

CIRCUIT COURIER

NEWS BULLETIN OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
VOL. 2021-3, APRIL - JUNE 2021

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Courthouse photos by Deputy Bill LaFlamme

News of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit

April - June
2021

The Circuit Courier is published by the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit

Krista Marx
Chief Judge
Barbara Dawicke
Trial Court Administrator

Fifteenth Circuit Mourns Passing of Walter N. Colbath, Jr., Former Chief Judge

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Judges and Court staff celebrate the life of the Honorable Walter N. Colbath, Jr., who passed away on Tuesday, May 4, 2021. He was 86 years old.

Judge Colbath was passionate about public service and politics, beginning his legal career as the Public Defender of the Fifteenth Circuit in 1966. He left the Public Defender's office in 1972, and later successfully ran for Councilman, then Mayor of the Village of North Palm Beach.



Hon. Walter N. Colbath, Jr.

In 1984, Governor Bob Graham appointed Judge Colbath to the Circuit Court bench, replacing Judge Lewis Kapner. During his term as Chief Judge from 1997 to 2001, Judge Colbath led the Circuit in many outstanding achievements, including, early on in his term, the establishment of the Foreclosure division, which he presided over. Under his leadership, the juvenile mediation and alternative sanctions programs were developed to address the escalation of cases involving juvenile offenders. Then, in 1999, Chief Judge Colbath entered an Administrative Order establishing Community Court as a separate County Court division, utilizing volunteer judges to hear pleas involving quality of life offenses. In 2000, the Domestic Violence Intake Unit and the Batterers Intervention Program were implemented to address the increase in domestic violence cases in the County. He also oversaw the implementation of programs aimed at reducing jail overcrowding and recidivism rates, while also addressing possible underlying issues such as addiction, mental illness, and joblessness.

In 2001, in his role as Chief Judge, he established the Elder Justice Center to identify and remove barriers faced by older adults by offering services to assist them in connecting with appropriate legal, medical and social service agencies. He retired from the bench in 2001. After his retirement, he continued to serve the legal community as a successful Circuit Civil Mediator.

Judge Colbath was often referred to as a gentle giant and was highly respected in the legal community. He was also a dedicated family man and raised three children, Walter N. Colbath, III; Jeffrey Colbath; and Stephanie Colbath. Walter N. Colbath, III, who preceded him in death, was a Mediator and Mediation Coordinator in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. Judge Jeffrey Colbath (retired), also following his father's footsteps, first served on the County Court bench from 1992 to 2003, then the Circuit Court bench from 2003 to 2019, and as Chief Judge from 2013 – 2017. He currently practices as a circuit civil mediator.

Judge Walter N. Colbath, Jr. will be remembered fondly as a great leader of the Circuit and will truly be missed by the judiciary, the legal community, and the Court staff of the Circuit.

Honoring Chief Judge Krista Marx



Hon. Glenn Kelley and Chief Judge Krista Marx

On June 16, 2021, Chief Judge Marx presided over her final Full Court lunch meeting with the judges of the Circuit. At the event, Chief Judge Marx was recognized for her leadership over the past four years. The in-coming Chief Judge, the Hon. Glenn Kelley, thanked Chief Judge Marx for guiding the Circuit through the tumultuous COVID-related times. Because of her efforts, the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit is expected to have the lowest pending caseload on July 1, 2021, when compared to the other large Florida circuits. Judge Kelley presented Chief Judge Marx with gifts of appreciation from the judges of the Circuit.

Chief Judge Marx's second term as Chief Judge ended on June 30, 2021. She will retire on July 31, 2021 after 36 years of service to the citizens of Palm Beach County, including almost 24 years as a judge.

Chief Judge Wins Equal Justice in Sentencing Award

Congratulations go out to Chief Judge Krista Marx for her most recent award: **Equal Justice in Sentencing.**

Using five years of sentencing data from the Florida Department of Corrections, for the period of July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2020, former chief judge Marx was found to be the fairest sentencing judge in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit.

