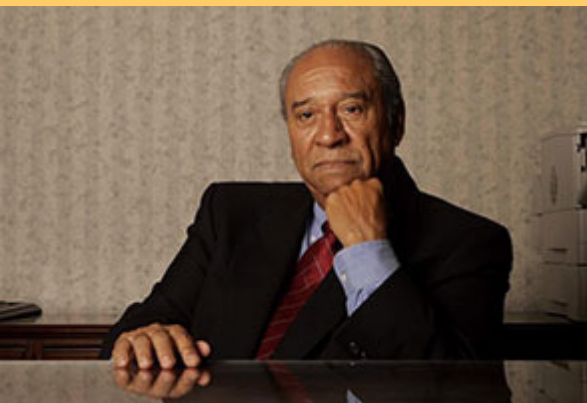


FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2018 | VOLUME 2018-4

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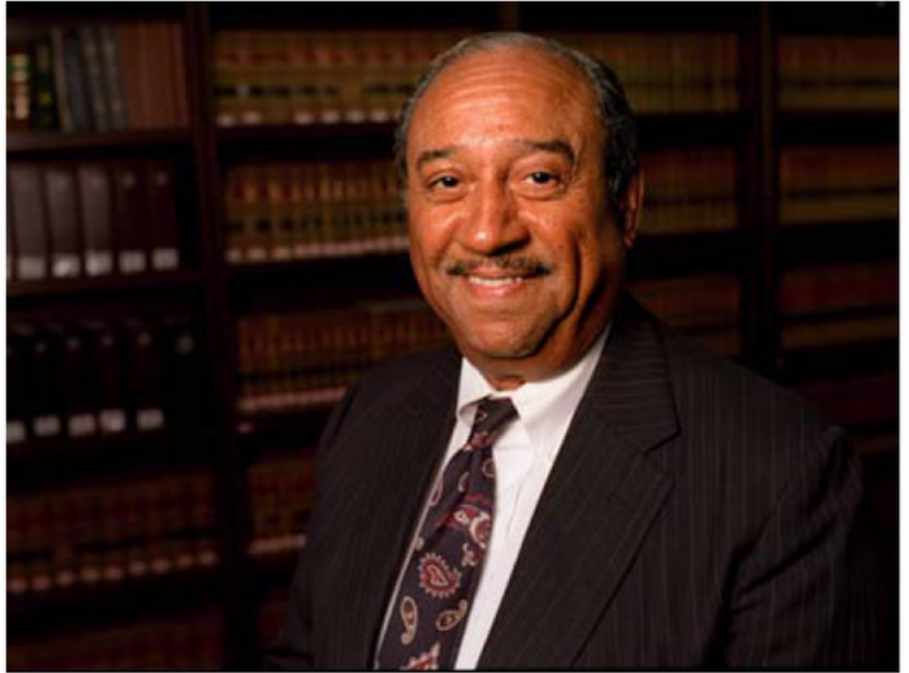
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The Hon. Edward Rodgers

Judge Rodgers Facts:

- Appointed as first Black county prosecutor in 1964
- Appointed as first Black judge in Palm Beach County in 1973
- Awarded the Jefferson Award in 1992 for his establishment of the Riviera Beach Drug Court
- Retired as a Judge in 1995
- Served on Riviera Beach City Council from 1999-2002
- Riviera Beach Post Office was renamed the Judge Edward Rodgers Post Office in 2004



THE HONORABLE EDWARD RODGERS, 1927 - 2018

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit mourns the passing of the Honorable Edward Rodgers. Judge Rodgers served for 22 years as a Judge in the Circuit including a term as Chief Judge from 1983-1985. He retired from the bench in 1995 but continued serving the community, as a Riviera Beach Councilman and Mayor, and also as a member of the Palm Beach County Ethics Committee.

Judge Rodgers graduated from Howard University with a B.A. and subsequently obtained his J.D. from Florida A&M University, College of Law. Two years after graduating from law school, Judge Rodgers was appointed as the first Black county prosecutor in Palm Beach County followed by an appointment to the County Court bench as the Circuit's first Black judge in 1973. He was elevated to the Circuit Court Bench in 1977. In 1991, Judge Rodgers started the Riviera Beach Civil Drug Court which operates to this day. Judge Rodgers was recognized for his visionary work related to the Riviera Beach Civil Drug Court with the Jefferson Award, the "Nobel" prize for public service.

AWARDS & HONORS

Chief Judge Krista Marx Elected Chair of Judicial Qualifications Commission

The Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission elected Chief Judge Marx as Chair for a second consecutive term. In this role she leads fifteen commission members, including judges, attorneys, and nonlawyers, who are tasked with investigating misconduct by Florida judges.

