

A photograph of a man with glasses and a blue shirt leaning over a woman in a black judicial robe. The man is pointing at a document on a table. The woman is looking down at the document. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and what appears to be a courtroom or office setting.

LEGALE-CONNECTED

of the 13th Judicial Circuit

Celebrating
National Adoption Day -
A Life Long Commitment

MIKE'S *Window*

TO THE 13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



The new year brings a great deal of anxiety as the state continues to address the tough economic times. When we transitioned to state funding in 2004 as a result of Revision 7, we knew the change posed a significant fiscal challenge for the state and particularly for the legislature, even without the knowledge of today's looming economic issues. Then as now, it is essential that the courts continue to fulfill their constitutional obligations to Floridians but to do so requires an adequate funding structure that will allow the court system to not be disrupted.

"Tough Economic Times"

Unfortunately, the legislature has never funded the courts at the recommended level. And then the storm hit with fiscal crises and the economy spiraled and rather than increased funding we have operated with deficits. As the Legislative Branch addresses the state's dwindling coffers, it has become evident that in addition to analyzing existing revenue sources, lawmakers will have to explore potentially new revenue options next session. However, significant strides were made in this Special Session for long term funding stability for the courts by creating a Trust Fund which can be used only for the purposes of funding the judicial branch.

The Trial Court Budget Commission has developed other revenue proposals that could be allocated to the courts, some of which put the burden on the litigants, such as the increased traffic fees raised in the Special Session. There are other potential solutions to the Judicial Branch funding stability that may be considered. Another solution may be to create a funding stream made up of all court-related fees collected by the clerk that would be diverted into the

new trust fund created in the special session. This would divert court-related filing fees and assessments which currently go to General Revenue and create a funding stream paid by the users of court services.

www.fljud13.org/budgetcrisis

We are posting materials that outline the caseload trends and the impact of state budget cuts on our website at www.fljud13.org/budgetcrisis. While we have felt the impact from the previous budget reductions, the situation could have been much more bleak. This is only possible because of our strategy to work toward a long term source for the Judicial Branch. In addition to the loss of operating dollars, we will lose one position as a result of the Special Session. As a result of policy decisions made by the TCBC, we anticipate that we will be able to cut a vacant position so that no one will actually lose a job. I encourage you to stay abreast of what is occurring in the upcoming legislative session. I know you are aware of the discussions of state budget cuts and it is difficult to stay focused on the tasks at hand. I appreciate the stress that you face and pledge to you that we are working diligently so that the court system is not disrupted. As always, my door is open, should you have questions.

Michael D. Brinkman



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On the Cover Judge Espinosa During Adoption Day 2008



NEW HIRES



Hired on September 10, 2008, **Laurie Scollin** is also a new Judicial Assistant. She works with Judge Paul Jeske in Unified Family Court and County Criminal, Divisions H/K. Prior to coming to the AOC, she worked for Channel 8 for 32 years. She began there as a secretary and ended her career in Community Affairs and "8 On Your Side". Just like her dad, she was born and raised in Tampa. Laurie says she's pretty attached to Charlie, her pet Schnauzer, which she adopted from a Schnauzer rescue group. She is an avid reader and enjoys mystery-thrillers. To balance that, her favorite movies are romantic comedies. Her main recreational interests are travelling and photography, which happily go very well together. She has been having a good time decorating her office with her travel photography.



Roberto Flores was hired October 1, 2008. You have probably seen Roberto around. Before being hired by the courts, he was a contractor at WUSF and worked in the courthouse. He started with them doing wiring, but later moved to desktop support, and that is where you may have encountered him. He says he likes the structure in his new position, although he admits that he was initially intimidated by working with judges, he is now used to the environment. Roberto says that most people are surprised that he was in the U.S. Army in military intelligence. While stationed at Ft. Stewart, Georgia, he was deployed to Kuwait and then to Iraq. His enlistment ended in 2008. Coming to work here isn't the only big change in his life lately; he just got married! They were friends before he went in the army. But, while he was away, they began exchanging e-mails and letters. Then they started dating when he was home on leave; then came love; then came marriage. Roberto and his wife like to go bowling, which he took up while he was in the army. They also enjoy riding their bicycles at Al Lopez Park.



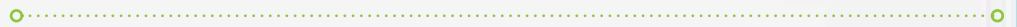
Jose Robles has worked in the courthouse for 15 years so you probably ask, "Why is he a New Hire?" Jose worked for one of our technology partners, WUSF, as a contractor for several years but now he returns to the AOC as an employee. Jose was rehired on November 1, 2008 and now works as a Program Assistant in Court Communications & Technology Services. He works in the Children's Justice Center at both Mary Lee's House and in the courthouse. Jose says he's "filling big shoes, since I am stepping into my nephew's job." His nephew, Mario Dominguez, tragically passed away last year. Jose says that he feels "like Mario guided me through the decision to return; he will be my chauffeur through the technology process."



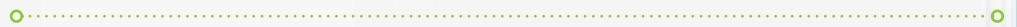
NEW HIRES



Before recent budget cuts and layoffs, [Brenda Parrish](#) worked in the Office of Public Information. Unfortunately, her position was cut in 2008, but to Brenda: “It turned out to be a wonderful blessing, because I always wanted to work in the courts, and there is always something going on in mediation”, where she was re-hired on November 3, 2008. One of the things she likes best about working here is that her sister, Leeisa Barbas, Legal Department, works here as well, so they are able to go to lunch together frequently. While not at work, she enjoys spending time with her 15 year old son, who shares her love of fishing. Brenda also plays poker, seven card stud or five card draw, but no Texas Hold’em for her. It may surprise you to know that she is a motorcycle rider. Riding her Honda Shadow on weekends and after work is recreation for her.



Born in Lowell Massachusetts, [Brian Vera](#) grew up in a Spanish speaking home. His dad is from Puerto Rico and his mom hails from New York City. Brian learned English in school and still likes to read classic novels by the likes of Charles Dickens. He also is a fan of John Grisham novels. He pointed out that Lowell is also the birthplace of author, Jack Kerouac, and Tonight Show host, Jay Leno. Brian is a Court Interpreter and was hired on November 12, 2008. Prior to coming to the AOC, he worked for ten years as a paralegal in various law firms. He has experience in civil, criminal and family law practices. He also has medical training and has worked as a cast technician in an orthopedic practice. Brian is married; he and his wife like to take walks and spend time with friends and family. He also volunteers time in a ministry and attends a Bible study group, which he says focuses on the positive side of life in a supportive environment.



You may have noticed that we recently acquired five new judges. So that means five new Judicial Assistants. [Lisa Smith](#) is one of them. She works for Judge Catherine Catlin and has known the judge over twenty years. Lisa says that the tight security in the courthouse is a challenge for her, but she’s getting used to it, doing her best not set off any alarms. She’s an energetic, “glass half full” kind of person. Lisa loves life and really enjoys interacting with people. Whether gardening, volunteering at her church, hanging out with her family or fishing in the gulf, you can be sure she’ll be having a ton of fun. Lisa actually caught a 40 pound wahoo in Hawaii. This wife and mother also has three dogs. They all live in Lutz. The family is big into traveling, especially cruises. Speaking of travel, Lisa has found a way to get from her home to the courthouse in 30 minutes. She says she’s helpful by nature, but you can bet she’ll be keeping that route secret.



