

THE 15TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA

CIRCUIT COURIER

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2025

Judge Caroline Shepherd Elevated to the Fourth District Court of Appeals



On July 17, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the elevation of Judge Caroline Shepherd to the Fourth District Court of Appeals, with a term beginning on October 1, 2025.

Judge Shepherd was appointed to the County Court bench of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit in 2009 and after ten years of serving in that capacity, was elevated to the Circuit Court bench by Gov. DeSantis in 2019.

Prior to her judicial appointment, Judge Shepherd served as an Assistant State Attorney in Miami-Dade County and Palm Beach County. She also served in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Department of Justice in Washington D.C.



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Judges and Magistrates Present at Trial Advocacy Workshop

Judge Laura Burkhart and Magistrates Maxine Williams and Diane Kirigin served as speakers and workshop leaders during the biannual Trial Advocacy Workshop of the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar in Miami, FL from July 23 to July 27.



Magistrate Maxine Williams (left)



Judge Laura Burkhart (left)



Magistrate Diane Kirigin (right)

Judge Ori Silver Receives Jurist Honor



On September 25, Judge Ori Silver was honored during the Sixth Anniversary of “The Florida Jurist: Recognizing Hispanic Excellence” Reception and Program at St. Thomas University presented by the Broward County Bar Association, Broward County Hispanic Bar Association, Hispanic National Association, Hispanic Bar Association of Central Florida, Tampa Hispanic Bar Association, Cuban American Bar Association and Palm Beach County Hispanic Bar Association.

Constitution Day Events



On September 15, Florida Atlantic University welcomed Florida Supreme Court Justice Renatha Francis for a conversation with FAU President Adam Hasner, where she discussed her journey and legal career as the first Jamaican-American appointed to the Supreme Court. Chief Judge Glenn Kelley, Judge Ori Silver and Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer, along with court administration staff attended the event.



On September 16, Chief Judge Glenn Kelley, Judges Cymonie Rowe, Lauren Burke, Maxine Cheesman, Joseph Curley, Jaimie Goodman, Scott Kerner, James Sherman, Lisa Small, Reid Scott II, Debra Moses Stephens, Stephanie Tew and 4th DCA Chief Judge Jeffrey Kuntz participated in the Palm Beach County School District's James Otis Lecture Series. Students from several Criminal Justice and Law Academy programs from the county got the chance to learn about the importance of the Constitution, as well as general court operations, and participate in a mock trial modeled after the famous Tinker v. Des Moines case.



On September 17, Judges Daliah Weiss, April Bristow, Samantha Schosberg Feuer, Lauren Burke and James Sherman participated in a roundtable discussion with students at FAU Honors College in Jupiter.

Highlighting the Judiciary

Reading & Robes - The Conservatory School at North Palm Beach

On Friday, September 19, several of our judges read to and spoke with students at The Conservatory School at North Palm Beach, as a part of the Reading & Robes program. Students were given the opportunity to learn more about the justice system, while also hearing the story of "Turning Pages" by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

Thank you to Judges Joseph Curley, Reid Scott II, Sarah Shullman, Samantha Schosberg Feuer, Lauren Burke, Stephanie Tew, Daliah Weiss, Caryn Siperstein, Katherine Mullinax, Santo DiGangi, Ori Silver and April Bristow.



Recap for Summer Pre-Law Interns and Law Clerks



On July 8, Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer and former Circuit General Counsel Kelly Rowley hosted a trip for the summer pre-law interns and law clerks to visit the Federal Courthouse. During their visit, they were able to observe court and meet with Judge Bruce Reinhart and Assistant US Attorney Alex Chase.



On July 9, Supreme Court Justice Renatha Francis paid a visit to the summer interns and law clerks.



On July 17, the summer interns visited the Palm Beach County Medical Examiner's Office. During their visit, they had the opportunity to attend the morning briefing and learn more about the role of the Medical Examiner.



On July 18, the interns met with Practitioners Kelly Schulz, Andrea Lewis, Joanne O'Connor and Tanique Lee to hear about different aspects of Civil Practice.



On July 25, the South Palm Beach County Bar Association hosted the summer interns and law clerks for a luncheon at the South County Courthouse in Delray Beach.

The interns and law clerks were able to hear from SPBCBA Board members as well as judges, learning about their career paths and gaining valuable advice.