The Commission has jurisdiction to review complaints about judges of the County, Circuit, District Courts of Appeal, as well as Justices of the Supreme Court of Florida. Proceedings before the Investigative Panel of the Commission are confidential, pursuant to Art. V, section 12(a)(4) of the Florida Constitution, Rule 2.420 of the Rules of Judicial Administration, and Rule 23 of the FJQC Rules.



Chief Judge Marx

Judge Glenn Kelley appointed to Trial Court Budget Commission

Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice, Charles Canady, appointed Judge Kelley to serve on the Trial Court Budget Commission (TCBC) as the representative for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. The TCBC is charged with specific responsibilities including:

- Establishing budgeting and funding policies and procedures consistent with judicial branch plans and policies, directions from the supreme court, and in consideration of input from supreme court committees and from the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges and the Florida Conference of County Court Judges
- Making recommendations to the supreme court on the trial court component of the annual judicial branch budget request



Judge Kelley

South Tech Academy Visits Judge Bradley Harper



Judge Harper with South Tech Academy Students

Judge Harper, County Judge, held a question and answer session on December 19th, with students from South Tech Academy. During his session with the students, Judge Harper explained the day-to-day functions of the Judicial System.

Hon. Meenu Sasser Receives Award

Judge Meenu Sasser was the recipient of the Civil Jury Innovator of the Year Award from the Civil Jury Project. Judge Sasser, who seeks ways to improve the court system, accepted the award at the Jury Innovations Workshop in October.



Judge Sasser (left) receives the award from Steven Sussman, Esq, on October 17, 2018

Employee Recognition Award Winners

Congratulations to our nominees for the 3rd Quarter Employee Recognition Awards including **Court Administration Staff:** Christopher Barnhill, Brianna Davino, Isabel Pereira, and Rolando Tatum; and for **Judicial Assistants:** Mary Ellis, Saiidia Johnson, and Harriet Merlin.

The ceremony was held on November 1st, 2018. The winners included: **Isabel Pereira** for Court Administration Staff and a tie for Judicial Assistant was announced - **Saiidia Johnson and Mary Ellis**.

Award winners receive the Circuit's Perpetual Trophy, a plaque, an official 15th Judicial Circuit tumbler, a paid Administrative leave day, a photo in the newsletter, and four weeks of parking in the Judicial parking garage.

To nominate an employee for a Recognition Award, visit <http://151.132.36.247/nominations/>.

WHAT ARE THE AWARDS CRITERIA?

Nominations may be made for superior performance by an employee who has demonstrated excellence in the work place. Nominations should be supported with specifics.

WHO CAN NOMINATE and WHO CAN BE RECOGNIZED?

Nominations may be submitted by any member of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. Employees/ Judicial Assistants who have been employed by the Circuit for at least one year are eligible for an award.

HOW ARE RECOGNIZED EMPLOYEES SELECTED?

Nominations are reviewed and selected by the Selection Committee. Decisions by the Selection Committee are final.



Award recipient Saiidia Johnson (center) with Chief Judge Marx (left) and Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer (right)



Judge Gillen (left) with award recipient Mary Ellis (center) and Chief Judge Marx (right)



Award recipient Isabel Pereira (center) with Tony Pereira (left) and Chief Judge Marx (right)

AROUND THE COURTHOUSE

Directors' Dessert Party

The Courthouse Directors hosted a dessert party on Thursday, November 15th. An abundance of pies were available for court staff and judicial assistants to enjoy. Additionally, a trivia contest was held in which staff members and judicial assistants could participate. Many of the questions related to courthouse judges, and individuals who raised their hands and answered correctly won a prize. To end the afternoon festivities, several individuals also told jokes. Food drive donations collected by Court Administration staff were also displayed, which benefited the Bill Brooks' Food For Families Food Drive.



Left to right: Devon Mugridge, Danni Hoeftling, Noel Chessman, Michelle Cruz, Tara Kranz, Mary Quinlan, Cristy Altaro, Tammy Anton, Barbara Dawicke, Nicholas Fricke, Melissa Sotillo



Court Staff enjoy their desserts at the annual Directors' Dessert Party



Food collected for the Food for Families Food Drive is displayed

Court Staff Gets Civics Lesson



Annette Boyd Pitts presents
American Civics to Court Staff

On Monday, October 8th, a presentation on American Civics was given by Annette Boyd-Pitts. Ms. Pitts, who has presented in over 25 countries and is a recipient of several education awards, gave a refresher of the courts and the Constitution. Ms. Pitts is the Executive Director of The Florida Law Related Education Association Inc., and also serves as the liason to the Florida Bar Constituional Judiciary Committee and Law -Related Education Committee. Participants were engaged with the presentation by answering questions throughout the presentation.