NEWHIRES



Mona Baker, hired on January 6, 2009, had previously worked for Circuit Court Judge Caroline Tesche as a paralegal, so when she found out that Judge Tesche was running for election, she asked her to consider hiring her as her judicial assistant; and here she is. Mona worked last year for the Offices of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel. Prior to that, she had a twenty-eight year career as a flight attendant with Delta Airlines. She's very involved with Sacred Heart Catholic Church in downtown Tampa, and even went through four years of training to become an ecclesiastical lay minister. She's also involved in local politics and every Saturday morning takes her parents for breakfast to West Tampa Sandwich Shop, a hotspot for local political figures. Another tradition she observes is to, every Valentine's Day, watch the movie, *The Notebook*, with her daughter.



Cheryl Redman, hired on January 6, 2009, is another new Judicial Assistant. She will be working with incoming Judge Lisa Campbell. Cheryl may be new here, but she's no stranger to the legal system. She worked for the Office of the Public Defender for 12 years. Judge Campbell has been assigned to Juvenile Division F, and that suits Cheryl just fine. That's because she worked in juvenile when she began at the Public Defender's Office. While in that capacity, she represented her office on Community Relations Boards, such as the Juvenile Detention Center (both East and West), Riverside Academy and the Columbus Residential Facility. Cheryl says she's looking forward to learning the judicial side of things. She's not all work though; she has a 7 year old grandson with whom she hangs out on the weekends. They play baseball, go to movies and visit Busch Gardens. She and her husband have property in Tennessee that they are developing with hopes that, someday, they'll have a retirement home there.



Suzanne Flowers has known Judge Samantha Ward for several years, and now she will be her judicial assistant in Domestic Relations/Family Law, Division E. Prior to January 6, 2008, when she came on board here, Suzanne worked in an accounting office. She says she that she thought this new job would be interesting. Thusfar, that's turned out to be the case. She went on to say that all of her friends were surprised to hear that she was taking a full-time job. She knows this will all be new to her, but she believes she's up to the challenge. Both of her kids are grown now so she's ready for a change. "It's all good" is her response to crises and challenges that present themselves in the workplace...and most likely the mantra she lives by. Married 23 years, she and her family enjoy boating and the beach – any beach, whether on the east or west coast. She has a daughter, 19 and a 21 year old son. They're all still close and often go listen to the band her son plays in. So if you are into Reggae/rock, as Suzanne describes the music, you may want to check out this band yourself.

EDITOR'S LETTER

ANGIE SMITH

WISDOM FROM
THE SILVER SCREEN

Looks like we made it! And for some of us, that was an accomplishment. As we tally our Performance Measures for 2008, we take stock of the old and the new in both our personal and professional worlds. We cannot escape the fiscal realities at home or at work but during the holidays, I turned to some unconventional wisdom...the Silver Screen.

Carter Chambers (in his letter to Edmond) *Dear Edmond, I've gone back and forth these last few days trying to decide whether or not I should even write this. In the end, I realize, I would regret if I didn't, so here it goes. I know the last time we saw each other, we were not exactly hitting the sweetest notes... There's no way I can repay you for all you've done for me, so rather than try, I'm going to ask you to do something else for me – find the joy in your life.* **The Bucket List** Most of us have already given a great deal of thought to those things that take our breath away and we know that joy doesn't depend on more money, bigger cars, longer holidays... Sometimes it's hard to remember this when bills are due, you still have to drive to the courthouse in the traffic, parties still have the same old problems they did last year, but I can still hear Carter Chambers whisper the words (as perhaps only Morgan Freeman could have ever done to bear witness to his character as a jubilant human being in the first place) – *find the joy in your life.* And you know what else I've been thinking, isn't it nice to actually be around joyful people?

If you don't know the difference between joy and happiness, it's worth the research. One is definitely better than the other. Being happy ain't nothing more than having something to look forward to, according to Earl Pilcher, Jr. in **A Family Thing**. By now, you know, there's no monetary value to what you are looking forward to. Maybe this is where we get our sense of accomplishment from. I am looking forward to working with our multimedia staff and redesigning our website in the next few months and

on a personal note, I am looking forward to taking a personal trip to Savannah with some joyful friends.

I have always found something in life is worth singing about and for that I cannot apologize, declared Nicholas Cage's character in **Captain Corelli's Mandolin**. One thing worthy of celebration is relationships. I've been in Tampa for 16 years now and have developed friendships that have stood the test of time, both in this courthouse and across the bay area. So bring out the karaoke, much to the dismay of those who have heard me belt out a few tunes, I have a song in my heart... Just think about Captain Corelli who was in the midst of war; he wasn't the first, nor will he be the last, to allow the human spirit to prevail in the midst of fear. It is fear, after all that is the opposite of joy. We all know courageous souls, worthy of our admiration, and perhaps emulation in times of life's hardship.

Along the way, you bump into people who make a dent into your life. Some people get struck by lightning. Some are born to set by a river. Some have an ear for music. Some are artists. Some swim the English Channel. Some know buttons. Some know Shakespeare. Some are mothers. Some people can dance. **Curious Case of Benjamin Buttons.** We work with such a diversity of people. There is seldom a day that I come to this office that I don't laugh and enjoy myself. Sure there are hard days, but who said we can't enjoy work while we get a sense of accomplishment? I hope everyone feels that way, if not there is good news.

If you don't believe it, remember the words of Patricia as she so delicately but deliberately talked to her daughter: *so now, alone or not, you've got to walk ahead. Thing to remember if we're all alone, then we're all together in that too. I find that helps sometimes.* **P.S. I Love You.** See you around...





Work Life Balance

What Really Matters?

Drop Unnecessary Activities

Protect Your Private Time

Accept Help to Balance Your Life

Plan Fun & Relaxation

SOCRATES LENDS A HAND

written by | Angie Smith

While on trial for his life, Socrates stated that “The unexamined life is not worth living.” This was his answer to whether he would prefer a life sentence, exile, or death as his punishment, and it forced the court to hand down his death sentence. While obviously of great importance to Socrates over 2000 years ago, this statement still has meaning for each of us. Simply put, if we fail to take the time to look closely at our lives, we end up living by default, and that usually results in frustration and unhappiness. Hardly a sentence a judge or jury can impose, yet many of us chose to live without ever questioning how we arrived to the place we find ourselves in.

Examining our life reveals patterns of behavior. Deeper contemplation yields understanding of the decisions we make, maybe even the why. Unless we become aware of these patterns, much of our life is unconscious repetition.

Our society discourages self-awareness with a weekly cycle of working and consuming that keeps us too busy to slow down for self-reflection. We are wrapped up in earning a living, acquiring new things, all the time, not thinking about what is important to us or standing still so that we can contemplate our lives. Scoff if you will, but there is something to what Socrates says, because, after all, his words stand the test of time.

Henry David Thoreau wrote: “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.” We have all seen people, maybe even ourselves at times, simply grit out every day in “quiet desperation”. But, it does not have to be that way, and this is where the examined life comes in. What is the real source of the dissatisfaction, and more importantly, what can I do about it? Since we spend so much of our lives at work, these questions are worth some real consideration, and the answers to them can lead to a

more positive relationship with our jobs and thus, the balance of those other things in our lives.

Years ago, while working as a substance abuse counselor in a residential treatment center, I became indignant because the center director had essentially abdicated his responsibilities and allowed his “control freak” secretary to run the place. I was righteously furious that she was interfering in clinical matters, and this made me unhappy with my job. Finally, I went to my immediate supervisor and vented my frustration. He acknowledged that the situation was all wrong, but what he suggested to me had nothing to do with “righting the injustice.” What he told me to do was to focus on my clients, to put my energy into serving the people that I was hired to help. I had let my outrage distract me from what I loved doing, counseling addicts. Things got better immediately.

