A Message from Lisa Goodner, State Courts Administrator

In this winter 2007 edition of the *Full Court Press*, I again want to take the opportunity to thank all of you for your commitment to carrying out the mission of Florida’s judicial branch. Some of your many judicial branch activities demonstrating that commitment are chronicled in this newsletter. The recently-published *2006-2007 Florida State Courts Annual Report* also highlights the many achievements of our state courts system—achievements resulting from your hard work and dedication.

Back in late spring, we knew that 2007-2008 would be a very tight budget year. In late summer, we learned that the economic forecast was more dire than previously expected. Governor Charlie Crist requested that all state agencies and branches prepare 10% budget reductions, and the judicial branch made extensive adjustments to accommodate this potential reduction. Fortunately, after the October special legislative session, funding for the courts was reduced only two percent rather than an anticipated four percent or greater. However, the Revenue Estimating Conference met again in mid-November and issued revised revenue projections for the state. Florida is now predicted to be short by another one billion dollars this fiscal year and by 1.4 billion dollars the next fiscal year. Unfortunately, we do not yet know how these predictions will affect the current year’s budget.

Although the current budget is uncertain, it is still essential to begin preparing for the branch’s future budgetary needs. This was Chief Justice Lewis’ focus in his recent presentation to the Governmental Services Committee of the Florida Tax and Budget Reform Commission—an important entity that is reconvened every 20 years to examine the state budgetary process, revenue needs, and expenditure processes. The chief justice spoke to commission members about the evolution of the state courts system, the branch’s funding structure, ongoing post-Revision 7 challenges, filing trends, demographic shifts, access trends, the influence of technology, and budget drivers—and how all of these affect, and will continue to affect, the work of the court system and its budget needs. Most importantly, the chief justice made clear to commission members that the mission of Florida’s courts—“to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes”—is essential to an orderly society, and insuring stable funding for core functions is of critical importance to Florida’s citizens.

I know these are challenging times. But I can assure you that Chief Justice Lewis, your branch leadership, and I will continue to work tirelessly so that the branch has the funding to carry out its mission.

Sincerely,

Lisa Goodner
Families and Children

Domestic Violence Strategic Planning Group

“What is it going to take to achieve the results we’re seeking? Legislative changes? Rule changes? Form changes? Changes in training?” “What should be our next step, and who should be taking it?” “How, ultimately, will the work of this group be realized?” For, as one person meaningfully cautioned, “If we just have great ideas and we don’t figure out how to implement them, all we’ll do is produce another great report.” These are some of the concerns that were sparking members of the Domestic Violence Strategic Planning Group, which had its second meeting in September at the supreme court. Clearly, the members of this group are emphatically committed to achieving more than just the penning of a well-written strategic plan.

The recently-established Domestic Violence Strategic Planning Group comprises an inspiring and far-reaching spectrum of members from across the state—among them, judges and court personnel, attorneys, law enforcement and probation officers, victim advocates, batterers intervention program directors, and representatives from the DV Program Office of the Department of Children and Families, the Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association, and the attorney general’s office—all experts in the field of domestic violence who have been instrumental in improving the services for and the lives of domestic violence victims and their families. The planning group was first convoked by OSCA’s Office of Court Improvement in February 2007 with the momentous goal of “improve[ing] the effectiveness of Florida’s justice system in handling domestic violence cases.” To achieve this goal, the group is helping the Office of Court Improvement develop a strategic plan that aims to enhance the way in which the court system addresses these cases.

After Rose Patterson, chief of the Office of Court Improvement, welcomed members to the September meeting and thanked them for their continuing input and commitment, OSCA’s Joanne Snair, who has been working on the domestic violence project for OSCA for over four years, introduced the day’s agenda: members would reevaluate the priority issues they named at the first meeting; then they would identify internal and external strengths and challenges in implementing the group’s recommendations; finally, they would divide into workgroups to begin addressing the three priority areas on which the group chose to focus. She reminded participants that, although domestic violence cases typically involve many different parties, in order to create an effective strategic plan, the group can productively address only those recommendations that may be implemented by court-based initiatives, for anything else would lie outside the branch’s jurisdiction.

After members engaged in an animated re-examination of the priority issues raised at their first meeting—and offered suggestions about others that needed to be added to the list—Joanne led them through a SWOT analysis—a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in a project. By identifying the internal and external factors that can help or hinder the group’s efforts to achieve its objective, she explained, members will be in a strong position to develop recommendations that can be implemented.

Members quickly named an abundance of the group’s internal strengths: among them, access to other groups that can lobby for systemic change; access to direct service providers who can share data and feedback; access to a variety of educational bodies—and to funding that supports educational endeavors; a range of perspectives and experience on which to draw; the judicial and law enforcement presence in the group; the energizing commitment, both individual and collective, of the members; the good geographic representation of members, covering both urban and rural areas from across the state; and member involvement in other committees and task forces that can help the group implement its recommendations. Members also readily identified positive external factors: the supportive administration of Governor Crist; the strong DV laws in Florida; and the prospect of effective resource use as a result of this collaborative effort.
Among the negative internal factors, members listed a need for greater engagement with clerks, law enforcement, public defenders, and social services entities; a lack of funding; and a lack of power/authority to effect the changes they seek. Some of the negative external factors mentioned were the lack of public education about DV; inconsistencies in the enforcement of laws and the provision of services; the tendency, still, to blame the victim; and resistance to change generally.