Paulina Pasquarelli Wins Constitution Knowledge Challenge



Paulina Pasquarelli, winner of
Constitution Knowledge
Challenge

Congratulations to Paulina Pasquarelli, the winner of the Constitution Knowledge Challenge, which was presented in the last newsletter. Among all of those who submitted correct answers, Paulina's name was randomly chosen as the winner. She received a coveted Fifteenth Judicial Circuit tumbler, as pictured here. Look for future challenges for your chance to win and increase your knowledge on select topics. Questions and answers are below.

Constitution Knowledge Challenge Questions and Answers

1. When was the Constitution signed? **A: September 17, 1787;**
2. Which two presidents signed the Constitution? **A: George Washington and James Madison ;**
3. Where is the original Constitution located today? **A: The National Archives in Washington, DC;**
4. What are the first three words written in the Constitution? **A: We the People**
5. Six men signed both the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Who are they? **A: George Clymer, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, George Read, Roger Sherman, and James Wilson**
6. Who was the oldest delegate at the Constitutional Convention? **A: Benjamin Franklin**
7. How many amendments are in the Constitution? **A: 27**
8. How many states were represented by the signers of the Constitution? **A: 12**
9. Which two founding fathers did not sign the Constitution due to being overseas? **A: Thomas Jefferson and John Adams**
10. What is the Bill of Rights? **A: The first 10 amendments.**



Left to right: Judges Carolyn Bell, Gregory M. Keyser, James Martz, Kirk C. Volker, and Luis Delgado



Above: Judge Martz poses with a new family on adoption day



Above: Judge Delgado poses with a newly adopted child on National Adoption Day

National Adoption Day

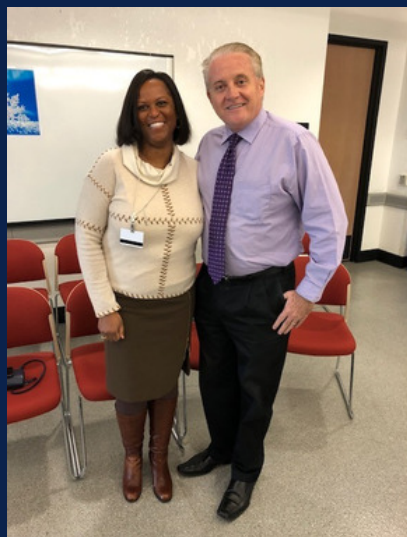
Adoptive families, adoption supporters, government officials, volunteers, and child advocates joined together to celebrate National Adoption Day in Palm Beach County on Friday, November 16th, where nearly 20 children in foster care were adopted into permanent, loving families at the Daniel T.K. Hurley Courthouse in West Palm Beach.

This annual fun-filled day featured a lunch, face painting, balloon creations, caricaturists, and a magic show followed by an award ceremony, keynote speakers, therapy dogs, and adoptions. Opening ceremonies included a welcome from Judge Martz and comments from keynote speaker Gesnel Fredricks. Jim Sackett presented the annual Jim Sackett Adoption Advocate Award to numerous photographers who have contributed their time and effort to the foster care and Adoption Day events. The Juvenile Judges finalized several adoptions at the end of the ceremony.

The event was hosted by Court Administration and coordinated by community representatives from: Children's Home Society, ChildNet, Inc., Department of Children and Families, Friends of Foster Children, Guardian ad Litem Program, and the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County.

Annual Holiday Luncheon

On December 11th, the Circuit held its annual Holiday potluck luncheon, where Judges, Judicial Assistants, and staff were invited to come together for good food and celebration. Entertainment was provided by the Palm Springs Middle School Orchestra.



Judge Rowe and Judge Hafele



Entertainment was provided by the Palm Springs Middle School Orchestra



Left to right: Judge Shepherd, Chief Judge Marx, Judge Kelley



Left to right: Sue Ling Curtis, Rhoda Jones, and Tammy Anton

Caring Canines

The Episcopal Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea on Palm Beach hosted its annual blessing of the animals service in celebration of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi on Sunday, October 8th. Retired Circuit Court Judge Ronald Alvarez and his wife were in attendance, along with several Caring Canines teams.