Dialoguing or talking to someone else to get a perspective on your life is actually the Socratic Method. You can do that with your boss, a friend or a counselor. The point is; if there is some aspect of your situation that you are not satisfied with, you have power to do something about it. If you are unhappy at work, we all know that affects life with your friends and family; conversely, if you have problems in your personal relationships, that often distracts you in the workplace.

The first task in establishing balance in one’s life is to rank the various “sectors” of that life in importance; to rigorously

examine the big question: what really matters? The answer to that question becomes life’s roadmap in terms of time management. Unfortunately, there are no GPS coordinates for this. There is, however, a useful guide to establishing such priorities on the popular website, WebMD: www.webmd.com/balance/guide/5-strategies-for-life-balance

We began with a philosophical discussion and moved to a practical discussion. Perhaps we should return to another philosopher, Santayana, who reminded us, “He who does not remember the past is condemned to repeat it.” 🐦



Hearsay



On November 18, 2008 Judge Tom Barber spoke to the students at Tampa Palms Elementary School.

LOOK WHO'S TEACHING

During the first full week of January, Circuit **Judge Tracy Sheehan**, County **Judge Cheryl Thomas** and **Chief Judge Manuel Menendez** served on the faculty of the Florida New Judges College in Tallahassee.

Valerie Parmer, Juvenile Diversion Programs, participated in the Great American Teach-in on November 19, 2008. She spoke to 4 classes at Sligh Middle School on the theme "Who I am Makes a Difference". Valerie related she also spoke about Teen Court and offered that as a way to help teens "who have made poor choices". Her assessment of the day: "As always, it was a wonderful experience".

Pam Stokes also works in the Juvenile Diversion Programs office. She also participated in the Great American Teach-in on November 19, 2008. She spoke to several grades at Lowry Elementary and talked about juvenile offenses.

Jennifer Branch and **Jason George**, Elder Justice Center, taught the Family Guardianship class on November 14 and 15, 2008. They teach the class at the Dale Mabry campus of Hillsborough Community College. Then on January 9 and 10, 2009, **Marla Smith** and **Gina Vittone** presented the same class at HCC.

Judge Raul Palomino addressed the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence at the Legal Clearinghouse Lawyer Training. This event was held at the Hilton Hotel at Tampa International Airport on January 13, 2009.

Judge Claudia Isom, **General Magistrate Mary Lou Cuellar-Stilo**, Staff Attorney **Shelley Mirpuri**, and **General Magistrate Sean Cadigan** conducted a Guardianship Town Hall Meeting on December 10, 2008. It was offered through the HCBA as a Judicial CLE Luncheon – at the new Chester H. Ferguson Center. There were over 60 people in attendance, both attorneys and legal guardians.

Magistrate Sean Cadigan facilitated an hour-long Guardianship Update presentation on January 14, 2008, for the Hillsborough Chapter of the Florida State Guardianship Association.

On November 13, 2008, **Judges Kimberly Fernandez** and **Emily Peacock** presented a Brown Bag Lunch at the Chester H. Ferguson Law Center. They lectured on "Civility and Professionalism in Family Law". The event was sponsored by the Hillsborough County Bar Association. Continuing educations credits were awarded to attorneys who attended.

Judge Kimberly Fernandez, Judge Emily Peacock and **Judge Scott Stephens** conducted a CLE presentation



for attorneys and psychologists on November 15, 2008. The topic of their talk was child custody evaluations and the changes in the custody statutes. The seminar was held at the Chester H. Ferguson Law Center.

Judge Richard Nielsen presented at the E-Courts Conference in Las Vegas on December 8, 2008. He co-presented with **Judge Mark Singer** of Manatee County on the subject "Two Judge's Transition to the Electronic Workplace." The topic primarily dealt with the availability and use of computerized resources for the judiciary in Florida.

On December 1, 2008 **Judges John Conrad** and **Dan Perry** spoke to a Criminal Justice class at St. Leo University.

LOOK WHO'S LEARNING

During the week of January 5, 2009, newly elected Circuit **Judges Caroline Tesche, Catherine Catlin, Lisa Campbell, Samantha Ward** & recently appointed **County Judge Paul Jeske** attended the Florida New Judges College in Tallahassee.

During November, **Nancy Brueger**, Drug Court Specialist in the Family Dependency Treatment Court, attended a week-long training to become a certified GAIN trainer. The GAIN is a comprehensive assessment tool that, Nancy says, will: "probably be incorporated throughout the state at some point."

Court Reporter, **Linda Sturm**, is a student at USF. She's a junior majoring in psychology with a minor in sociology. She previously graduated from HCC, where

she was a member of the National Honor Society and Phi Beta Kappa. At USF, she is a member of the Golden Key Honor Society. She is currently attending four nights a week and says she's thoroughly enjoying it even though it makes her days very long.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

On the evening of November 12, 2008, **Dave Rowland**, Court Counsel, attended Stetson University College of Law's new student orientation and made a presentation on the bar admissions process on behalf of the Florida Board of Bar Examiners.

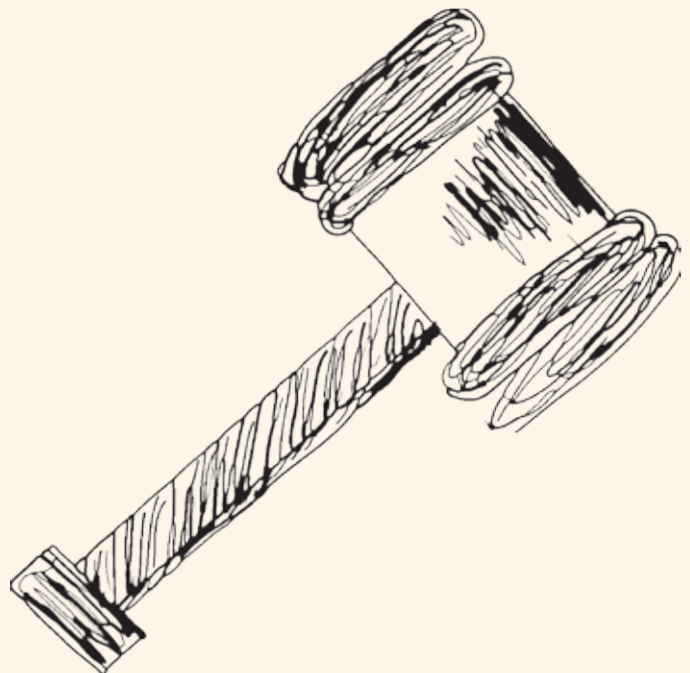
In November, **Judge Susan Sexton** was the keynote speaker at the Pepin Academy on the subject of "Becoming a Guardian Advocate".

LOOK WHO'S VOLUNTEERING

Judicial Assistant, **Anita Gillen** volunteered at the Salvation Army warehouse on Saturday, December 20, 2008. She spent the day distributing toys and food to needy families. Anita says she finds this work very satisfying and encourages others to join her next holiday season.

Judge Susan Sexton was recently appointed co-chair of the Tampa Bay Global Initiative of the World Affairs Council.

Effective November 1, 2008, Judicial Assistant, **Rocky Valdez**, was appointed to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Hispanic Advisory Counsel. 🌎





Hearsay



Gina Vittone and Jason George of the EJC at the Senior Expo.

This Hearsay column was inadvertently omitted from the second issue of the Legal e-Connected. It is included in this issue to ensure recognition, albeit an edition too late. Please accept our apologies.