Armed with an awareness of both the positives and negatives inherent in its undertaking, the group separated out into three workgroups, each to begin addressing a specific priority area: workgroup one, headed by Judge Amy Karan (Miami-Dade County), is focusing on creating more effective injunction orders; workgroup two, guided by Judge Mary Catherine Green (Polk County), is concentrating on injunction enforcement and compliance issues; and workgroup three, navigated by Judge Lynn Tepper (Sixth Judicial Circuit), is addressing the needs of parties (e.g., access to courts, support services). Over the next few months, each workgroup will be developing strategies and action plans for its priority area, and, in April, the Domestic Violence Strategic Planning Group will meet again to consider and synthesize these proposals into a comprehensive DV plan draft that will include a communication plan, a strategic plan, and a monitoring plan. The group’s goal is to produce a final, comprehensive strategic plan by June 2008. This plan will be invaluable in guiding the court system and its justice system partners through coordinated, collaborative efforts to improve the justice system’s handling of DV cases.

Family Court

Dependency Video

“What am I going to do?” “Where are my kids?” “When am I going to see my child?” “How did this happen?” “What’s going on?” “What is a case plan...DCF...Guardian ad Litem...disposition...judicial review?” “What is dependency court?” Because dependency court can be a bewildering and anxiety-producing experience pervaded with new and often exasperating terminology, the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court has been determined to do something to explain and guide parents through the process—and its efforts have recently borne fruit.

Judge Nikki Ann Clark, Second Judicial Circuit, who chairs the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court, opened the steering committee’s October meeting with a premiere of the video A Family Guide to Dependency Court—a joint effort of one of the committee’s ad hoc workgroups and OSCA’s Office of Court Improvement. Funded by a Federal Court Improvement Program Training Grant, this video was created primarily for parents who are entering the early phase of the proceedings, but it was also envisioned as an aid to Department of Children and Families staff, community-based care staff, Guardians ad Litem, and volunteers who are unfamiliar with the court process.

With its straightforward, easy-to-follow script, the video begins by clarifying the scope and role of dependency court: any time there’s an apprehension that a child has been or is in danger of being abused, abandoned, or neglected, this concern is addressed in dependency court—which aims to ensure that kids are safe and protected and strives to address the problems that brought them into dependency court in the first place. Then the video goes on to address the sorts of questions that parents are bound to ponder: “Who are all these people in the courtroom, and what does each one do?” “Do I need a lawyer?” “What is a first hearing?” “What should I take with me to court?” As the video makes clear throughout, the preferred goal of dependency court is to reunify parents with their children. As for the best way for parents to achieve this goal? Parents are urged to do their case plan.

The video was produced by Diane Wilkins Productions, which also provided six professional actors. (Viewers who notice that some of the actors look strangely familiar will be relieved to know that many of the extras are in fact Office of Court Improvement and Second Judicial Circuit staff.) Entered into an international competition for marketing and communication professionals involved in the conceptualization, writing, and design of print, visual, and audio materials, the video won a Gold Marcom Award.

Copies of A Family Guide to Dependency Court were recently sent to each of the family court managers, who have distributed them to the judges and courthouses in their circuits. Copies have also
been sent to the DCF regional directors and training academy, the community-based care lead agency contacts, and the Guardian ad Litem circuit directors and statewide office. The video is also available for online viewing. For more information about or for a copy of this video, please contact OSCA’s John Couch at CouchJ@flcourts.org.

Youth Panel
After the screening of the video, steering committee members were treated to a youth panel coordinated by Judge Herbert Baumann, Jr., Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. Judge Baumann chairs the Independent Living Subcommittee, responsible for examining the role of the courts in dependency cases in which children “age out” of the foster care system without a permanent family.

When he was first appointed chair of the subcommittee, Judge Baumann was emphatic about including as members some youths who are about to age out of—or who have recently aged out of—the system, but it soon became evident that this would be a difficult goal to realize. Recognizing the indispensability of having their input, he invited several young adults associated with foster care-related organizations to participate in a youth panel for his subcommittee members. This panel discussion, which took place in June, comprised two youths associated with Connected by 25 (a community initiative that aims to ensure that youths who are currently in the foster care system are educated, housed, employed, and connected to a support system by the time they reach 25) and two young adults associated with Youth SHINE (a Florida’s Children First project that helps young adults who are currently in the foster care system are educated, housed, employed, and connected to a support system by the time they reach 25) and two young adults associated with Foster care-related organization (since the steering committee meeting, however, she has connected with Youth SHINE and is now doing advocacy work with this group). Also on the panel was Andrea Moore, executive director of Florida’s Children First. Because one of the tasks of the subcommittee is to address the rule regarding children’s presence in court in dependency hearings, the panelists were asked to include this issue in their presentation.

