

Circuit Courier

January-March 2014

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

Black History Month
2014 Bench/Bar Conference

And more...



**Cover photo: Main
Judicial Center,
WPB**

*Photo by: Deputy
Bill LaFlamme*

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FOCUS ON BLACK HISTORY MONTH: ACHIEVEMENTS OF JUDGE EDWARD RODGERS

Retired Judge Edward Rodgers was raised in Pittsburgh and worked in the steel mills before joining the Navy during World War

II. After his service, he attended Howard University, moved to West Palm Beach and eventually attended and graduated from Florida A & M law school. In

1964, Edward Rodgers became the County's first black prosecutor

when he was appointed to the position by (then) State Attorney, Marvin Mounts. Thirteen years later, in 1977 with his elevation to the bench, he obtained the distinction of being the County's first black Judge and, later, Florida's first black Circuit Judge.



Retired Judge Edward Rodgers

Judge Rodgers has always sought to improve the lives of others. In 1992 he was recognized with a Jefferson Award, the "Nobel Prize for public service" for his establishment of the Riviera Beach Drug Court. Due to its success in helping those with addiction issues, the Riviera Beach Drug Court was later replicated in Delray Beach and West Palm Beach.

After retiring from the bench in 1995, the former Judge has continued his public service including a tenure as a Riviera Beach City Councilman and Mayor. Additionally, from 2010-2012 he served as the first Chairman of the Palm Beach County Ethics Commission. In 2004, the Riviera Beach Post Office was renamed the Judge Edward Rodgers Post Office building.

2014 BENCH/BAR CONFERENCE

Judges in Attendance:

Circuit

Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath
 Judge Ronald Alvarez
 Ret. Judge Nelson Bailey
 Judge Thomas Barkdull III
 Judge Peter Blanc
 Judge Lucy Chernow Brown
 Judge Catherine Brunson
 Judge Charles Burton
 Judge Jack Cox
 Judge David Crow
 Judge Edward Fine
 Judge David French
 Judge Jeffrey Gillen
 Judge Donald Hafele
 Judge John Kastrenakes
 Judge Glenn Kelley
 Judge Gregory Keyser
 Judge Janis Keyser
 Judge Diana Lewis
 Judge James Martz
 Judge Joseph Marx
 Judge Krista Marx
 Judge Timothy McCarthy
 Judge Karen Miller
 Judge Richard Oftedal
 Judge John Phillips
 Judge Robin Rosenberg
 Judge Rosemarie Scher
 Judge Lisa Small

County

Judge August Bonavita
 Theodore Booras
 Judge Sandra Bosso-Pardo
 Judge Frank Castor
 Judge Barry Cohen
 Judge Reginald Corlew
 Judge Sheree Cunningham
 Judge Mark Eissey
 Judge Peter Evans
 Judge Leonard Hanser
 Judge Robert Panse
 Judge Nancy Perez
 Judge Caroline Shepherd
 Judge Debra Moses
 Stephens
 Judge Daliah Weiss

On March 7, 2014, the Palm Beach County Bar Association hosted the Bench/Bar. The Bar was greatly assisted by Judges and Court Administration staff who organized and hosted several of the sessions. This annual event provides a valuable opportunity for the judiciary and legal community to interact and discuss topics related to their respective legal practice areas.

The morning program included two new sessions, Transactional Law and Alternative Dispute Resolution. Many of the other morning sessions were geared to new attorneys and solo/small firm practitioners. Court staff moderated the civil, foreclosure, criminal, family and eEverything morning sessions.

During the lunch break, attendees were welcomed by PBC Bar President Jill Weiss. **Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath** gave his "State of the Judiciary" address. Attorney Scott Hawkins was awarded the newly named Sid Stubbs' Professionalism Award presented by Michael Mopsick and Amy Borman, chairs of the Palm Beach County Bar Association's Professionalism Committee. The Judge Edward Rodgers Diversity Award was presented to the law firm of Shutts and Bowen.