LOOK WHO'S OUT AND ABOUT

On January 23rd and 24th, the Elder Justice Center manned a booth at the Senior Expo. This is a large event, usually drawing around 10,000 people over the two days. The EJC booth was manned for the two days by Victim Advocate – Court Counselor, **Gina Vittone**. Also staffing the booth was Magistrate and EJC Director, **Sean Cadigan**. Court Counselor, **Jason George** and U.S.F. Intern, **Angela Walton** worked shifts as well.

On Saturday, March 15, 2008, **Judge Eric Myers** participated, along with his Masonic Lodge, Mount Pleasant Lodge #13, Prince Hall Affiliated, in the Special Olympic Games held at the University of South

Florida. Judge Myers and his fellow Lodge members were in charge of the shot put competition for girls and boys. According to Judge Myers, “great fun was had by all.” Then, on March 28, 2008, Judge Myers, along with his Shrine Temple, Harram Temple #23, in conjunction with Egypt Temple Shriners, participated in the Annual Shrine Circus at Raymond James Stadium. Judge Myers wishes to “encourage all to come and support the Shriners in all that we do for the children and the community.”

On March 9, 2008, **Vickie Reeves**, Magistrate in the Family Law Division volunteered to help out at the Mercedes – Benz Little Everglades Steeplechase. This is an annual, charitable event. This year it benefited Diabetic Charitable Services, Quantum Leap Farm,

Inc. and Pioneer Florida Museum & Village. According to Ms. Reeves, " We have steeplechase horse races, a carriage parade, a hat contest, children's area, Jack Russell terrier races and a fantastic Vendor Village with treasures galore."

April was Child Abuse Awareness Month, and during April, **Amanda Hevia**, of the Children's Justice Center, created the blue ribbons on the trees around the courthouse. Amanda has been using her artistic skills to create these ribbons since she began with CJC in 2005.



The first annual "Cure on Wheels" ride took place on May 31st and June 1st in San Antonio Florida. The 120 mile ride raised money, through rider sponsorship, for research at Moffitt Cancer Center. **David Kirby** rode both days and, through his sponsors, raised over \$900.00 for the cause.

LOOK WHO'S TEACHING

Judge Lawrence Lefler and his Judicial Assistant, **Christina Cornella** conducted a mock trial for sixty second graders from St. Lawrence Catholic School. The defendant in the case was a young girl named Goldilocks. The trial took place on Friday, May 16th, and to everyone's delight, Goldilocks was found not guilty by a jury of her peers. Judge Lefler acted as the judge. Two local attorneys played the roles of Assistant State Attorney and Defense Counsel.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

Judge Dan Sleet, on Saturday, March 8th gave a lecture and fielded questions from a local Boy Scout Troop. Judge Sleet's presentation was part of the troop's Law Day class during which scouts studied the constitution and earned their Law Day badges. The event took place at Christ the King Church in Tampa.

Magistrate, Sean Cadigan spoke to a paralegal class at St. Petersburg College on April first. Mr. Cadigan spoke on the topic of Guardianship Court and covered sub-topics such as incapacities, guardianships, the Baker and Marchman Acts, Adult Protective Services and, of course, the Elder Justice Center.

On March 4, 2008, at the Chester H. Ferguson Law Center, **Judge Claudia Isom**; **Dave Rowland**, Court Counsel, and **Carol LoCicero**, of Thomas and LoCicero, PL, gave a presentation on the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration. The event was well attended, and the attorneys present earned two continuing legal education credits.

Magistrate Mary Lou Cuellar-Stilo was a presenter at the Elder Concert (sponsored by the Academy of Florida Elder Law Attorneys) on March 29, 2008. Ms. Cuellar-Stilo said that the participants seemed to enjoy the game of "Guardianship Jeopardy" she presented, and she was certain they enjoyed the rewards of the chocolate she handed out at the end of the game

Mediation and Diversion Services Director, **Paul McGuire**, lectured on the topic of court processes at the Family Mediation Certification Training which was held at the University of South Florida on February 15th.

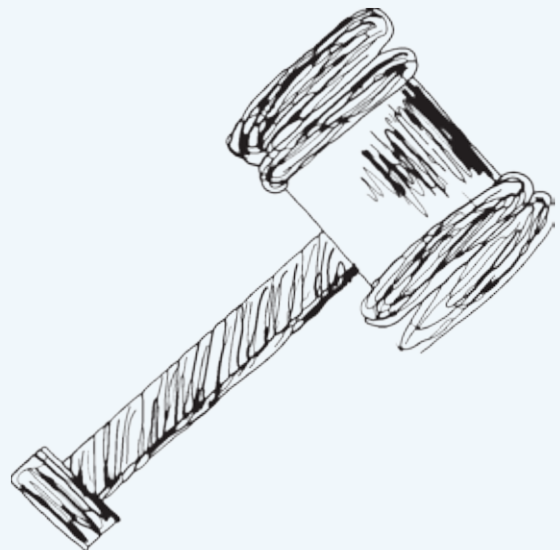
LOOK WHO'S BEING NOTICED

Hillsborough County's Public Guardian, Aging Solutions, had their annual benefit, Steppin/ForWard, on April 19, 2008. **Magistrate Sean Cadigan** (who is also Director of the Elder Justice Center) was recognized, during the awards segment of the event, for his "support of Aging Solutions, Inc. Office of the Public Guardian" and for his "commitment to protect Florida's most vulnerable citizens." Additionally, the staff of the Elder Justice Center was recognized for their hard work on the annual holiday gift drive, Elves for Elders. The gift drive benefits wards of the State of Florida in Hillsborough County – the very people Aging Solutions serves.

LOOK WHO'S LEARNING

Marc Settembrino, of the Juvenile Diversionary Program, has been accepted into the Master's Program in Sociology at the University of South Florida.

Carmen Dunning, of the Office of Public Information, has received an "advanced technical certificate in paralegal." She graduated with a GPA of 4.0. And on April 25, 2008 she was inducted into Lambda Epsilon Chi, a national honor society for paralegal education. 📖



NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY



Life Long Commitments | November 21, 2008

written by | David Kirby
photos by | Simone Fallon



Judge Jack Espinosa surrenders the bench to a young girl who may be focused on a judicial career



Judge Katherine Essrig expresses her happiness with an adoption finalized

National Adoption Day was celebrated in Courtroom One on November 21, 2008.

Our justice system is designed to be adversarial, and what goes on in courtrooms is often disharmonious. However, on this day in Courtroom One, the atmosphere was one of joy as forty children were officially made members of permanent, loving families.

According to the National Adoption Day website: "In 2008 National Adoption Day was celebrated in all

50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico – and – for the first time in Guam." There were more than 325 events, and over 4,500 adoptions were finalized at events this year. And, the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit was one of those events for the fifth year.

Finalizing the adoptions in this circuit were Judges Tracy Sheehan, Jack Espinosa (substituting for Rex Barbas), Debra Behnke and Katherine Essrig. These judges did the officiating, but they were not the central figures in the courtroom

– not this time! This was all about the children and the caring families who brought them into their hearts and homes.

Adopting a child is a difficult and time-consuming effort. There is paperwork, lots of it. There are background checks, home studies, interviews and coursework to complete. The whole process takes from 8 – 12 months. And finally there are the emotional and practical adjustments that must be made by the adopting family and by the adopted child. What will

“...the atmosphere was one of joy as forty children were officially made members of permanent, loving families.”