Additionally, to celebrate all of their love, support, and time throughout the year, an appreciation event was held on December 14th. There were gifts, snacks (including for the therapy dogs), and a photo presentation to celebrate the memories from 2018.



Annual blessing ceremony at Bethesda by the Sea



Left to Right: Kay Heisler with Sunshine, Neil Clery with Dublin, Lin Cleary with Toast, Alan Levine with Sophie, Maria Hubbell with Chloe, Deb Schwartz with Maggie May



Left: Retired Circuit Court Judge Ronald Alvarez with wife Elaine Webb-Alvarez at Bethesda by the Sea's Blessing Ceremony

Right: Judge Martz with a therapy dog



Delinquency Drug Court

Delinquency Drug Court ended the year on a positive note with a number of graduations. In addition, Drug Court was proud to celebrate the following accomplishments:

- 6 participants earned a High School Diploma or GED
- 4 participants were enrolled in college
- 4 participants were employed full-time
- In 2018, ZERO program graduates recidivated

Below are pictures from some recent graduations.



Left: Case Manager Brandon Richardson with graduate.



Right: Judge Martz with graduate and family

Technology Staff Joins to Help with Recovery Efforts



Technology staff from the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit teamed up with staff from the Fifth, Eighth, and Twentieth judicial circuits to assist with Hurricane Michael recovery efforts in the Fourteenth Circuit. After the hurricane, 39 judges and staff from Bay County and 15 from Jackson County had to be relocated to temporary buildings to ensure the continuation of court hearings.

LUNCH AND LEARN

Do You Really Need an Estate Plan?

On October 9, 2018, Gina Grandinette, Esq. of Grandinette Law, P.A., joined by Brigitte Del Rio, Paralegal, presented a Lunch & Learn to Circuit employees, titled, "Do You Really Need an Estate Plan?". Some of the topics that were discussed included: Last Will & Testaments, Power of Attorneys, Living Wills, Probate, Estate Planning and Elder Law. Employees learned a few ways they can avoid probate and how to better protect their assets.



Above from left: Gina Grandinette, Esq. and Brigitte Del Rio, from Grandinette Law, P.A.

Department of Revenue Lunch and Learn

On October 29, 2018, Magistrate Judette Fanelli and Magistrate James Williams, DOR Child Support Hearing Officers, presented a Lunch & Learn to the Family Judges, Magistrates, Judicial Assistants, Magistrate Assistants and the family case managers. During the presentation, the DOR Magistrates explained procedures and processes in Department of Revenue child support cases, the different case types, and the challenges associated with DOR proceedings.



Magistrate Judette Fanelli presents on DOR proceedings

Take Stock in Children

On November 13, 2018, Michele Legue of Take Stock in Children Palm Beach County, presented a Lunch & Learn to Circuit employees, titled, "Mentoring: Take Stock in Children." Take Stock in Children is a non-profit organization in Florida that provides a unique opportunity for deserving low-income youth/students, to escape the cycle of poverty through education. Take Stock in Children offers students college scholarships, caring volunteer mentors and hope for a better life.



Michele Legue, Associate Mentor Coordinator, Take Stock in Children

Michele Legue explained how meeting with a child in middle or high school for just 30 minutes, 3 times a month, could have a positive impact on that child's life. There are many children who need mentors, and Take Stock in Children Palm Beach County is ready to accept your application on their website: takestockpalmbeach.org

RETIREMENTS

JUDGES' RETIREMENTS

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit said goodbye to four retiring judges: the Honorable Peter Blanc, the Honorable Catherine Brunson, the Honorable David French, and the Honorable Nancy Perez. A celebration was held in their honor on December 4th, 2018. The circuit will certainly feel a great void created by the departure of these long-tenured, experienced, and knowledgeable jurists. We wish them all the best.



Chief Judge Marx addresses the audience during the celebration of the retiring judges



Left: Judicial Attendees



Chief Judge Marx with retired Judge Blanc

Hon. Peter Blanc

Judge Blanc was appointed as a County Judge in 1990, and began his tenure as a Circuit Judge in 1999. He later served as Chief Judge from 2009-2013.

Prior to his appointment, Judge Blanc worked as an Assistant Public Defender in a private law firm, and as a sole practitioner. He is a graduate of the University of Miami Law School and also earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Illinois.

His official last day was December 28th, 2018.

Hon. Catherine Brunson

In 1994, Judge Brunson became the first Black female Circuit Judge in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, after becoming the first Black woman to practice law in Palm Beach County as well as the first Black female county attorney.

She was honored with the Legacy Award from the F. Malcolm Cunningham Sr. Bar Association in February 2018, an organization she helped found in the 1970s.