In telling their stories, these two young women eloquently spoke about many matters that resonated with steering committee members. For instance, they discussed the frequent inability of current and former foster children to access their own records and, therefore, their pasts—which makes them feel like “victims of identity theft.” And they talked about foster kids’ rightful anger—anger about the lives they have been dealt and the ways they have been treated by their families, their foster families, the state, the courts—and about the complications that escalate when their anger is misconstrued as mental illness and (mis)treated with psychotropic medications.

Also of paramount concern is that, even though it’s their lives that are being orchestrated by the court system, foster kids are typically not consulted about the transition and normalcy plans that are approved for them. Thus Tammy and Jade made a passionate plea for representation in all court proceedings that concern them, stressing that those children who have a Guardian or Attorney ad Litem generally fare best because someone is present to advocate on their behalf. Throughout the presentation, they made poignantly clear the critical role that the courts play in their lives: because foster children are in state custody and often have no one to make sure they are kept safe and receive proper care and needed services, the court is their only safety net. The bottom line, they emphasized, is that children need to be involved in the hearings—and need to be heard: "It’s not about us without us,” they declared.

Clearly, the youth panelists’ presentation was persuasive and affecting, for it segued seamlessly into a stirring and useful discussion among the panelists and steering committee members about the current and proposed rule regarding children’s presence in
The ultimate goal, Judge Baumann concluded, must be to get the child involved in his/her case plan as early as possible.

Mental Health Summit: Saving Money and Offering Hope

The culmination of a concerted inter-branch endeavor, the long-anticipated Mental Health Summit—titled Transforming Florida’s Mental Health System—was hosted at the supreme court on November 14. The seed for this mental health initiative was first planted 16 months ago, when Chief Justice Lewis directed the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court to create a subcommittee to address mental health issues within the context of family courts and appointed Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County, to chair the subcommittee. Then in April, the chief justice invited Judge Leifman to serve as his special advisor on criminal justice and mental health issues, prompting the seed to germinate quickly into a “cross-systems collaboration” of the judicial branch, the governor’s office, the Department of Children and Families, the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Health, and the legislature.

Focused on improving the practices of the criminal justice and public mental health systems when dealing with people with mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance abuse disorders, this collaborative effort gained even more momentum this spring when the Council of State Governments Justice Center selected Florida as one of seven states to participate in its Chief Justices’ Criminal Justice/Mental Health Leadership Initiative, which was founded to address the national crisis resulting from the way states handle mentally ill inmates. Providing technical assistance from national experts, the Justice Center also gave Florida a small grant, which helped to subsidize the November summit.

The purpose of the summit was to herald and summarize the Mental Health Subcommittee’s recently-completed report, Constructing a Comprehensive and Competent Criminal Justice/Mental Health/Substance Abuse Treatment System: Strategies for Planning, Leadership, Financing, and Service Development. The summit began with a welcome by some of the many leaders who participated in making this initiative a collaborative success: Chief Justice Lewis, Governor Crist, Secretary Butterworth (DCF), Secretary Agwunobi (AHCA), Secretary McNeil (DJJ), and Secretary McDonough (DOC). Then, after presenting a historical synopsis of the treatment of the mentally ill in the U.S. and in Florida, Judge Leifman introduced the packed courtroom to the subcommittee’s comprehensive plan for creating a system of care for those with serious mental illness who are involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the criminal justice system.

Some of the key features of the plan, which will be phased in over six years, are as follows: the creation of a three-tier classification system to distinguish among levels of mental illness so as to determine appropriate levels of care; the adoption of a range of innovative financing strategies that will create incentives to prevent individuals from inappropriately entering the justice system; the formation of Integrated Specialty Care Networks to maximize state and federal funding that serves those with serious mental illness; the establishment of inter-agency partnerships to maximize funding streams for mentally ill individuals who are covered under public entitlement benefits; and the establishment of a Statewide Leadership Group to help communities build the infrastructure for competent, community-based mental health systems, thereby helping communities become eligible for federal dollars to serve those with mental illness (for more details, read report online).

Most of the report’s recommendations primarily concern state agencies, but some do speak to the role of the judicial branch, specifically regarding the education of judges and other court professionals about issues associated with mental illness and about how these issues can impact the courts. According to the Mental Health Subcommittee’s Judicial Education and Rule Making Workgroup, “At the very least, it is...
critical that judges are provided with basic knowledge regarding mental illnesses, the mental health system, and available resources in the community so that they are prepared to make informed decisions when mental health concerns or issues arise. Failure to do so may mean that decisions are based on mistaken stereotypes or assumptions about mental illnesses, which can have a variety of negative impacts on individuals, families, the community, and the justice system."

Judicial branch members should also be familiar with issues associated with mental illness because “Judges are uniquely positioned to play important roles in designing, implementing, and administering a variety of problem solving approaches to address complex social issues. For example, through court-based interventions such as diversion programs and specialty mental health courts, judges play a significant role in determining how individual cases involving defendants with mental illnesses should proceed and whether alternatives to prosecution or incarceration should be considered,” the workgroup stated. It recommends that training be provided at judicial education programs (in fact, a three-day course titled “The Rational vs. the Irrational—Total System Change of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse and Justice Interface” will be offered at the Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies; Judge Martha Ann Lott, Eighth Judicial Circuit, is the faculty lead).