Left: Judges Jeffrey Gillen, Sandra Bosso-Pardo, John Kastrenakes



Left: Judges Joseph Marx, Ronald Alvarez, Robin Rosenberg, Krista Marx, James Martz



Left: Judges Martin Colin, Spencer Levine, Laura Johnson, Robert Panse



Left: Attorney Leo Plascencia, Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath, Judge Peter Evans



Left: Judge Moses Baker and General Counsel Amy Borman

BENCH/BAR CONFERENCE: CONT.

Judicial Assistants:

Nicolette Anderson
Valencia Anderson
Mary Beardsley
Jennifer Bernier
Erin Borden
Erin Brandt
Nancy Brody
Susan Campbell
Kristin Colbath
Mona Driscoll
Torina Edwards
Mary Ellis
Jeri Fickes
Brenda Gleason
Carla Glover
Diana Grant
Marilyn Greathouse
Carol Hall
Donna Holden
Saiidia Johnson
Joli Katz
Judith Lane
Gloria Lozano
Stefanie Lee
Audrie Leo
Jan Leslie
Kim Massengill
Katherine Matthews
Dawn McClelland
Marie McGeehan
Harriet Merlin
Manuela Morales
Andrea Morris
Marie Murphy
Carol Nettles
Sherrie Norton
Eyder Orozco
Autumn Peek
Janny Phillips
Lorraine Pratts
Rebecca Ricker
Sherry Riggio
William Rivera
Debra Rosenblatt
Roberta Rubin
Sterlette Searcy
Michelle Smith
Carmen Sosa
Amy Tracy
Sabrina Valdez
Denise Van Vooren
Maria Vasil
Kelli Williams
Jessica Wolfkill
Maryann Yarosz
Celanne Ziegler

Following Judge Colbath's presentation, this year's lunchtime guest speaker was Laurence Leamer. He spoke of his new novel, "The Pride of Justice." This book is based on the true story involving two attorneys who spent more than twelve years seeking justice in Caperton v. Massey.

The afternoon Bench /Bar sessions, aimed at Judges, Magistrates, and attorneys, were varied and addressed substantive legal topics. In one session, several members of the Judiciary participated in a group discussion on topics related to family law, juvenile law, personal injury, commercial litigation and criminal law. Another session, aimed at law students, was led by Judges Nancy Perez and Lucy Brown, with General Counsel Amy Borman.



L-r: Judge Lisa Small, Melissa Sotillo



L-r: Jasmin Rios, Cristy Altaro, Mary Quinlan



L-r: Tara Kranz, Walter Colbath, Bill Moreno



L-r: Magistrates Judette Fanelli, Linda Goodwin



Back center, Judge Richard Oftedal with the foreclosure team



Judicial Assistants Gloria Lozano, Jennifer Bernier

Participants include:

Magistrates:

Sara Alijewicz
Thomas Baker
Peter Bassilene
Joyce Cohen
Judette Fanelli
Linda Goodwin
Diane Kirigin
Jorge Maxion
Larry Weaver
Maxine Williams

Magistrates Assistants:

Sandra Becerra
Natashia Harris
Shilah James
Nicole Karlecke
Stephanie King
Breanne Perry
Sharon Royal
Rita Sinofsky
Cathy Solis
Law Clerks:
Leslie Arsenault
Rachel Belcher
Angela Claud
Sean Fahey
Christine Gardner
Monica Haddad
Gabrielle Jackson
Benjamin Kennard
Madhavi Menon
Michele Nihiser
Michelle Logan
Jennifer Printz

Staff:

Cristy Altaro
Amy Borman
Gina Evangelista
Tara Kranz
Bill Moreno
Devon Mugridge
Debra Oats
Mary Quinlan
Tehera Smith
Melissa Sotillo

*The following article from **Judge Meenu Sasser** was posted in the March 2013 edition of the Palm Beach County Bar Association Bulletin. Excerpts from the full article follow.*

As judges, unfortunately we have a first-hand view of the decrease in civility among attorneys. Much too often, we see discovery abuses, filing of baseless objections to discovery requests with the knowledge of the lack of existence of responsive documents, meritless motions for sanctions filed to gain an edge, improper instructions not to answer during depositions, invalid objections to deposition questions to coach a witness on how to answer, and vitriolic chains of string emails between counsel.

