing professionalism. Seated: Magistrate Diane Kirigin and Judge Moses Baker*

### Judge Robin Rosenberg Hosts Mock Trial

On May 17, 2013, **Judge Robin Rosenberg** hosted a mock trial with students from Palm Springs Middle School. Judge Rosenberg presided as seventh-grade civics students took on the roles of prosecuting and defense attorneys, defendant, and witnesses for the prosecution and the defense. A jury was impaneled using seventh and eighth grade participants.

Following the “jury” deliberations, which returned a not guilty verdict, students learned more about the courthouse operations from a courthouse deputy. Additionally, a canine handler showed the students his security dog whose duty it is to sniff out possible explosives in the courthouse.



The trip was organized by social studies department chair, Phil Mancusi. Other participating teachers were Ellen Bredeweg, who coached the trial participants, and Kevin Mancusi, who brought a seventh-grade group, also acting as jury members.



*Commissioner Mary Lou Berger (center) presents a proclamation at the Board of County Commissioners meeting on June 4th, recognizing June 2013 as National Drug Court Month. Accepting it are (l-r): Case Manager Josh Rose, Juvenile Court Operations Manager Cristy Altaro, Palm Beach County Circuit Court Judge Ron Alvarez, Adult Drug Court Coordinator Dorrie Tyng, and Trial Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke.*

### Judge Ronald Alvarez Swears in New Attorney

On June 16, 2013, **Judge Ronald Alvarez** swore in Veronica Limia as a new Florida attorney. Veronica's road through law school did not follow the usual path as at 17 she was a troubled young lady and ended up prosecuted as an adult for burglary and grand larceny. She served 18 months at the now defunct Florida Institute for Girls and was set free on her nineteenth birthday.

Fast forward almost ten years and Veronica graduated from Florida International University Law School. She was sworn in to the Florida Bar by Judge Alvarez, the Juvenile Judge that she appeared before numerous times under less happy circumstances.

Veronica hopes to work on behalf of troubled kids, helping to ensure that they receive the structure, guidance, and services they may need to change their lives in a positive manner. She also has her sights set on a possible judgeship, years from now, so that she can carry on Judge Alvarez's work with children in the court system.





## LAW WEEK: ANNUAL JUDGES/LAWYERS SOFTBALL GAME

On Saturday, April 27, 2013, the 18th Annual Judges/Lawyers softball competition was held at John Prince Park.

This is the third year the event has been dedicated to Dennis P. Koehler, Esq. who passed away in 2011 after a valiant fight against melanoma. It is now known as the 'Koehler Classic.'

Participating in this event were: U.S. District Court **Judge Kenneth Marra**, Fifteenth Circuit **Judges, Mark Eissey and Jim Martz**. Magistrate Sara Alijewicz, along with members from the Palm Beach County Bar Association, participated in the planning of the annual event.

Although the Judges' team fought hard, the winner, again, was the Attorneys' team.

Immediately following the game, the judges and lawyers enjoyed a picnic lunch donated by Duffy's at Village Commons.



*The Judges' Team*



*The Attorneys' Team*



## TRIAL COURT LAW CLERKS

This spring, the Trial Court Law Clerks welcomed Benjamin Kennard to the Circuit. Ben graduated with honors from Emory University School of Law in May 2012. While in law school he served as the Managing Editor of the Emory Law Journal, worked as an Intern at Cisco Systems, Inc., the Internal Revenue Service, and as a teaching assistant in an advanced legal writing. After his graduation from law school and before his move to Palm Beach County, Ben worked with a law firm in Atlanta.



Ben graduated from the University of Florida in 2002 with a degree in Business Administration. He was employed in Sarasota as a transition analyst, a real estate agent, and as a commercial property appraiser before beginning his legal studies.

### Summer Judicial Interns

In May the summer intern program started with nine law students joining the circuit. In the first 6 weeks of the program, the interns, along with the trial court law clerks, toured the Palm Beach County Jail, attended First Appearance Court and Mental Health Court with **Judge James Martz**, Juvenile Court with **Judge Ronald Alvarez**, and Adult Drug Court with **Judge Caroline Shepherd**. They also observed Uniform Motion Calendar, foreclosure hearings with **Judge Robin Rosenberg**, felony arraignments, special set hearings with **Judge Jack Cox** as well as other various civil and criminal hearings.