Using an analysis of 29,907 criminal punishment scoresheets provided by each respective clerk of court as the primary source, with the Florida Department of Corrections being a secondary source, the researcher was able to identify the top three judges from each judicial circuit. The sentences that were included in the analysis were aggravated assault, drug possession, drug sales, burglary and grand theft. These sentences were selected for the study due to the frequency that they are brought before felony court judges across the state of Florida.

Congratulations again to Chief Judge Marx on receiving the Equal Justice in Sentencing Award for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit.



Hon. Krista Marx

The Investiture of the Honorable Melanie Surber

Family, colleagues, and friends gathered in ceremonial courtroom 11A of the Daniel T. K. Hurley Courthouse on Friday, June 25, 2021, for the investiture of Judge Melanie Surber as a County Court Judge for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit.

Judge Surber was appointed to the County bench by Governor Ron DeSantis in December 2019 for a term beginning on January 13, 2020. However, Judge Surber's formal investiture was delayed due to the pandemic.

Following the invocation from Pastor Dave Franklin, Judge Surber's daughters, Jaclyn and Kaitlyn Surber led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chief Judge Krista Marx then delivered opening remarks by welcoming the group and acknowledged the Judicial Nominating Committee. The Judicial Commission, signed by Governor Ron DeSantis, was presented by Chief Deputy Clerk Shannon Ramsey-Chessman on behalf of Joseph Abruzzo, Clerk and Comptroller of Palm Beach County.

The Hon. Sherri Collins presented a desk plate on behalf of the Florida Conference of County Court Judges. A Bible was presented by Ronald Ponzoli, Jr., Esq., representing the Florida Board of Governors.

Chief Judge Krista Marx administered the Oath of Office as husband, Todd Surber, held the Bible. The honor of enrobing Judge Surber went to her husband, Todd, and her children, Jaclyn and Kaitlyn.

Several traditional and ceremonial gifts were presented to Judge Surber. The gavel was presented by Julia Wyda, Esq., President of the Palm Beach County Bar Association; followed by other gifts presented by Peter Hunt, Esq., President of the Palm Beach County Justice Association; Karen Terry, Esq., President of the American Board of Trial Advocates and Christa McCann, Esq., President of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers.

Following remarks by Matthew Ocksrider (Office of the Attorney General), Briana Kish, cousin of Judge Surber, thanked her family and members of the Judiciary who were present.

Prior to her appointment to the County bench, Judge Surber worked at the Attorney General's Office as a Senior Assistant Attorney General in Criminal Appeals. While there, she appeared before the Florida Supreme Court 20 times. She graduated from Nova Southeastern University with a Juris Doctorate and obtained her undergraduate degree from Boston University.

Judge Surber is assigned to Domestic Violence Division DV and County Criminal Division TD on the second floor of the Main Judicial Center. Her judicial Assistant is Yvette Deas.



Hon. Melanie Surber



Chief Judge Marx administers the Oath of Office to Judge Surber

The Honorable Carolyn Bell Receives Ryskamp Award

The Honorable Carolyn Bell was recently honored as the 2020-2021 recipient of the prestigious Kenneth L. Ryskamp Award by the Palm Beach Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

Since 2004, the award has been presented to individuals from the bench and bar in recognition of each recipient's distinguished contribution to enhancing the quality of the practice of law in federal court in the Southern District of Florida.

Due to the pandemic, the ceremony was held virtually on May 21, 2021. However, this allowed individuals all over the country to celebrate and participate in this special event.

A discussion about "a new paradigm for professionalism" was led by Judge Bell immediately following the ceremony.

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit congratulates Judge Bell on this significant recognition.



Above: The Ryskamp Award

The Honorable Cymonie Rowe Receives Rosemary Barkett Award

The Honorable Cymonie Rowe was recognized on June 10th by the Statewide Florida Association of Women Lawyers (FAWL) with the prestigious Rosemary Barkett Outstanding Achievement Award - the highest award bestowed by FAWL.