Lawyers who engage in such tactics often find themselves and their clients harmed as their cases go off track, often ending up in a discovery morass, or with competing cross motions for sanctions that take up valuable court time, cost significant sums of money and do not serve their clients best interests of efficiently progressing their cases towards a trial on the merits. Lawyers who engage in incivility may also find that their actions destroy their reputation with opposing counsel and the bench. No one wants to refer cases to someone who is unprofessional and who wastes a client's time and money. The most reputable and respected lawyers are most in demand and get the most business. Such behavior makes life intolerable, often unnecessarily increasing the stress of practice and adversely affecting health and relationships. Finally, incivility results in a denigration of the court system and the image of lawyers among the public.

The decrease in civility calls for greater judicial leadership. In fact, numerous commentators have turned a critical eye towards the judiciary, urging judges to assume leadership and serve as the principal example of courtesy, restraint, tolerance. We as judges must play a critical role in fostering and promoting civility. The American Board of Trial Advocates has adopted principles which include conduct expected of judges. These principles provide as follows:

A lawyer is entitled to expect judges to observe the following Principles:

- Be courteous and respectful to lawyers, parties, witnesses, and court personnel.
- Control courtroom decorum and proceedings so as to ensure that all litigation is conducted in a civil and efficient manner.

- Abstain from hostile, demeaning, or humiliating language in written opinions or oral communications with lawyers, parties, or witnesses.
- Be punctual in convening all hearings and conferences, and, if unavoidably delayed, notify counsel, if possible.
- Be considerate of time schedules of lawyers, parties, and witnesses in setting dates for hearings, meetings, and conferences. When possible, avoid scheduling matters for a time that conflicts with counsel's required appearance before another judge.
- Make all reasonable efforts to promptly decide matters under submission.
- Give issues in controversy deliberate, impartial, and studied analysis before rendering a decision.
- Be considerate of the time constraints and pressures imposed on lawyers by the demands of litigation practice, while endeavoring to resolve disputes efficiently.
- Be mindful that a lawyer has a right and duty to present a case fully, make a complete record, and argue the facts and law vigorously.
- Never impugn the integrity or professionalism of a lawyer based solely on the clients or causes he represents.
- Require court personnel to be respectful and courteous toward lawyers, parties, and witnesses.
- Abstain from adopting procedures that needlessly increase litigation time and expense.
- Promptly bring to counsel's attention uncivil conduct on the part of clients, witnesses, or counsel.

Many in the organized bar are also taking a stand against lawyer incivility. In an effort to combat the decline in civility and promote a more uniform standard of professional courtesy across South Florida, 42 South Florida voluntary bar associations have adopted a joint resolution to promote the Florida Supreme Court's Amended Oath of Attorney Admission. As judges we can strongly support this effort, which was spearheaded by Adam Rabin as President of the Palm Beach County Bar Association.

Accordingly, in an effort to support the voluntary bar associations joint efforts to promote civility, upon the initial on-line scheduling of a special set hearing in any cases in Circuit Civil Division AI, the Court will serve a notice, via the Court's e-service system, of the Palm Beach County Bar Association Standards of Professional Courtesy as a gentle reminder to all counsel (whether they primarily practice in Palm Beach County, are admitted pro hac vice from out-of-state, or have their offices located elsewhere in Florida) of the expectations of professionalism and civility in the practice of law in Palm Beach County.



On February 11, 2014, Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath was invited to address the monthly meeting of the South Palm Beach County Bar Association. At the luncheon the Judge spoke of issues involving the Circuit, including judicial assignments, new judges, and the Circuit budget.

Judicial Lunch Series

On February 5, 2014, the Judicial Relations Committee of the Palm Beach County Bar Association held its monthly judicial luncheon where they discussed “Litigating Attorney’s Fees-Seeking Them, Proving Them, and Opposing Them.” The judicial panel consisted of **Judges Jack Cox, Donald Hafele and Timothy McCarthy** with Andy Thomson of Proskauer Rose as the moderator.