Off site visits included Place of Hope (a group foster home), the Juvenile Detention Facility/Juvenile Assessment Center, a ride along with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, oral arguments at the Fourth District Court of Appeal, the historic courthouse and a trip to the Belle Glade Courthouse to meet with **Judge Peter Evans**, **Judge James Martz** and **Senior Judge Nelson Bailey**. In addition to all the trips and observations, the interns worked on a civil case management project, various post conviction motions and county to circuit appeals.



*L-r: Cooper Jarnigan, University of Miami; Alexandra Bargoot, Cornell University; Lars Altman, University of Florida; Michael Binko, University of Miami; Zachary Rothman, University of Florida; Michael Selig, George Washington University; Christopher Weeg, University of Florida; Edward Grodin, Florida State University; Annie Duong, Florida State University*



### Courthouse Tour

Leadership Boca visited the Fifteenth Circuit on May 5, 2013, and met with **Judges August Bonavita** and **Robert Panse**. The Judges discussed aspects of the judicial system with the group including their role as County Court Judges and the jurisdictional authority of the County Court.

Senator Maria Sachs also addressed the group. She explained the role of leadership in government in the Florida Legislature.



*Judge August Bonavita addresses Leadership Boca*



*Senator Maria Sachs (center) stands with Leadership Boca members*

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### Mediation Training

On June 14th, Palm Beach County Victim Services presented a seminar on victim services to the Circuit's County and Family Mediators. The session, attended by over 35 court mediators, was part of a continuing education series provided by the Mediation Department for the volunteer and staff mediators.

*L-r: Amy Shaffer, LMHC; Susan Carlini, MSCJ, Carol Messam-Gilbert, MPA and Walter Colbath, III, Mediation Services Coordinator with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Office.*





### Traffic Hearing Officer Training

On June 6, 2013, Fourth District Court of Appeal **Judge Jonathan Gerber** returned to the Fifteenth Circuit Main Courthouse to provide an ethics training for the Traffic Hearing Officers.

Also in attendance were Traffic Hearing Officers from the 8th Circuit, 17th Circuit, and 20th Circuit.



*Judge Jonathon Gerber addresses the mediators*

### Meet the Traffic Hearing Officers



*Back l-r: Parnel Auguste, Marshall Osofsky, Leonard Singer, Daniel Haverman, James Kehoe, Michele Lenoff, Lloyd Routman, Sara Blumberg, Donia Roberts, Steven Rubin, James McGlynn*

*Front l-r: Linda Spector, Miriam Acosta Castriz, Cathy Chimera, Steven Miller, John Kurtz*



### Germaine English, Chief of Personnel Services, Earns Certification

Germaine Z. English, Chief of Personnel Services recently earned certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR).

The certification, awarded by the HR Certification Institute, signifies that Germaine English possesses the theoretical knowledge and practical experience in human resource management necessary to pass a rigorous examination demonstrating a mastery of the field. "Certification as a human resource professional clearly demonstrates a commitment to personal excellence and to the human resource profession," said Mary Power, CAE, Executive Director of the HR Certification Institute.



*Germaine English*

### Court Interpreter Training

On May 17, 2013, the Circuit hosted its second educational workshop of the year for Court Interpreters. The professional development seminar entitled, "Forensics: Lost in Translation" is an approved course by the Florida Court Interpreter Certification and Regulation Program.

The training was primarily designed to familiarize court interpreters with the forensic terms most frequently used by prosecutors, defense attorneys, and expert witnesses when presenting testimonies during trials and other court proceedings. The session covered six particular topics: Firearms Analysis, Crime Scene, Forensic Toxicology, Forensic Chemistry, Forensic Biology and Latent Prints. Glossaries of the terms pertinent to each unit were provided to the participants in English, Spanish, and Creole. The workshop was presented by the Forensic Science Team, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office.



*A view of the participants at the Forensics: Lost In Translation workshop*



*Participants at the workshop listen to Forensic Scientist Jimmy Palma from PBSO Firearms Unit.*

### Excellence Awards

Congratulations to those persons nominated for the Judicial Assistant (JA) Recognition Award for the first quarter of 2013: Erin Brandt, Brenda Gleason, Donna Holden, Kimberly Massengill, Sherri Norton, and Janny Phillips.