Aspects of this plan have never been tried anywhere else in the country, Judge Leifman emphasized. But the existing system does not work, and if Florida does not try something different, then the state will continue to “bleed”—millions of dollars annually to build more prisons and to pay for more forensic beds. And to do that, he cautioned, would fit the definition of insanity: to keep doing the same thing over and over, expecting a different result. Alternatively, he offered, this redesigned mental health system can save substantial taxpayer dollars. Moreover, it has the potential to help countless Floridians with mental illness—and to offer them “a true opportunity for the recovery of hope.”

Fairness and Diversity

Architectural and Electronic Access to the Courts

People who are 65 and older are more than twice as likely to have a disability as those who are between 16 and 65. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2000 and 2030, the number of Americans 65 and older is projected to grow from 35 million to more than 70 million—or from 12.4% to nearly 20% of the population. Between 2000 and 2030, the number of Floridians in this age group is projected to grow from just over 2.8 million to nearly 7.8 million—or from 17.6% of residents to 27%. If these projection figures prove true, the number of Floridians with disabilities—currently, over three million—will burgeon strikingly over the next two decades or so. Therefore, Chief Justice Lewis has been resolutely urging Florida’s courts to address the needs of people with disabilities—and to focus both on architectural access and electronic access.

In September 2006, the chief justice charged the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity with establishing a Court Accessibility Subcommittee to coordinate the surveying of all 138 court facilities in the state for architectural accessibility and to support the development and implementation of transition plans. He also requested that the chief judge of each circuit and DCA appoint a Court Accessibility Team (CAT) comprising a broad range of stakeholders in the community (e.g., court representatives, county representatives, justice system partners, people with disabilities, and architects with ADA experience) to manage the project locally. Meanwhile, the Court Access Subcommittee, chaired by Trial Court Administrator Nick Sudzina, Tenth Judicial Circuit, designed a courts-specific survey instrument and organized regional training sessions for the members of the CATs.

Beginning this fall, courts from all across the state began sending their completed surveys to the subcommittee, which will use them as the basis for a report on the architectural accessibility of Florida’s state courts. This overview will document the areas that need attention as well as the need for funding. (In fact, after receiving the survey results, some courts began making improvements right away; for instance,
the supreme court is renovating its bathrooms, has placed adjustable podiums in the courtroom and the judicial meeting room, and has raised the counsels’ tables so that people in wheelchairs have sufficient knee room.)

Debbie Howells, ADA coordinator for the state court system, declared that “Every circuit and DCA has been very responsive,” and she has been especially heartened by the “excellent cooperation and open communication” among the CAT members. Most impressive, she said, is the way in which this survey experience has become a collaborative, non-adversarial, “two-way learning opportunity”: court representatives have become sensitized to the kinds of challenges that people in the disability community face when they visit the court, and the disability community has developed a better understanding of the issues that the court system faces in trying to correct some of the architectural barriers (e.g., the state is responsible for facilities that house the DCAs, and each county is responsible for its trial court facilities, so all three branches of government, both at the state and local levels, must work together to achieve court accessibility). She sees this court access initiative as a “tremendous success so far,” saying that “It will have importance for the state court system for years to come.”

But in this digital world, accessibility has come to signify more than making sure that people with disabilities can access parking spaces, entrances, restrooms, witness stands, jury assembly areas, holding cells, and the like. Since July 2006, the Florida Legislature has required all state government entities—including the judiciary—to ensure that people with disabilities also have access to electronic information and technology. That means that all electronic-based communications—emails, word processing documents, PDFs, spreadsheets, web pages, PowerPoint presentations, videos, audio files, software applications, computer hardware, telephones, faxes, copy machines, etc.—must be made accessible to people with disabilities. Although the legislature provided no funding to implement this legislation, Florida’s courts have been taking significant steps to realize this goal.

In order to provide electronic access to people with disabilities, the state court system recognizes the need to perform a rigorous evaluation of the accessibility of its current electronic and information technology. A thorough assessment will identify challenges the court system faces, recommend standards, and formulate options and strategies for implementation; it will also include a review of court procurement policies and procedures as well as recommendations on accessibility testing, training needs, and ongoing resource requirements. To subsidize this comprehensive assessment, the state court system submitted a legislative budget request for non-recurring funds to contract with an organization that has the requisite expertise in this area.

In addition, in a move to make sure that all court technology projects are conceptualized with access in mind, the Florida Courts Technology Commission has recently been tasked with working “to incorporate the principles of accessibility into all court technology projects, through consideration and application of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; sections 262.601 through 262.606, Florida Statutes; and any other applicable state or federal disability laws.” Thus, the goal of electronic access now undergirds all technology-based policy decisions.