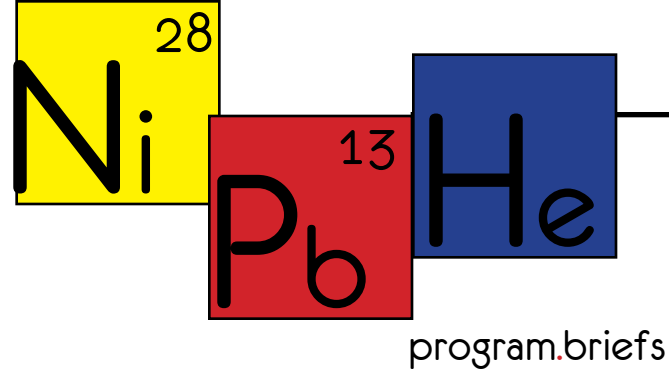
Judge Tracy Sheehan stepped away from the bench to offer congratulations to a new family

having this new family member mean to the structure and dynamics of the existing family? What will the financial impact be? There are myriad adjustments to be made, but families have been doing just that with biological and with adoptive children for as long as there have been families.

The process is arduous enough to ensure that families do not enter into adoption lightly. HKI and community-based agencies worked to deliver services to the those with abundant love, compassion and maturity to complete the process, so that on November 21, 2008 they were able to legally become a family. That's right; once finalized by the court, the child becomes a permanent member of the family, affording the parents all rights and responsibilities that would come with a biological child.

This year, the 2008 Heart Gallery of Tampa Bay touched the hearts of those who walked through the lobby of the courthouse as it displayed compelling, professional portraits of our community's children. This unique artistic exhibit introduces you to Tampa Bay's children who are looking for a home right now. 🐾





Mental Health Pre-Trial Intervention


written by | Angie Smith



In the first two quarters of existence, this new program has screened 30 defendants and just more than one-third have been approved for Mental Health Pre-Trial Intervention. The Senior Court Program Specialist provided an assessment of defendants; those who had an Axis One diagnosis and were amenable for mental health treatment, received referrals and were actually linked with the appropriate provider. The mental health treatment provider now sends monthly reports regarding compliance to both the Department of Corrections and the court.

The success of this pilot program rests with the development of a protocol which was developed by the Senior Court Program Specialist, Dan Ringhoff, Marie Marino, Division Chief, Forensic Behavior Health Intervention Unit, Public Defender's Office, and Mike Sinacore, Bureau Chief, State Attorney's Office. Each of the felony divisions have cases with this added case management component. After the State Attorney and Public Defender confer on a specific case, the Public Defender refers the case to the Senior Court Program Specialist, which is a grant funded position. The Department of Corrections also agreed to designate two Probation Officers (who volunteered) to monitor the conditions of the agreements and work with the Department of Children and Families Case Manager to ensure the defendant is complying with the court order. Not only does the Senior Court Program Specialist participate in the assessment phase, you'll find him in court, offering testimony during status conferences, in the event there is no treatment provider assigned or available.

Two other aspects of case management for mental health are provided by the Senior Court Program Specialist. He also serves the Violation of Probation Division in a similar process. In another vein, he works in the Independent Living Court, with kids who are aging out of the foster care system who also have serious mental health problems. Ringhoff's function is to provide feedback to the court regarding the adult mental health system and to ensure a smooth transition to that system.

Whether a felony division or Unified Family Court, mental health court case management is now being implemented in this circuit because of grant funding by the Department of Children & Families through Northside Mental Health, Inc. 



Community Bench

JUSTICE TEACHING

written by | David Kirby

“Our students know more about ‘contestants’ and ‘reality players’ than the fabric of our real society. “It has been reported that just over half of all Americans can correctly identify the three branches of government.”

- Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Fred Lewis



Judge Raul Palomino




“Our students know more about ‘contestants’ and ‘reality players’ than the fabric of our real society. “It has been reported that just over half of all Americans can correctly identify the three branches of government.” “More than one in five believes that the three branches of government are the Republican, Democrat and Independent branches.” So wrote then Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Fred Lewis in announcing a new initiative, Justice Teaching, to be led by the judges, at all levels, of this state. His comments and announcement can be found in the November 2006 Florida Bar Journal. (www.floridabar.org/divcom/jn/jnjournal01.nsf/Articles/43709138CFB332FA8525721700622B3B)

County Judge Raul Palomino was in Tallahassee in 2006, and in a conversation with Chief Justice Lewis, learned that he had some ideas about getting the schools and the legal profession together to enhance civics education for Florida’s students. Judge Palomino immediately said he wanted to be part of it, and part of it he became. He has coordinated Justice Teaching in this circuit since its inception. Chief Justice Lewis

tasked judges with serving “in a formal capacity to ensure that Justice Teaching will function on a continuing basis to recruit volunteers and provide continuing educational programs for our schools on a consistent basis. Judge Palomino serves as the interface between the legal profession and the schools. He also recruits local attorneys and judges to come on board.

While there is plenty of room for more legal professionals to become part of Justice Teaching, Judge Palomino noted with pride that in 2008, there was at least one Justice Teacher in every public school in the state, which is great progress for a program that is only two years old.

One of the strengths of the program, according to Judge Palomino, is that it is not about “teaching the children law; it is to teach civics, the constitution; how our government works”. Another of Justice Teaching’s strengths is that it has no budget; no income at all except some small donations to help cover printing costs. It is beholden to nothing but its own ideals and its desire to help our schools educate better citizens. 

JUDGE CRENSHAW



Judge Marva L. Crenshaw was appointed to the 2nd District Court of Appeal by Gov. Charlie Crist on January 7, 2009. The 2nd District, which is based in Lakeland, hears appeals from Collier, Lee, Charlotte, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties.

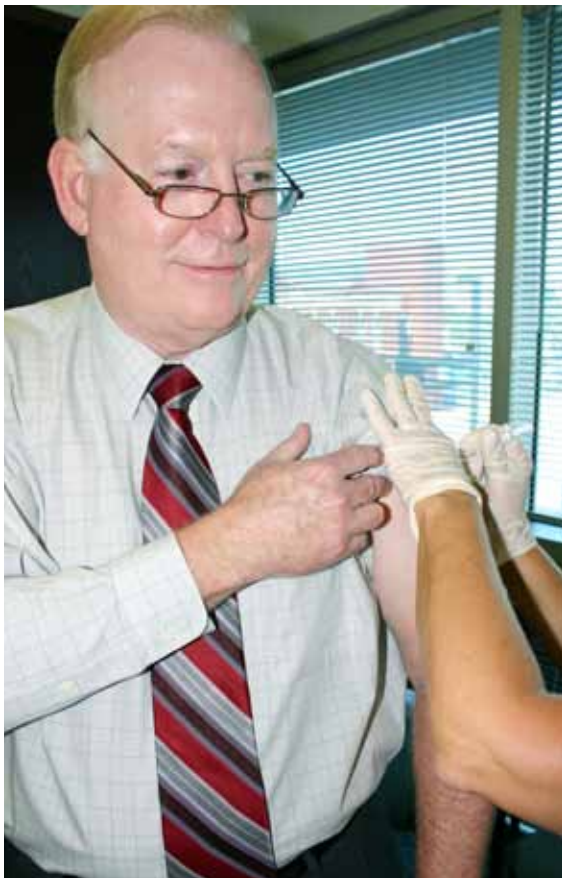
that: "She has served as a role model of fairness and hard work, not just in legal circles, but in the community, where she speaks to youth groups about the importance of education."

A lifelong Florida resident, Judge Crenshaw has served on the circuit bench here since August 2000. Before that, she had been a Hillsborough county judge since 1989. What you may not remember is that she was the deputy director for Bay Area Legal Services before she became a judge and had worked there since 1978.