The FAWL Rosemary Barkett Outstanding Achievement Award is awarded annually to a FAWL member who has demonstrated a commitment to the purpose and goals of FAWL.

Past recipients of the award have excelled to outstanding career achievement that charts new territory in the profession, have assisted in overcoming traditional stereotypes associated with women by breaking down barriers, molding a new way of thinking about themselves, others and their place in the universe or have promoted the status of women within the profession and advanced the status of women in the state of Florida.

Additionally, Judge Rowe was recently honored as the 2021 Jurist of the Year by the Charles S. Barnard Inns of Court as well as 2021 Jurist of the Year by the Palm Beach County Florida Association of Women Lawyers.

The Juvenile Division is fortunate to have such a distinguished judge serving our youth and families and the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit congratulates Judge Rowe on this wonderful achievement.



Above: Judge Rowe (middle) and attendees at the virtual Rosemary Barkett Award Ceremony.

Juvenile Division Hosts "Children of Inmates"

On May 13, the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit's Juvenile Division hosted a virtual information session with Miami-based *Children of Inmates*, an organization that reconnects children in Florida to their incarcerated parents through quarterly bonding visits. During the bonding visits, parents are able to read books, work on puzzles, participate in arts and crafts and have face-to-face conversations with their children.

In addition to bonding visits, Children of Inmates also provides "wrap-around" services including online tutoring, assistance with childcare, diapers, developmental toys, counseling, and community referrals. It is reported that 90 percent of the families participating in the visits experience stronger bonds between children and their incarcerated parents while more than 70 percent of the children become engaged in pro-social behavior. A special thanks to Brittany Astrologo, Juvenile Court Case Manager, for coordinating the event.

Law Libraries Reopen to the Public

The Palm Beach County Law Libraries opened to the public once again on June 21, 2021. After being closed for fifteen months due to the pandemic, staff was ready to assist "first-returns" at all three law library locations.

During the time of being closed to the public, staff continued to maintain the collection and filled service requests by the public over the phone, through e-mails and regular mail delivery. Remote access to Westlaw and the LexisNexis Digital Library was also granted, providing a means to access legal materials and allowing patrons to continue performing legal research from either home or office. Additionally, CLE materials were also available for checkout and were mailed by USPS for attorneys who wished to obtain needed credits. Upon hearing that the branches would be re-opening, many regular patrons welcomed the news and shared their enthusiasm at being able to return.

The Palm Beach County Law Libraries and the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit extend a warm welcome back to all of our regular visitors and general public.



Above: Joe Crisco assisting a patron.

Drug Court Reaches 20 Year Milestone

On May 20th, Judge Charles Burton welcomed guests and Drug Court participants to celebrate National Drug Court month and twenty years of Drug Court in the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. The special event included a moving speech by a 2009 graduate of Drug Court as well as an appearance by State Attorney, Dave Aronberg, who shared his admiration for Drug Court and continued support for the program's use of evidence based treatment and best practices.

Drug Court received a proclamation from Mayor Dave Kerner and the Board of County Commissioners, proclaiming the month of May 2021 as Drug Court Month in Palm Beach County. Judge Burton reiterated the final phrase of the proclamation which states, "Treatment courts demonstrate that when one person rises out of substance abuse and crime, we all rise". The celebration concluded with three graduations and the graduates were awarded a certificate of completion and a Nolle Prose from the State.

For twenty years the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit's Drug Court has been an integral part of reuniting families, restoring lives and making the community safer. Drug Court significantly improves treatment outcomes, reduces addiction-related crime, and is cost effective in reducing the overall number of jail bed days. Since 2001, nearly 2,000 people have successfully graduated from the program.

The Drug Court team has performed exceptionally throughout the pandemic, going above and beyond expectations and allowing the success of the program to continue.

A special thank you goes to Judge Burton for leading Drug Court and for hosting this special event as well as all who joined us virtually to celebrate Drug Court Month.

Pictured left to right: APD Sheldon Graves, Drug Court Manager Jackson Mack, Program Specialist Wesley Andre, Judge Charles Burton, ASA Bryan Poulton, Program Specialist Sheree Carter and, Officer Lisa Collie.