Meanwhile, many courts are undertaking local initiatives. For instance, the supreme court and OSCA recently established a 508 Workgroup (named after section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act, after which the Florida law is modeled), whose purpose is to make recommendations on the implementation of the Florida Statutes relating to access to electronic information and information technology for people with disabilities. In addition, supreme court and OSCA staff were invited to a presentation on accessible electronic and Internet technologies. And educational presentations and training sessions are being planned for other court audiences across the state, among them, chief judges, court managers, court webmasters, and court technology officers.
Underscoring the growing nationwide importance of electronic access for people with disabilities—and manifesting Florida’s leading role in addressing it—for the Court Technology Conference, the National Center for State Courts invited three Florida court staffers (the supreme court’s Craig Waters and Tricia Knox and OSCA’s Phil Pollock) to give a paper this October on the legal and technological issues underpinning accessibility to court web sites. This team gave a similar presentation to the trial court administrators at the December education program and is receiving other invitations, from courts both in and out of state, to present this information.

If people complain about having to comply with all these accessibility requirements, invite them to think about curb cuts, suggested Bob Ahern, founder of a computer training, web development, and consulting services company, in his presentation to supreme court and OSCA staff. When the ADA was enacted in 1990, he reminded listeners, everyone who had to write the checks complained bitterly that creating curb cuts was expensive and that it would benefit only a small minority of people, those in wheelchairs. Then he challenged everyone in the room to think about all the people who actually do avail themselves of curb cuts: people pushing baby carriages or strollers or shopping carts, people dragging luggage, people with canes or walkers, toddlers, kids on scooters, bicyclists, skaters, skateboarders….Although the accessibility changes we’re all being instructed to make may seem as if they’ll benefit only a small number of people, in fact, they’ll benefit everyone, he stressed. In working to enable architectural and electronic access to the courts by people with disabilities, the courts are indeed facilitating everyone’s access to justice.

New E-Tool in Place to Recruit Law Clerks and Staff Attorneys

Developed by OSCA’s Information Systems Services in conjunction with the Standing Committee on Fairness and Diversity, the Law Clerk Resume Repository is an innovative e-tool designed to increase the diversity of employees seeking law clerk and staff attorney positions in Florida’s state court system—and to provide a ready applicant pool from which to fill these key positions. The resume repository enables applicants to post their resumes electronically—and lets judges and court managers review these resumes online. To download resumes, applicants can find the link on the Florida State Courts website (under Court Employment or Diversity Resources). And to access these resumes, judges and court managers can find the link on the State Courts Intranet site (under Personnel Office/Recruitment/Law Clerk Search; after requesting access, you’ll receive an email with your user name and password). With the help of this exciting, new resource, Florida’s courts aim to increase their talented and diverse workforce.

Education and Outreach

Alternative Dispute Resolution: Educational Opportunities for Mediators of All Ages

“Insight and Inspiration,” this year’s sixteenth annual conference for mediators and arbitrators, drew a “record-breaking” crowd of 1,200 to Orlando this August, announced Florida Dispute Resolution Center Director Sharon Press in her welcoming greeting to attendees. The day-and-a-half long conference, co-sponsored by the Florida Dispute Resolution Center and the Florida Academy of Professional Mediators, followed a one-day training session for court-appointed arbitrators. Balancing high-quality plenary sessions with intimate interactive workshops, this richly-textured event provided attendees with a plethora of tantalizing and useful learning opportunities.

The conference began with a warm welcome from Justice Peggy Quince, who thanked mediators “for what you do to help make the justice system work in the state of Florida.” Keynote speaker Kimberlee Kovach, distinguished lecturer in dispute resolution at South Texas College of Law, spoke next, encouraging mediators to seek insight and inspiration by objectively evaluating the relationship between mediation and the courts. She emphasized some of the advantages that this connection has wrought: financial and staff support; credibility; near-immediate acceptance; and an increase in use. But she also called attention to what she
saw as some of the drawbacks of the connection: the adversarial, win-lose mentality; the focus on settlement rather than problem-solving; the public’s misconception that mediation is a legal process that can be initiated only after someone is involved in a lawsuit; and the lawyer-heavy nature of the profession, which often fails to take advantage of the wisdom and experience of other relevant disciplines. By reflecting on the last 30 years of mediation in this country and urging listeners to move beyond some entrenched ways of thinking and doing, the speaker invited mediators to aspire toward a refreshed and more meaningful conception of what they can hope to achieve for their clients and for their profession.

Two plenary sessions—one on diversity and a second on ethical responsibilities and domestic violence—punctuated the remainder of the conference schedule, which consisted of three blocks of concurrent sessions, each offering choices from among 13 workshops and one mini-plenary. Mediators are required to complete at least 16 hours of continuing mediation education every two years, and, at every stage of the conference, attendees could follow any one of copious paths to satisfy their education requirements (mediators who attended the entire event earned 12.9 continuing education hours).

The conference also gave mediators the chance to fulfill two recently-added education requirements. As of August 1, 2007, as part of their 16 hours, all mediators must take one hour of diversity/cultural awareness education, and all county court and circuit court mediators must take two hours of domestic violence education. Those who attended the plenary and the mini-plenary sessions were easily able to accrue continuing mediation education hours in domestic violence education and diversity/cultural awareness. In addition, conferees could choose from among five workshops on domestic violence education and seven on diversity/cultural awareness education.