On August 1, a farewell lunch was held for the summer judicial interns and law clerks. During the ceremony, Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer and Judge Sherri Collins reflected on the summer and continued success of the program.

Chief Judge Glenn Kelley also spoke to the group, sharing his gratitude for the students, judges and court administration staff that helped to make the summer successful. Each intern and law clerk received their own certificate presented by the Chief Judge and shared lessons and advice they learned from the program.

Court Administration Staff Attend NACM Conference



Pictured (from l to r): Tara Kranz, Family Court Manager; Kimberly Wolf, Judicial Assistant to Chief Judge Kelley; Alisia Gibbs, Magistrate Assistant to Magistrate Maxine Williams; Sheree Carter, Court Program Specialist; Erica Alter, Program Coordinator; and Joel Figueras, Program Coordinator.

Several members of the Circuit’s court administration staff attended the National Association for Court Management (NACM) conference in Omaha, Nebraska from July 21 through July 24. This year’s theme was “Promoting Public Trust and Confidence through Service and Collaboration” which included sessions that explored strategies for effective customer and court user experiences for all citizens across different backgrounds, abilities and more.

NACM is the largest organization of court management professionals in the world dedicated to developing all court professionals as leaders, providing community, sharing information, and advocating on important court and justice topics.

Chief Judge & Court Administration Staff Attend NAPCO Conference



Pictured: Mary Quinlan, Chief Deputy Court Administrator; Melissa Sotillo, Director of Administrative Services; Chief Judge Glenn Kelley; and Barbara Dawicke, Trial Court Administrator.

In August, the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit proudly joined judicial leaders from across the country at the National Association for Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers (NAPCO), Trial Court Leadership Academy and Conference in Bellevue, WA.

The focus of the annual NAPCO Conference is to improve and lead the Nation’s State and Local Courts by bringing together Presiding Judges and Court Executives from around the Country for three and half days’ worth of interactive sessions that are informative, educational, and insightful.

This year’s theme, “Public Trust and Confidence,” inspired the curation of three days of interactive learning, collaboration, and leadership development. A highlight of the conference was the “Leadership Academy Day”, led by Suzanne Peterson, Ph.D., Partner at CRA | Admired Leadership. Through dynamic, behavior-based exercises, Dr. Peterson focused on strengthening public trust by enhancing leadership practices that inspire, support, and effectively guide court teams. Attendees explored strategies for managing transitions, motivating through honorable action, and using everyday behaviors to build stronger, more engaged court environments.

Throughout the remaining plenaries and workshops, the conference reinforced the importance of continuous improvement and collaborative leadership as courts navigate evolving challenges in the post-pandemic era.

Juvenile Judges & Court Administration Staff Attend DCF Summit



Attendees (left to right) Jasmine Valdez, Alessandra Valdes, Judge Lisa Small, Judge Kathleen Kroll, Mary Quinlan, Rachel Lively, Anna Branney and Mary Bode.

Several Juvenile Court Judges and Court Administration staff from the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit attended the 2025 Florida Children and Families Summit, held September 3–5 in Orlando, Florida. The summit, themed “Building a Better Future for Children and Families across Florida,” brought together child welfare professionals, community partners, and advocates for workshops, keynote presentations, and networking opportunities focused on best practices in behavioral health, substance use, and mental health.

ICM Courses Held at 15th Judicial Circuit

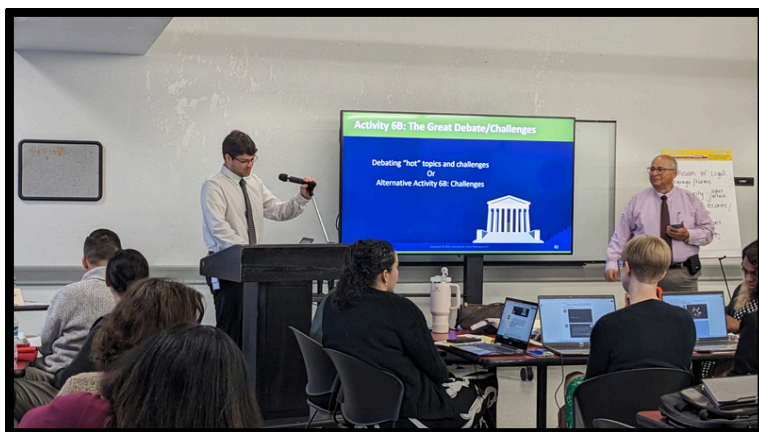
Our Circuit hosted the National Center for State Courts Institute for Court Management (ICM) National Faculty Jude Del Preore and Rhonda Gardner as they led the Purposes & Responsibilities Course, as a part of the Certified Court Manager Program.