Judge Crenshaw is understandably excited about this opportunity. She leaves with this circuit's best wishes and its gratitude for her years of honorable service. 🙏

The Governor characterized Judge Crenshaw as: "a distinguished jurist of high integrity". He also noted

FLUSHOTS



Judge Bergmann rolled up his sleeve and took his shot with grace and dignity



David Kirby of OPI grimaced in pain - or the thought of it



Judge Greg Holder joined with 60 other judges and staff to take advantage of the workplace flu shots

ELVESFORELDERS



Jennifer Branch, EJC, and GM Sean Cadigan, check out some of the “joy” contributed to Elves for Elders

written by | David Kirby

It's unlikely that you've ever had to consider this question. But, what if your total discretionary income was between thirty-five and fifty dollars a month? Let's see, annually that would amount to between \$400.00 and \$600.00. Now, out of that pittance would you allocate for your clothing, your dental care, toiletries, food (other than institutional), recreation, social life; essentially everything but room, and board. And what if you wanted to attend an adult daycare program to break the boredom and keep the mind active? Well, those programs cost money – so, good luck.

This is exactly the situation of the wards of the state in Hillsborough County. Pretty sad situation; right? But, this article isn't really about sadness and need. It's about the generosity of a community coming together to help meet some of the needs of these people.

Since its inception in 2002 the Elves for Elders annual gift drive (the brainchild of Judge Susan Sexton) has been coordinated by the Elder Justice Center (www.fljud13.org/courtAdministrationPage.asp) and

Aging Solutions, Inc., (www.aging-solutions.org/) the Public Guardian of Hillsborough County. Each year, beginning in November, these two organizations spearhead the effort to gather gifts and donations for these wards. Simply put, these people are under public guardianship because they no longer have the capacity to care for themselves, and have no one else to care for them. Virtually all of whatever income they have is used up paying for their very basic necessities. Most are surprised to see that their needs are great, but their wishes are modest.

“Cash donations this year totaled \$12,000.00, and every ward was chosen and received gifts”

Each year, Aging Solutions compiles Christmas gift lists of each ward's wishes. There is never an extravagant request. The lists are made up of things like; a hair bush, underwear, tooth paste, T-shirts, a jacket, sweats, socks, a radio (not an i-Pod, just a plain radio), a gift certificate to Wal-Mart or McDonalds.

Lisa Esposito, Esq., is the president of the Tampa Gator Club (www.tampagatorclub.com); yes, the National Championship Gators. Under Ms Esposito's leadership, the club has previously participated in Elves for Elders, but, according to Sean Cadigan, Director of the Elder Justice Center, they outdid themselves this year. In all, the Gator Club brought in over seventy-five donors and \$1,127.00 in cash donations. Also, a club member contacted journalist, Steve Otto, and convinced him to write an article about the drive, which was published in the Tampa Tribune and brought in a host of other donors, including him.

Overall, cash donations this year totaled \$12,000.00, and every ward was chosen and received gifts. EJC Director, Sean Cadigan said: “Considering these hard economic times” he was surprised at peoples' generosity. He said it brought to his mind “the look on George Bailey's face, from It's a Wonderful Life when all those people were chipping in to help him”.

COURTTOURS

Navigating the 13th Judicial Circuit



Date	Group	Tour Guide
10.02.08	Foundation Christian Academy	David Kirby
10.02.08	Roche Surety Bail Bonds Class	David Kirby
10.21.08	Florida Career College	David Kirby
10.23.08	Franklin Middle School/Edgecomb Bar Assoc.	D. Kirby & A. Tasanaprasert
10.27.08	Booker T. Washington Elementary School	David Kirby
11.18.08	Girl Scout Troup 487	David Kirby
12.02.08	Everest University	Blanca Potts
12.04.08	Leto HS Law Studies	David Kirby
12.16.08	Everest University	David Kirby





“Anti-Meth Podcast”

Click the Following Link to
Watch the Anti-Meth Podcast
www.fljud13.org/mediacenterpage.asp

Credits

Executive Producer
K. Angela Smith

Producer
Carlos Nieves

Studio Host
Tonya Muhammad

Cast & Special Guests
Liz Harden of DACCO
Clara Parker of Hillsborough
Kids, Inc.

An Excerpt from the Podcast

Host Tonya Muhammed: Because of time limits and the intensity of treatment, this program requires a lot of participation, right?

Parker: That’s correct. Time limits, now because of new legislation were adopted. The case plan goal dates are 9 months instead of previous 12 months. So the intensity of the program allows them to participate more, get more actively involved early on and help get them through a case plan much quicker.

Harden: what that means to the client and the client’s family is it really is going to be a very active treatment process, which may require more frequent court dates, may require more frequent reporting from the treatment providers and more groups and individual sessions where previously they might have had longer times to accomplish those goals, they are now going to be asked at a quicker pace.



Host Tonya Muhammad speaks with Liz Harden and Clara Parker



Clara Parker of Hillsborough Kids, Inc.



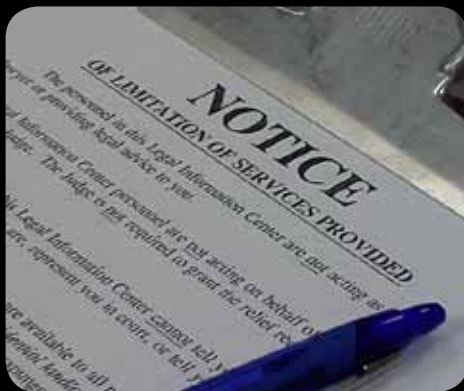
10.4 million teens 12 and older have used methamphetamine at least once in their life

To View an Additional Podcasts Such as “Levels of Care” Please Click on the Following Link:
www.fljud13.org/mediacenterpage.asp



Legal Information Center

written by | Simone Fallon



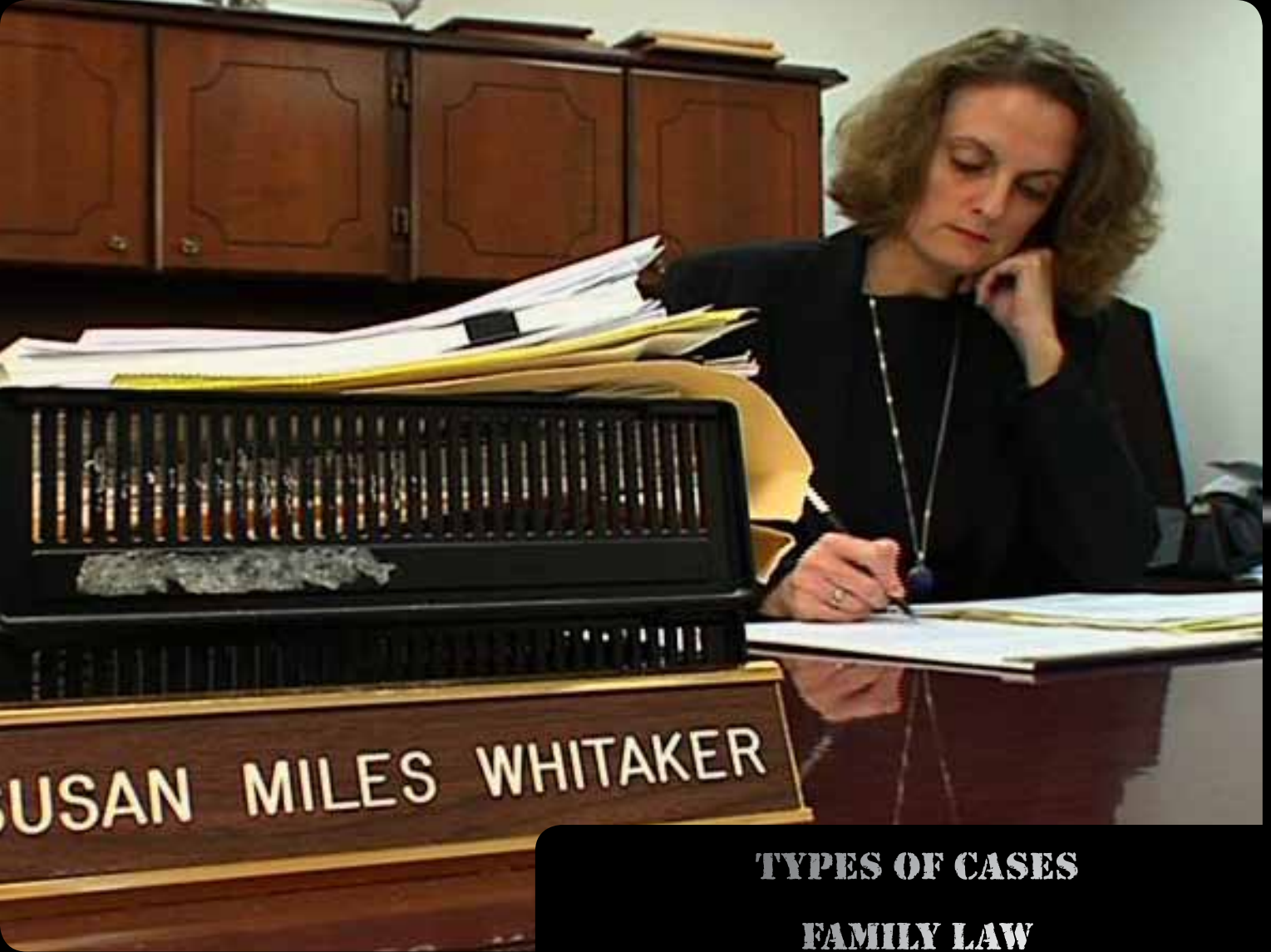
For further information please visit: www.bals.org