But certified mediators are not the only ones who get to take advantage of mediation education programs. For, on October 18, on International Conflict Resolution Day, peer mediators from four Leon County elementary and middle schools had a chance to benefit from a mediation education program as well. At “Let’s Talk About It,” the Mediation Day Celebration held at Florida State University, 76 peer mediators (16 students from elementary schools and 60 from middle schools) participated in educational sessions that aimed to deepen their awareness of and sensitivity to others and to otherness generally. The Dispute Resolution Center helped to organize the half-day event, which began with a “warm-up” exercise—a half hour of cooperative games—and a welcome by Sharon Press. Then, students were separated into smaller groups for age-specific workshop sessions. The focus for the middle school mediators was on non-verbal skills; students were guided to think about the importance of this form of communication through a role play exercise that involved mediating the conflict between Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf. And the focus for the middle schoolers was on building more effective mediation skills in real-life situations by learning how to employ empathy statements, empathic body language, and other verbal and non-verbal methods to show interest and engagement and to draw others out.

After the workshops were over, students gathered together again for lunch and an address by Chief Justice Lewis, who, using a cordless mic, ambulated among the round tables bustling with students, creating a close and intimate backdrop for his talk. His theme was the importance of finding one’s uniqueness. “Many of us spend our entire lifetime trying to figure out who we are,” he noted. Because we don’t know who we are, the majority of us end up being unhappy with our jobs, with what we do; as a result, he warned, most of us are not living up to our potential. However, “As soon as you discover your uniqueness, you will know where it’s going to take you.” And, once you’ve made this discovery, he urged, “You need to take responsibility for yourself.”

Rather than blaming others for everything that goes wrong in their lives, the chief justice encouraged his young listeners to take control of their lives and realize that they are responsible—“for yourself, your school, your family, your community, and, ultimately, for this great nation.” Given their precocious commitment to problem-solving and peace-making, it’s probably not a stretch to say that these peer mediators already grasp the chief justice’s message in some fundamental and meaningful way.
Mediator Certification Qualifications Revised

On November 15, 2007, the Florida Supreme Court released opinion SC05-998 amending the qualifications for becoming a Florida Supreme Court certified mediator pursuant to rule 10.100, Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators. With the release of this opinion, the supreme court has fully embraced the “point system” for assessing qualifications. In addition to amending rule 10.100, the court revised rule 1.720(f), Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, to provide that if the parties are unable to agree upon the selection of a mediator, either may request that the court appoint a certified circuit mediator who is a member of The Florida Bar. The chief justice also released a new administrative order implementing these amendments, AOSC07-57. The changes went into effect immediately. Questions may be directed to the Dispute Resolution Center at (850) 921-2910.

Constitution Day at the Supreme Court

Just before noon on September 24, from cars, vans, and mini-buses, they began alighting at the supreme court. From far and near, they ventured—from Altha, Apopka, Deltona, Gulf Breeze, Lakeland, Marianna, Ocala, Orlando, Palm Coast, Pensacola, Sarasota, Sebring, Tampa, Wewahitchka, and from Tallahassee as well. They—98 middle and high school students (along with three dozen teachers and parents), representing 16 different schools—journeyed to the capital to commemorate Constitution Day with the supreme court justices.

After the students were shepherded into the courtroom, court staff distributed an option finder to each one and explained how to use it. Soon thereafter, Marshal DeCoste called the court to order, and, into the awe-hushed room, the robed justices made their formal entry. “It is truly a grand day when we can have tomorrow’s future sitting in our audience,” Chief Justice Lewis said, genially welcoming the visitors. “You will be in charge—the leaders who will determine who we become as a people,” he pronounced, reminding them that democracy cannot survive without education and introducing them to the instructional activities in which they would soon engage.

The program was divided into three parts. In the opening activity, students had a chance to demonstrate their knowledge, using the option finders to register their answers to a series of multiple choice questions. The first seven were trivia questions on subjects like popular boy bands and trendy TV shows—an ice-breaker exercise that enabled them to become familiar with the option finders. Not surprisingly, the students performed admirably on these questions (the justices, however, admitted to a less-than-perfect knowledge of these subjects). The final 28 questions were designed to test the students’ civics knowledge, but the correct answers to these questions were not revealed yet.

For the second part of the program, divided into seven groups, the students were ushered into more intimate rooms in the building for breakout sessions, each of which was conducted by a justice. As they entered these smaller rooms, each student was handed a “fact strip” that contained a specific grievance from the Declaration of Independence in both its original language and in more modern lingo (they were not told from what document the grievances were taken). After the justice introduced him/herself and welcomed the group, students were invited to read their fact strip to themselves; then, divided into smaller groups, students introduced themselves to one another and taught their group-mates the information contained in their respective fact strip—an opportunity both to grow comfortable with one another and to learn some new facts. The justice then led them in a discussion about where these grievances are found, why the Declaration of Independence was needed, what happened as a result of it, and how the Articles of Confederation came to be written.