When asked about their experience taking the course, General Counsel Ashlyn Darden said “my biggest takeaway from the Purposes and Responsibilities of the Courts ICM course is that each and every court staff member has an important role in maintaining the purposes of the courts. Each and every one of us works to ensure that the courts can continue to provide due process and a fair and peaceful resolution of disputes.”

Kwame Ratliff, Digital Court Reporter said “my key takeaway from the ICM course is a deeper appreciation for the essential functions of courts in safeguarding individual rights and ensuring due process. The course provided a solid foundation on the structure and roles of U.S. courts, while also addressing the complexities of court management and organization. It highlighted the significant challenges facing the judicial system and underscored the importance of maintaining public trust and confidence to uphold the legitimacy and effectiveness of the courts.”



Trial Court Administrator Barbara Dawicke provided welcome remarks and introduced the speakers to the 40 attendees, which included court professionals from around the state, as well as from our circuit.



Benjamin Aubrey, Floating Judicial Assistant, participated in an interactive exercise during the ICM Course.

Juvenile Division Events Recap

Rise Up Summer Program

Juvenile Division staff successfully wrapped up another year of its Rise Up Summer Program. The program, held each Friday of summer break from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the South County Courthouse, provides youth on probation with opportunities to work on probation sanctions, earn community service hours, and build valuable life skills such as budgeting, CPR, healthy eating, and college and career readiness.

This year, 11 youth successfully completed the program, earning nearly 1,000 hours of community service through a variety of projects including creating greeting cards for veterans, assembling activity bags for St Mary's Children Hospital, and making blankets for animals at Peggy Adams Animal Rescue. Those hours translated into over \$2,700 applied toward court costs. Participants worked on important life skills, created resumes and five participants earned their Florida Food Handler Safety Certification. In addition, participants received backpacks filled with school supplies to help them prepare for the upcoming school year.

The program's success was possible through the support of over 30 community partners who facilitated meaningful and motivational presentations, shared resources, and provided mentorship throughout the summer. A special thank you to the South Palm Beach County Florida Association of Women Lawyers and South Palm Beach County Bar Association, whose generous sponsorship provided breakfast and lunch each week, supplies throughout the summer, and school supplies for participants to gear up for the school year. Their continued generosity plays a vital role in making this program possible each year. The Juvenile Division also had the assistance of two outstanding interns, Delaney MacDonald and Ariana Congote, who facilitated weekly sessions and supported the participants.



Kids Kards for Veterans



Juvenile Division Interns



Community Partners

Juvenile Division Event Recaps

Juvenile Education Clinics

The Circuit's Juvenile Division team continues to provide valuable educational opportunities for youth through its Juvenile Education Clinics. These workshops provide valuable information to court-involved youth. The clinics are held in-person at both the Probation Administration Building and, for the first time since before COVID, the South County Courthouse.

This year, a new clinic was introduced and it was designed to teach youth practical skills such as scheduling medical appointments, navigating health insurance, basic budgeting and finances, and essential household tasks. The existing topics—Jobs 101, Know Your Record, Unlock Your Potential, and Cyber Safety—continue to equip youth with knowledge to succeed personally, professionally, and digitally.

So far in 2025, the Juvenile Division has held 11 clinics with 74 participants, earning nearly 400 community service hours. Youth receive a certificate of achievement and five hours of community service upon completion. Four remaining sessions are scheduled before the end of the year. The clinics are facilitated by Juvenile Court team member Brandon Richardson.

Juvenile Staff Attend Cross Sites Conference



From September 5–7, the Cross Sites Safe Babies Zero to Three Conference brought together leaders, innovators, and advocates in Portland, Oregon. This annual gathering is a hub for sharing best practices in coordinated, community-based services—ensuring families receive timely, responsive support that fosters the long-term well-being and healthy development of infants and toddlers. Anna Branney, Early Childhood Court Coordinator, Mary Bode, Juvenile Program Coordinator, and Lara Cunningham, Dependency Case Manager Supervisor, joined colleagues from across Florida to celebrate a remarkable milestone—10 years of Early Childhood Courts. Together, they honored a decade of providing hope and healing to Florida families, while gaining new insights and inspiration to carry this important work forward.