L-r facing: Andy Thomson, Judge Donald Hafele, Judge Timothy McCarthy, Judge Jack Cox

Adopt-A-Bear

On March 17, 2014, Palm Beach County Juvenile Courts were presented with a supply of brand new stuffed teddy bears, courtesy of the Adopt-A-Bear program.

Judges Ronald Alvarez, Kathleen Kroll, James Martz, Rosemarie Scher and Magistrate Sara Alijewicz received the bears which will be given out to children who appear before them.



L-r Magistrate Alijewicz, Judge Kroll, Judge Scher, Adopt-A-Bear representative Michele Gillen, Judge Martz, Judge Alvarez

AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Judge Jack Schramm Cox and Scouts

As part of the courthouse tour program, Cub Scout Pack 173 met with **Judge Jack Schramm Cox** in his courtroom for a mock trial.



Judge Jack Cox, Court Deputy David Chapman and cub scout.



Second from the left, Letitia Warren, Tour Coordinator. Front: Judge Jack Cox with Scout Pack 213, and their leaders.

Judge Meenu Sasser presents Sidebar to Young Lawyers

The Palm Beach County Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section held the first of their "YLS Sidebar Series" on April 15. **Judge Meenu Sasser** provided the section with information on Summary Judgment Motions.



Judge Meenu Sasser presents to the Young Lawyers Section

Judge Sasser and Mock Jury

The Florida Association of Women Lawyers along with students from American Heritage school participated in a mock jury. **Judge Meenu Sasser** acted as the presiding Judge.



Process Servers

Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath swore in 45 newly certified process servers on January 15, 2014. All 45 have completed the required training and have successfully passed the process server examination.

The Certified Process Server program, under the management of Amy Borman, accepts applicants each October.



Chief Judge Jeffrey Colbath swears in the new certified process servers.

TRIAL COURT LAW CLERKS

Michelle Logan joined the circuit in January 2014 as a Senior Trial Court Law Clerk responsible for coordinating the criminal & juvenile assignments. Michelle previously worked as a staff attorney in the 17th Judicial Circuit and was with the Office of the State Attorney for approximately 8 years in the appellate and county court divisions. Michelle also worked in private practice handling DHSMV matters as well as other criminal appeals. Michelle completed her undergraduate at Florida State University and her law degree at Nova Southeastern University where she was a Leo Goodwin Scholar.



Madhavi Menon joined the circuit as a Trial Court Law Clerk in March 2014. Madhavi relocated from Indianapolis where she worked in the Office of the Indiana Attorney General, Civil Litigation Section. Madhavi graduated from Dartmouth College in June 2009 with an A.B. *cum laude* in Government and Religion. She completed her first year of law school at the University of Texas School of Law before transferring to the University of Chicago Law School where she graduated from in June 2012. While in law school, Madhavi was a 1L staff member of the American Journal of Criminal Law and part of The Exoneration Project where she worked on post-conviction matters. During law school Madhavi worked at the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Policy and the Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network.



Florida Court Personnel (FCP) Institute

The Florida Court Personnel Institute, held this year on February 6 and February 7, 2014 in Orlando, offers education for court personnel through the Florida Court Education Trust Fund.

Judge Kathleen Kroll, the Chair of the Florida Court Personnel Committee was present and attended the various sessions. Court Administration employees participating were: Cristy Altaro, Sara Blumberg, Amy Borman, Walter Colbath, Marla Jacknin, Diane Kirigin, Debra Oats, Melissa Sotillo and Tara Kranz. Tracks included: Motivation and Team Building, Are You Getting Your Message Across, Public Perceptions of Fairness and Faculty Training.



L-r Melissa Sotillo, Debra Oats, Cristy Altaro, Walter Colbath, Marla Jacknin, Tara Kranz

Staff Lunch Seminars

On February 11, Court Interpreters Angela Afandor and Hans Belizaire presented, “Useful Phrases in Spanish and Creole”, as part of the Circuit’s Lunch and Learn.



L-r: Hans Belizaire and Angela Afandor

On March 25, General Counsel Amy Borman presented a Lunch and Learn to court employees on “Social Media”, and how to avoid the appearance of impropriety.