All of this conversation segued smoothly into a colloquy about the Constitution: its purpose; from what it protects us; what role it plays in our lives; and how it’s organized. Then, students were again divided into small groups to engage in a Constitution Scavenger Hunt—artfully designed to spur them to find the answers to the very civics questions they’d been asked earlier, in the opening exercise. After the “hunts” were completed, the justice reviewed the answers with them, and with the remaining time, students were prompted to talk a bit about how the 220-year-old Constitution affects their lives—peppered by pertinent queries by the justice, such as, “Should the government have the right to read your MySpace or Facebook accounts to see if you
are saying bad things about the school or teachers?” and “Should cameras be placed in classrooms so that school administrators can monitor student behavior?”

For the last part of the program, the justices and their charges returned to the courtroom, and students had the opportunity to re-vote their responses to the civics questions they’d been asked during the opening activity—but this time, the answers were displayed immediately on the screen, revealing the vote breakdown of both the “before” and the “after” responses. No one could deny what a dramatic difference the breakout sessions made! For instance, during the opening activity, only 53% of the students knew that it is the First Amendment that frees Americans to disagree with and criticize government officials; at the closing activity, this number soared to 88%. And while, at first, only 34% knew that the speaker of the house becomes president of the U.S. if the president and vice president die, by the end of the day, over 94% knew the correct answer. In the closing exercise, over 92% knew that there are five rights in the First Amendment, while only 35% got the answer correct in the opening exercise.

Rob Thompson, the supreme court’s law-related education and outreach coordinator, believes that the program’s success was due to its well-defined purpose, goals, and structure: by showing the students what they don’t know and then by giving them a chance, guided by the justices, to discover the answers with their peers, students could observe their significant improvement and could actually witness themselves learning. As for what the students thought about their day at the court, they were certainly surprised by how much they absorbed—but mostly they were moved by the nature of the experience: “How incredible it was to be so close to a justice of the supreme court,” several of them enthused.

**Florida Invited to Participate in State Courts Data Roundtable**

When OSCA needs to know how Florida’s court system will be financially affected by a proposed bill, from whom does it get the answer? When the supreme court prepares to certify the need for new judges, where does it get the data on which to base its request to the legislature? When an OSCA unit is seeking federal funds to subsidize, for instance, court improvement programs, how does it get the filing forecasts it needs? When the legislature wants to know how many people arrested for a specific offense in Florida were arraigned in a prescribed period, where does it get the numbers?

Because the process of gathering and analyzing these types of data is typically done silently, behind the scenes, most people have no idea that OSCA has a Court Research and Data Section (under the aegis of Court Services) to collect, analyze, and provide the data that are so critical to the seamless operations of the court system. In the words of one of the OSCA employees of this section, this work may seem “dry, technical, and unsexy,” but it’s evident that many consequential court administrative decisions could not be made without it.

Up until nearly a decade ago, the collection of statistical data for the Florida court system was done exclusively by OSCA’s Information Systems Services Unit (ISS): ISS would collect and report the data, and staff in Court Services, most of whom were policy-oriented analysts, would compile the data, do the spreadsheets, and write the reports. But that all began to change in 1998, when former State Courts Administrator Ken Palmer asked Kris Slayden to address the disconnect between the collection of the data and the analysis of them; Kris teamed up with the two court statisticians in her unit—Arlene Johnson and P.J. Stockdale—to tackle this project. The offices of many other state court administrators
had already formed research and data sections—and some Florida agencies, like the Department of Corrections and FDLE, also had them—so this team didn’t quite have to reinvent the wheel. But Kris, Arlene, and P.J. wanted to create a section that would be specifically tailored to the needs of Florida’s court system and its judges and court administrators. After about 18 months, they had a fully-functional process in place.

In the early 1990s, statistical work was limited to judicial certification support to the supreme court and ancillary data requests. Now, in addition to expanded and more complex work for judicial certification, it includes performance measurement, Statistical Reference Guide production, ad hoc data requests, legislative bill analyses, special analytical studies, and web-based data query system maintenance. The Research and Data Section’s staff members carry out data base administration functions, conduct audits and provide training to field staff on the data reported to OSCA, and analyze all trial court and DCA information.

At seven years old, Florida’s Court Research and Data Section is really quite young compared to those developed by most other state court systems. So Court Services was more than a little surprised—and honored—when the National Center for State Courts, as part of its Court Statistics Project, recently invited the section to participate in a State Courts Data Roundtable. Only ten states—those with the most developed programs in the country—were invited.

The National Center for State Courts, which aims to improve the administration of justice through leadership and service to state and international courts, takes a special interest in the improvement of court operations through the collection and interpretation of data—hence its decision to host a roundtable in which court data specialists from across the country could share information and learn about each other’s data management techniques. At the end of June, a data specialist from each of the ten states (Arkansas, California, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Texas, Utah, Washington, and of course Florida) convened in Williamsburg, Virginia, to meet their counterparts and to discuss the data collection, auditing, and reporting capabilities of their respective statewide case management/statistical information systems as well as issues relating to national data collection.