Congratulations, also, to those persons nominated for the Court Administration Employee of the Quarter Award for the first quarter of 2013: Sara Jones, Susan Permuy, Letitia Warren, and Sylvia Wilson.

The Selection Committee had a difficult time choosing the final candidates because of the quality of the nominations. On June 14, 2013, the results were announced at a ceremony: Erin Brandt, Judicial Assistant to Judge Oftedal was named JA of the Quarter. Susan Permuy, Digital Court Reporter, was named Court Administration Employee of the Quarter.



*Barbara Dawicke, Judge Robin Rosenberg, Judge Richard Oftedal, Erin Brandt and Chief Judge Peter Blanc*



*Barbara Dawicke, Judge Robin Rosenberg, Judge Richard Oftedal, Susan Permuy and Chief Judge Peter Blanc*

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## TAKE OUR DAUGHTERS AND SONS TO WORK DAY

Court Administration celebrated “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day” on June 14, 2013. The program consisted of a welcome by **Chief Judge Peter Blanc**, a juvenile court observation with **Judge Ronald Alvarez**, a caring canine presentation, an introduction to court reporting, and an opportunity to experience court interpreting in both Spanish and Creole.

The young adults who appeared for the program have parents who work as Judicial Assistants, in Court Reporting, the Law Library, HR, and the Foreclosure Division. At the completion of the program the attendees shadowed their parent as they carried out their duties for the Court.



*Chief Judge Peter Blanc answers some challenging questions from the children.*



*Juvenile Judge Ronald Alvarez*

## Retirements: Alternative Dispute Resolution Office

The ADR office recently bid farewell to two valued and long serving employees, Laverne Mosley, Mediator, and Sylvia Wilson, Mediation Secretary. Ms. Mosley was employed as a Family Mediator in the Circuit from July 1989-June 2013. Ms. Wilson was employed from June 2002-May 2013. Both will be missed terribly by the Mediation staff. Their contributions to the Circuit are appreciated and will not be forgotten. We wish them well in their retirement.



*Fifth from left Sylvia Wilson; Fifth from right Laverne Mosley.*

## WELCOME TO THE CIRCUIT APRIL-JUNE 2013

### Welcome:

Kelli-Renee Williams - Floating Judicial Assistant  
Sharon Royal - Magistrate Assistant  
Stephanie King - Magistrate Assistant  
Shilah James - Magistrate Assistant  
Benjamin Kennard - Trial Court Law Clerk  
Myrtel Ortiz - Court Interpreter  
Jose Pereira - Court Interpreter  
Joshua Rosa - County Court Case Manager - Juvenile  
David Juhe - Front Desk Specialist / Video Hearing Technician  
Vanessa Guzman - Information Desk Specialist  
Alexandra Bargoot - Foreclosure Case Manager  
Lori Fischer - Foreclosure Case Manager  
Jonique Hale - Foreclosure Case Manager  
Toni-Ann Miller - Foreclosure Case Manager  
Maria Vega - Foreclosure Case Manager  
Jacarri Walker - Foreclosure Case Manager

## ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

### Administrative Orders amended April 1-June 30, 2013 are:

11.110-4/13, Appointment of Circuit Judges as Acting County Judges and County Judges as Acting Circuit Judges  
4.411-5/13, Alternative Sanctions Program for Felony Offenders  
2.310-4/13, Service by Email  
4.504-4/13, Felony Re-Assignment of Cases, which has been VACATED  
4.101-5/13, Administrative Procedures in the Criminal Division  
4.502-5/13, Circuit Criminal Felony Allocation  
5.101-5/13, Unified Family Court Jurisdiction  
10.301-6/13, Civil Traffic Infraction Hearing Officer Program  
2.312-6/13, Electronic Filing of Documents  
3.302-6/13, Foreclosure Division "AW"  
2.105-6/13, Fifteenth Circuit Professionalism Panel

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### July

16-18 Conference of County Court Judges

### August

4 Statewide Chief Judges and Court Administrators Meeting

4-7 Conference of Circuit Judges

4-7 Court Administrators Educational Program

7-9 Foreclosure Training

## COURT HOLIDAYS JULY - SEPTEMBER

### July

4 Independence Day

### September

3 Labor Day

17 Rosh Hashanah

Therapy dog "Trouble" poses for her close up during a visit with the children at "Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day."



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