Amy Borman

Mock Trial Competition

The Palm Beach County Courthouse was the location for a Mock Trial Competition hosted by the Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. on February 3, 2014.

The following schools participated in the event. American Heritage Boca/Delray; Florida Atlantic University High School; Inlet Grove High School; Palm Beach Lakes Community High School; Royal Palm Beach High School; Spanish River High School.



Participants of the Mock Trial Competition discuss their strategy.

AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Excellence Awards

Congratulations to those persons nominated for the Judicial Assistant Recognition Award for the fourth quarter of 2013: Nancy Brody, Diana Grant, Judith Lane, Stefanie Lee, Marie Murphy, Jessica Wolfkill, Maryann Yarosz.

Congratulations, also, to those persons nominated for the Court Administration employee of the fourth quarter of 2013: Natashia Harris, Rhoda Jones, Benjamin Kennard, Jennifer Printz, Sarwar Siddiqui, Connie Thomas.

On January 24th, a ceremony was held to announce the winners for the fourth quarter of 2013. Stefanie Lee, Judicial Assistant to Judge Peter Blanc, was named Judicial Assistant of the quarter ending December 2013. Jennifer Printz and Connie Thomas were both named as the Court Employee of the quarter for the same quarter.

The winning Judicial Assistant and Court Staff person received a plaque, a paid Administrative leave day, a photo in the newsletter, and four weeks of parking in the Judicial parking garage.



*Judge Peter
Blanc and
Stefanie Lee*



*Jennifer Printz and
Amy Borman*



*Connie Thomas
and Judge
Rosemarie
Scher*

Law Library Services

Email Service/Fax Service

Copy Machines

CLE CD Rentals

Westlaw

Stamped Envelopes

Blank Orders

TV/DVD/Elmo rental

Military Employment Verification

Law Library Staff will do an online search and print a document to show if a person is currently on active duty.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

Administrative Orders amended January 1-March 31, 2014 are:

- 5.212 -1/14 IN RE: ORDER TO ATTEND PARENTING CLASS, AND TO FILE FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE AND CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINE WORKSHEET IN PATERNITY & DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE CASES WITH MINOR CHILDREN
- 5.108 -1/14 IN RE: FAMILY/JUVENILE HYBRID DIVISION "FA/JM"
- 2.506 -1/14* IN RE: COURT INTERPRETER POLICIES
- 11.105 -1/14* RE: JUDICIAL ROTATION POLICY
- 11.106 -1/14* RE: ALTERNATE ASSIGNMENTS
- 11.102 -1/14* RE: ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGES AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
- 4.205 -1/14* IN RE: FORFEITURE AND DISCHARGE OF SURETY AND CASH
- 3.314 -3/14 IN RE: TIMELY RESOLUTION OF MOTIONS IN FORECLOSURE DIVISION "AW"

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>.

WELCOME TO THE CIRCUIT

New Employees:

Dexter Banks	Mailroom Clerk
Judy Broderick	Foreclosure Secretary
Ashley Johnson	Foreclosure Case Manager
Lorainne Laguer Pratts	Judicial Assistant
Michelle Logan	Trial Court Law Clerk
Madhavi Menon	Trial Court Law Clerk
Cathia Philippe	Foreclosure Case Manager
Erik Rodriguez	Mailroom
Cathy Solis	Magistrate Assistant
Jacarri Walker	Probate Case Manager
LaPorcia Walker	Foreclosure Case Manager

COURT HOLIDAYS

May

27 Memorial Day

RECENT EVENTS

April

26 Fifteenth Circuit Family Picnic

April 28-May 2 Law Week

FUTURE EVENTS

June

25 Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day

Retirement:

Court Administration recently bid farewell to a valued and long serving employee, Sara Jones, who worked in the Law Library for 24 years.

Sara, who in the past few years has worked primarily in the South County Courthouse Library, has been an important and valuable member of the Court staff. Law Library patrons and Court staff will miss her gregarious personality, her willingness to help out wherever needed, and her knowledge of research sources. The Circuit wishes Sara a happy and relaxing retirement. We Look forward to seeing her back in the library, from time to time, as temporary help.



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Barbara Dawicke, Trial Court Administrator

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