Main Courthouse Tours

PBSC Criminal Justice Institute:

On August 20, students from Palm Beach State College's Criminal Justice Institute visited the Daniel T.K. Hurley Courthouse. There, they had the opportunity to observe the courtrooms of Judge James Nutt and Judge Cymonie Rowe and visit with PBSO Officers.



Palm Beach Atlantic University:

On September 25, students from Palm Beach Atlantic University visited the Daniel T.K. Hurley Courthouse. There, they had the opportunity to observe Judge Howard Coates' courtroom, experience a K9 demonstration, tour the jury room and have a recruitment discussion with HR representatives from 15th Judicial Circuit and Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller, Palm Beach County.



Farewells

Congratulations to the following longtime Court Administration staff who retired during this quarter: Ken Blanck, Programmer, Danni Hoefling, ADR Director and Judette Fanelli, Magistrate (Not Pictured). The Circuit is grateful for their many years of hard work and dedication.



On July 1, a surprise retirement ceremony was held in honor of longtime Circuit Programmer Ken Blanck. Family, friends and court administration staff were in attendance to celebrate the momentous occasion. Ken was the Circuit's longest-tenured Programmer and retired in July after working with the Circuit since 2016.



On August 26, a surprise retirement ceremony was held in honor of longtime Circuit employee Danni Hoefling. Family, friends and court administration staff were in attendance to celebrate the momentous occasion. Danni retired in August after working with the Circuit since 1996.

Human Resources: Lunch & Learns | New Employee Orientation

Lunch & Learn Events This Quarter

August 25:

August 25: Tackling Ticketmaster, presented by Richalyn Miller, Public Information Officer



September 29:

Helpful & Preventable Tips for Pet Owners, presented by Dani Arcos, Judicial Assistant

New Employee Orientation:

Rayon Forde, Civil Court Case Manager and Arielle Frank, Trial Court Staff Attorney attended the Circuit's employee orientation course on August 15.

During the course, the employees were introduced to the Circuit's Mission and Vision, the Circuit's Core Competencies, the structure of the judicial branch, and their role as officers of the Court.



New Hires | Employees On the Move

Welcome to the Circuit's newest employees:

July 2025

April Boray, Mediator

August 2025

Rayon Forde, Civil Court Case Manager;
Arielle Frank, Trial Court Staff Attorney

September 2025

Juan Hidalgo, Court Interpreter;
Angela Changeux, Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officer
Assistant;
Jack Steinman, General Magistrate Assistant;
Sheena Benjamin-Wise, Magistrate;
Lana Zolon, Family Mediator;
Kira Mendez, Administrative Assistant II, Human Resources;
Jose Suarez, Agency Analyst Programmer;
Neshara Smith, General Magistrate Assistant

Employees on the Move/Position Reclassified

July 2025

Charles Burgess, Civil Court Case Manager

September 2025

Glenn Milgraum, ADR Director

Employees who retired during July–September 2025:

July 2025

Kenneth Blanck

August 2025

Danni Hoefling, ADR Director

September 2025

Judette Fanelli, Magistrate

Administrative Orders

The following AOs were updated or entered July – September 2025 (most recent to oldest):

9/30/2025	4.201	First Appearance Hearings	
9/19/2025	11.203	Appointment of Magistrates	
9/3/2025	11.106	Alternate Assignments	
8/19/2025	2.309	Exemplification Certificates	
8/15/2025	4.906	Mental Health Specialty Division	
8/13/2025	12.709	Appointment of Clerk Ad Interim	
8/13/2025	5.501	Domestic, Repeat, Dating and Sexual	
8/11/2025	2.311	Notices of Change of Address,	
8/1/2025	12.504	County Canvassing Board	
8/1/2025	12.301	Order Temporarily Assigning the	
8/1/2025	11.11	Appointment of Circuit Judges as	
7/25/2025	12.504A	County Canvassing Board for SH90 Primary Special Election and SH90 General Special Election	
7/25/2025	5.802	Parental Notice of Abortion - Judicial	
7/17/2025	3.602	Residential Eviction	



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Previous issues are available online: <https://15thcircuit.com/newsletters>



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