Judge Brunson officially retired on December 31st, 2018.



Chief Judge Marx with retired Judge Brunson



Chief Judge Marx with retired Judge French

Hon. David French

Judge French served 11 years as Circuit Civil Judge, retiring on December 31st, 2018.

A graduate of Cumberland School of Law, Judge French worked as a trial lawyer before being elected to the bench in 2007. He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from Florida State University.

Outside of his role as a judge, he is known to be passionate about flying his personal skymaster airplane and horse breeding.

Hon. Nancy Perez

Judge Perez was raised as a child of migrant farm workers and she sometimes helped her parents in the field picking crops. This experience influenced her desire to attend law school. She graduated with her juris doctorate from Florida State University. Prior to becoming the first Hispanic judge in Palm Beach County (1991), she worked for the Migrant Farm Workers Division of Georgia Legal Services, and later worked with the Association of Migrant Organizations.

Judge Perez retired on December 31st, 2018.



Chief Judge Marx with retired Judge Perez

RETIREMENTS CONTINUED

Mary Ellis, Judicial Assistant

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit bid a farewell to Judicial Assistant Mary Ellis on November 6th, 2018 at a retirement party. Ms. Ellis served as a Judicial Assistant for 26 years, most recently as a Judicial Assistant to Judge Lucy Brown and Judge Jeffrey Gillen. Judge Gillen and Andrea Morris organized the retirement party, which was attended by family and friends.



Left to Right:
Judge Gillen, Mary Ellis, Retired Judge Lucy Brown, and Chief Judge Marx

Joe Larson, Digital Court Reporter

After a 23-year career with the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, Digital Court Reporter Joe Larson retired. Mr. Larson was a valued employee of the Circuit. He contributed historical knowledge of the Court Reporting Department in terms of procedures and developed relationships with court partners and the judiciary. A well-attended farewell party was held for Mr. Larson on his last day, November 9th, 2018.



Left to Right:
Melissa Sotillo, Joe Larson, Randy Carpenter, and Rolando Tatum

Connie Thomas, Family Court Case Manager

Ms. Connie Thomas, Family Court Case Manager, retired December 31, 2018, after serving the citizens of Palm Beach County for nearly twenty years. Connie joined the Circuit in 2000, and assisted the administration, the judiciary and the litigants in various divisions of the Unified Family Court. Her last assignment was in Division FD assisting Judge Brunson in the case management of the division prior to their retirement in December 2018. Connie will be missed by her friends and team members in Family Case Management Department.



Left to Right: Judge Keyser, Connie Thomas, and Judge Brunson

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Gigi Jones, Court Software Training Specialist



Gigi Jones
Software Training Specialist

Gigi Jones began her role as Software Training Specialist at the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit on December 17th, 2018. She is responsible for training staff on the Court's in-house applications, a role fitting to Ms. Jones who loves to help people learn and improve their skills.

Prior to joining the Circuit, Ms. Jones worked as the Instructional Technology Coordinator for Bethesda Health. She earned both a BS and MBA from Florida Atlantic University.

Ms. Jones is very excited about her new role and says she is happy to be a part of such a great team.

Look for Ms. Jones in future newsletters as she will be hosting a new column called "Tech Tips."

New Employees

Welcome to our new employees who began their duties in October - December 2018:

- **Horacio Elman**, Desktop Administrator, October 1st
- **Ramsey Caraballo**, Computer Specialist II, October 1st
- **Travon King**, Computer Specialist II, October 9th
- **Brenda Estrella**, Administrative Secretary II OPS, Mediation, October 15th
- **Angela Afanador**, Certified Spanish Court Interpreter, November 1st
- **Shawya McDonald**, Magistrate Assistant to Magistrate Maxine Williams, November 1st
- **Tyrell Siagi**, Administrative Assistant I OPS, Civil, November 26th
- **Robin Shevock**, Civil Court Case Manager, December 3rd
- **Laura Leite**, Family Court Case Manager OPS, December 3rd
- **Hon. Paige Gillman**, County Court Judge, December 3rd
- **Gigi Jones**, Court Software Training Specialist, December 17th
- **Panteleis (Telly) Stefanopoulos**, JA to Judge Paige Gillman, December 17th

Also, congratulations to our employees who started in new positions including:

- **Stefanie Lee**, JA to Judge Gillen, December 3rd
- **Carey Helmes**, JA to Judge Bonavita, December 4th
- **Christopher Barnhill**, Administrative Assistant I, Court Reporting, December 17th