The Thirteenth Judicial Circuit has a unique partnership with Bay Area Legal Services, a non-profit law firm. Bay Area Legal Services is the service provider for the Legal Information Center. This program provides free assistance to pro-se litigants seeking help with Family Law, Residential (Landlord/Tenant) or Small Claims issues. The Legal Information Center is located in the Edgecomb Courthouse (Room 203) and is headed up by Susan Whitaker, a family law attorney.

Whitaker states that, "The most prevalent type of case is Family Law." 80% - 90% of people seeking assistance are seeking Family Law assistance. Family Law cases consist of divorce, child custody, child support, adoptions and

name changes. Whitaker consults with over 150 people each week.

The pro se client may feel overwhelmed, anxious and frustrated when attempting to face the legal system without representation. With a sea of forms and questions it's easy to see that a person may feel discouraged. For many families, seeking private representation is financially out of the question. In order for these families to prepare themselves they must be properly educated to successfully navigate the legal system. This is where the Legal Information Center's services prove to be invaluable. Whitaker asks pro-se litigants questions such as, "What do you want to accomplish?" and "What do you want the courts to do for you?" The answers to these questions



TYPES OF CASES

FAMILY LAW

RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD/TENANT


SMALL CLAIMS

may well enlighten the litigant to set their goals within the court system. Whitaker directs them to specific forms that may be downloaded from www.fljud13.org or purchased at the Clerk's office for a nominal fee.

The Legal Information Center offers walk in hours which vary from week to week. Hours are posted at www.fljud13.org. or are available by calling (813) 864-2280. Each person seeking assistance from the Legal Information Center must complete the Notice of Limitation of Services Provided which states that staff members are not providing representation, they are not giving legal advice, conversations are not confidential because the attorney/client relationship does not exist.

The Legal Information Center's services are also felt throughout the courthouse. Judges and attorneys alike benefit from a knowledgeable litigant which leads to an increase in docket productivity. Additionally, the Case Management Unit is charged with providing assistance to the judiciary for Family Law issues are more effective when the pro se litigant is knowledgeable and prepared.

Funding for the Legal Information Center is provided by a grant from the law firm of Fowler White Boggs Banker and TECO.

The Legal Information Center makes the pro se process easy, demystifies the process and empowers people. 

JUDGE CATHERINE CATLIN INVESTITURE



written by | David Kirby
photos by | Carlos Nieves

Judge Catlin's brother, Craig Mershon held the bible while she was sworn in.

Catherine M. Catlin's life changed on August 26, 2008 when she was elected to the office of Circuit Court Judge. Her investiture took place on January 20, 2009 in Courtroom One.

Her nephew, Nicholas Valdez, linked her love of her family with her unique abilities in the area of family law, and he also offered: "My aunt has always wanted to be a judge." Both local attorney, Norman Cannella, Sr. and his wife are close friends of the new judge. Mr. Cannella, who was present at the investiture, offered some of his wisdom when he told Judge Catlin: "Your life has now changed. You are no longer an advocate; you are now a decision-maker."

Even though Mr. Cannella said that he hoped that his remarks to her would not make her cry, when Judge Catlin responded to his comments, she acknowledged that his statements did bring tears. However, to this admission, she added: "but for those who come before me, this is the last sign of weakness you will see from me." The new judge went on to thank her father for teaching her that "ethics are everything", and she promised those assembled that she will "work hard to earn your faith, trust and respect".

So, by taking the oath of office and donning the symbol of her office, the black robe, Judge Catherine Catlin achieved a life-long goal and took her place among her new colleagues, the judiciary of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit.

In addition to taking the bench, she will participate in the upcoming investitures of three of her newest colleagues, Judges Caroline Tesche, Lisa Campbell and Samantha Ward, who have been with her during the last few weeks of Judicial Orientation. 🌸



Judge Kim Fernandez and Judge Emily Peacock joined Judge Catlin after the ceremony to celebrate.



Judge Ron Ficarrota presented Judge Catlin with a nameplate on behalf of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges.

JUDGE CAROLINE TESCHE INVESTITURE



Judge Tesche's brother, Thomas W. Tesche held the bible while she was sworn in.

written by | David Kirby
photos by | Simone Fallon

January 23, 2009 happens to be the birthday of the Honorable Caroline J. Tesche. It also happens to be the day that she was invested as a Circuit Court Judge. Chief Judge, Manuel Menendez wished her happy birthday and presented her with a helium-filled "Happy Birthday" balloon. In response to the laughter, Judge Menendez said that all the judges chipped in for the balloon. Then, turning to the matter at hand, he administered the oath of office to our newest Circuit Court Judge. She takes over Domestic Relations/Family Law, Division I. Her Judicial Assistant is Mona Baker.

Among the well-wishers was one of her older brothers, Allan Tesche, Esq. who practices law in Anchorage, Alaska. In his comments, he recounted a strong family heritage including John Rutledge (September 17, 1739 – July 23, 1800) who was the first governor of South Carolina, who served as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. John's younger brother, Edward, was also was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Mr. Tesche asked the judiciary to train and support his sister and to expect the very best from her.

Longtime friend, Jill Menadier, Esq., also addressed the group. As the ceremony drew to a close, Judge Tesche commented: "From my heart, I cannot be more honored and thrilled about these next steps I'm taking."

Another older brother, Thomas W. Tesche, offered the benediction and court was adjourned. 🙏



Two friends, Donna Casavant and Deborah Brown, assisted Judge Tesche during her enrobing.



Judge Ron Ficarrorta presented Judge Tesche with a nameplate on behalf of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges.