Honorable Sandra Bosso-Pardo Retiring



Honorable Sandra Bosso-Pardo

The Hon. Sandra Bosso-Pardo announced her retirement. After 16 years of service to the community, her last day on the bench is September 30, 2021.

The Fifteenth Circuit wishes her the best in her retirement years and hopes to see her again as a Senior Judge.

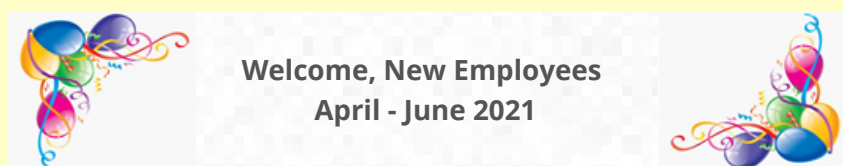
Expansion of Delinquency Drug Court Will Assist More Youth

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit's Delinquency Drug Court (DDC) is excited to announce that it is expanding its program in order to assist additional youths who are struggling with substance abuse issues.

Since its inception, the DDC has been instrumental in assisting high-risk juveniles obtain and maintain sobriety as well as reach their personal milestones. The program was designed to help juveniles with substance use disorders who come in contact with the juvenile justice system and has been performing exceptionally well for over 13 years.

Over the past year, court partners worked together to create and implement two new tracks of Delinquency Drug Court, known as Drug Court Intervention. As of June, the program has grown and can now expand its reach to help youth in the community who have been unsuccessful in diversion programs due to substance use. It also assists substance challenged low-risk youth with no probation history.

Delinquency Drug Court looks forward to continuing to provide assistance and support to court-involved youth.



Melissa Munoz, HR Coordinator
Stephanie Boden, Court Program Specialist II OPS, Family
Mary Boning, Trial Court Staff Attorney
Mayoli Albor, Magistrate Assistant to Magistrate James B. Williams, Jr.

Brandy Drury, Administrative Assistant I, Court Reporting
Michael Porter, Court Program Specialist OPS, Legal
Akia Kerr, Juvenile Court Case Manager
Sarah Freglette, Juvenile Court Case Manager

Promotions

Cheyenne Grace, Floating JA
Daniel Svec, Court Analyst

Administrative Orders, April - June 2021

6/2021 A.O. 5.101

In Re: Assignment of Unified Family Court Cases

6/2021 A.O. 6.101

In Re: Probate and Guardianship Divisions

6/2021 A.O. 12.515

In Re: COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols and Operational Measures

6/2021 A.O. 3.301

In Re: Foreclosure Sales and Cancellation of Foreclosure Sales

5/2021 A.O. 4.202

In Re: Schedule of Bonds and Procedures Relating to Pre-First Appearance Release

5/2021 A.O. 5.701

In Re: Attorney Ad-Litem Program

5/2021 A.O. 3.108

In Re: Adoption and Implementation of Retroactive Civil Differentiated Case Management Plan for Cases Filed on or before April 29, 2021

5/2021 A.O. 12.107

In Re: The Florida Bar vs. Danielle Justine Butler

5/2021 A.O. 12.201

In Re: Appointment of Acting Chief Judge

5/2021 A.O. 12.106

In Re: Florida Bar vs. Tracy Belinda Newmark

4/2021 A.O. 3.108

In Re: Adoption and Implementation of Retroactive Civil Differentiated Case Management Plan for Cases Filed on or before April 29, 2021

4/2021 A.O. 3.107

In Re: Adoption and Implementation of Civil Differentiated Case Management Plan for Cases Filed on or after April 30, 2021

4/2021 A.O. 12.105

In Re: The Florida Bar v. Stefan E. McHardy

4/2021 A.O. 12.801

In Re: Alexander Bess

4/2021 A.O. 12.104

In Re: The Florida Bar v. Madsen Marcellus, Jr.

4/2021 A.O. 12.514

In Re: International Travel by Judges and Court Staff during the pandemic