LOCAL JUDICIARY AND LEGISLATORS JOINED EFFORTS TO CREATE EASIER ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN GUARDIANSHIP CASES

written by | David Kirby



L-R: Shelley Mirpuri, Judge Susan Sexton, Rep. Kevin Ambler, Gov. Charlie Crist, Sylvia Smith, Amber Smith, Jim DeBeaugrine, Margaret Hooper

On June 13, 2008, Governor Charlie Crist signed House Bill 739, and in doing so he made the lives of some families with developmentally disabled children a bit less complicated. But the real story has to do with how the bill ended up before the Governor. Every bill has a beginning, and the roots of this one began when Circuit Judge Susan Sexton became aware of a problem in Chapter 393 of the Florida Statutes and decided to reach beyond the Judicial Branch to try to do something about it in the Legislative Branch.

Judge Sexton has had more than ten years on the bench in the Guardianship division. Because of her daily exposure to such cases, she became aware of a problem in the state statutes. The essence of the problem was that, upon the eighteenth birthday of a developmentally disabled child, his or her parents were no longer able to access needed information about their child, many times vital information such as medical data and social security records. In order for parents to gain access to these records, they needed to obtain letters of guardian advocacy. The applicable laws were cumbersome and

outdated. They created unnecessary hardship and expense for these families. So, Judge Sexton, along with Staff Attorney, Shelley Mirpuri, approached Senator Victor Crist and Representative Kevin Ambler about the problem.

The result of this collaboration between these two branches of government was HB 739 which amended the existing guardianship provisions. Judge Sexton and Ms. Mirpuri, along with other stakeholders, remained involved throughout the legislative process. They attended a legislative committee hearing in Tallahassee and helped draft the bill. Then on June 13, 2008, they were present in Orlando when the Governor signed the bill into law.

Now, because of the efforts of Judge Sexton, Shelley Mirpuri and members of the Florida Legislature, the lives of families with developmentally disabled children have become less difficult, and in easing the burden on these families, justice is much more accessible for these families – truly justice served. 🙏

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

ERC Shines Spotlight on Staff in Court Land

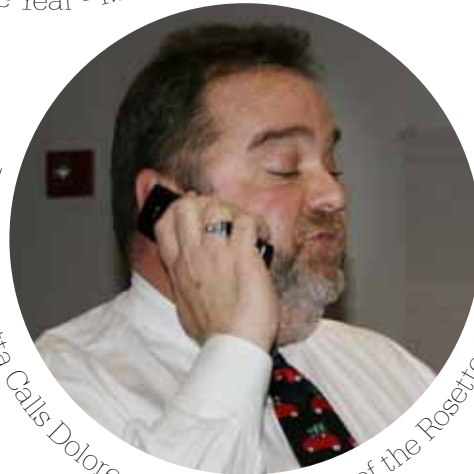
written by | Angie Smith
photos by | Simone Fallon



Employee of the Year - Martiza Lopez



Chief Judge's Award - Sheriff David Gee



Judge Ficarrotta Calls Dolores Scranton Winner of the Rosette J.A. of the Year



Leadership - Tracy Wells

You can't have an Employee Recognition Ceremony in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit without hearing a quote or two from Court Administrator, Mike Bridenback. "Life isn't about how to survive the storm, but how to dance in the rain," he began, borrowing a phrase but continuing with heartfelt sentiment when he described how sometimes people with deserving recognition are "right under your nose." Ms Tracy Wells, Senior Administrative Assistant, who has exemplified those traits throughout this year and many others, received the Leadership Award. The Employee of the Year took a risk when leaving a position in Drug Court for uncertain waters, demonstrating that she is innovative, visionary, a team player and a role model – Ms Maritza Lopez,

Court Interpreter Supervisor. In addition to the traditional accolades from colleagues and the court, Reeves Auto was on hand to present the keys to BMW Sedans for a week – to get a taste of the good life while cruising down Dale Mabry and across the Tampa Bay to Maritza, as well as the J.A. of the Year, Ms Dolores Scranton. Although Dolores was unable to attend the ceremony, Judge Ficarrotta was undeterred in his excitement as he praised her contributions to his office and then let his fingers do the walking as he held up his cell phone and dialed her number to let her know she received the Tessie Rosette Judicial Assistant of the Year Award. This was met with chants of congratulations through the phone as the judge held it up for audience participation.



Synergy - Carlos Nieves



MVP - Carrie Yoakum



Risk Taker - Diane Williams



Helping Hand - Connie Santiago



Innovator - Diane Browning



Quality of Excellence - Nickolle Lindo



The Ceremony presented an opportunity for Chief Judge Menendez to make a public presentation to Hillsborough County Sheriff David Gee for his support to the judiciary and staff during this last year. Other employees recognized this year included:

- Helping Hand – Connie Santiago, Court Facilities
- Innovative – Diane Browning, Child Support Hearing Officer Program
- Risk Taker – Diane Williams, Court Programs
- Quality of Excellence- Nickolle Lindo, Juvenile Drug Court Program
- Synergy - Carlos Nieves, Eye4Media, Office of Public Information
- Most Valuable Player – Carrie Yoakum, Court Communication and Technology Services
- Teamwork – Family Case Management Unit



Judge Levens Recites "The Night Before Christmas at the Courthouse"



"King" Chief Menendez Presides Over the "Land of Edgewood" Castle

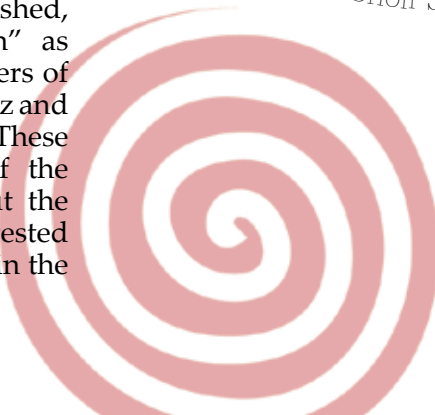


As for the last two years, the Employee Recognition Ceremony was combined with a holiday party, which was celebrated on the 6th floor of the George Edgewood Courthouse. This area was literally transformed into "candy cane lane" by two resident geniuses, Tracy Wells, Central Office, and Elvira Pisacane, Fiscal Affairs. Of course, they had the help of "elves" throughout court administration who worked tirelessly to plan and implement the new holiday land. Janice Albury, Court Operations, led a court "choir" in a unique rendition of The Twelve Days of Christmas and Judge Bill Levens read a special version of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas.



The 13th Judicial Circuit Choir Sings "The 12 Days of Christmas"

For those nominees whose hopes were dashed, there were other opportunities to "win" as multiple drawings were held by the Masters of Ceremonies, Chief Judge Manuel Menendez and Court Administrator Mike Bridenback. These opportunities were available because of the community support garnered throughout the year. Judges and employees who are interested in viewing more photos, you'll find them in the common drive. 📁





Take a ... Beach Day

win a day of
administrative leave

be the first employee to send the correct answers to smithka@fjud13.org
to win a day of administrative leave granted by the court administrator

1. Where can you find compelling portraits of our community's children who are available for adoption?
2. What is the reported budget of Justice Teaching?
3. What significant stride was made for the long term funding stability for the courts in the last Special Session of the Legislature?
4. Dialoguing or talking to someone else to get a perspective on your life is referred to as the _____ method.
5. Which agency is the Public Guardian of Hillsborough County?
6. Which new hire was deployed to Kuwait and Iraq?
7. Where can you find materials that outline caseload trends and the impact of state budget cuts?
8. The 2nd DCA hears appeals from Hillsborough County and surrounding counties. What are the other counties?
9. Who received the chief judge's award at the Employee Recognition Ceremony?
10. How long does the adoption process reportedly take?