Representing Florida’s courts was P.J. Stockdale, senior court statistics consultant for OSCA, who was excited about participating in this roundtable (the first of its kind) and about meeting with others from across the country who do the same job he does. He confessed that participants did “a lot of talking shop, sharing challenges, and validating problems,” but he also said it was really useful to find out what other court data sections do and how Florida compares. For instance, of the ten states, Florida’s section is the only one that has its own server (others borrow space from their IT departments). The advantage, P.J. explained, is that “the layout, data, and processes we have running on our server are exactly the ones we need.” Also, “With our own server, we don’t have to share the environment with other competing uses”—plus “We have the level of control we need to get optimal performance for research and data.” At the roundtable, P.J. also discovered that Florida’s court system lags in terms of the detail of the data collected, especially, for instance, case management data (e.g., how long a case took and what delayed it)—but that it is “out in front” in terms of the depth, caliber, quality, and accuracy of the data it does collect.

One of the other intriguing aspects of the roundtable, P.J. noted, was the realization that everyone who was present ended up becoming a court data specialist totally by chance. Because the job requires a skills set that is not taught in college and because it requires an unusual congregation of abilities, one literally has to learn the job “on the job.” To do the job well, one should have strong statistical and critical thinking skills as well as an understanding of why a particular solution makes sense; knowledge about how to take raw data and organize it in a way that facilitates good analysis; sound programming and code-writing skills; and a facility for presenting data effectively, which means understanding the principles behind the design of cogent charts and tables. According to roundtable participants, rarely do courts find someone with all these skills together.
But that might not be the case for long, for one of the many positive outcroppings of this roundtable is the prospect that the National Center may begin providing professional training for court data specialists. Given that the skills set needed for the job has crystallized over the years, the National Center recognizes that it is now possible to provide standardized training—and it is considering the possibility of setting up learning opportunities for new as well as seasoned data specialists. Also under consideration is the creation of a national association for those who do court research so that they can have formal opportunities for professional growth and networking. Meanwhile, the National Center has set up a listserv so that roundtable participants have a medium for sharing questions, concerns, and suggestions; through online and face-to-face contact, participants intend to continue their important dialogue.

**Florida Court Public Information Officers Form Statewide Organization**

Several exceptionally high-profile cases have propelled some of Florida’s courts into the news this year. No doubt the most pronounced were the Anna Nicole Smith case, heard in the Seventeenth Circuit and appealed to the Fourth DCA, and the John Couey trial, held in the Eleventh Circuit after being moved from the Fifth Circuit. Another attention-getting court case—or, more accurately, reprised court case—unfolded in Tallahassee this fall, stirring up seven-year-old memories of 36 days in front of Florida’s supreme court: just last month, an HBO crew was in the capital for a week to shoot scenes for the movie *Recount*, loosely-based on the “back room events” that unfolded between Election Day 2000 and the U.S. Supreme Court decision. As any news-watcher can recall, during these media-intense cases, the Florida court public information officers (PIOs) were solidly on hand, tirelessly and calmly working both behind the scenes and in front of the cameras to provide accurate, up-to-date information to the press and to the public.

According to supreme court PIO Craig Waters, the 2000 election prompted many state court systems to recognize the importance of having a PIO in place to work with the media during high-profile cases. Fortunately for Florida, however, Chief Justice Kogan anticipated that need in the mid-90s. To improve the way in which the supreme court works with the media, he launched his “Access Initiative” in 1996, and he directed Craig, who was then the chief justice’s executive assistant for external administrative matters, to carry out this initiative.

Craig’s first project was to set up a “press page” on the supreme court/Florida state courts website so that information about weighty cases could quickly and easily be accessed. His second project was to have cameras mounted in the courtroom so that oral arguments could be broadcast live, giving the public a window into the workings of the supreme court; with the help of WFSU-TV (Florida State University), oral arguments have been broadcast in real time on local cable, by satellite, and online since 1997. Therefore, by the time of the 2000 elections, Florida’s supreme court had a well-developed, press-friendly web presence as well as three years of experience broadcasting court proceedings. Advances like these are the means toward achieving what Craig calls “technological transparency”—the utilization of high tech mechanisms for getting information to the press directly, assuring the maximum level of transparency.

In 1998, the supreme court created a full-time PIO position—and Craig was offered the job, which he has been doing ever since. At that point, the supreme court was one of the few courts in the state with a PIO. Soon after the 9/11 tragedy, however, that changed. The horrors of 9/11 prompted Chief Justice Wells to establish the Work Group on Emergency Preparedness, which he charged with “develop[ing] a plan for the State Courts System to better respond to emergency situations,” and one of the group’s recommendations was that every circuit court and DCA designate someone to serve as PIO.
to coordinate emergency response activities and provide information to the media and the public. Since May 2002, each of Florida’s circuit courts and DCAs has had a PIO in place.

Recently, Florida became the first state in the country to institute a statewide organization of court PIOs. FCPIO, Inc., was created in January 2007 “to promote professional education of Florida court public information officers, to encourage their professionalism, to encourage and promote the use of best practices and ethical behavior by its members, and to serve the communities in which their courts dispense justice” (qtd. from the FCPIO mission statement). Since the incorporation of the FCPIO, the PIOs meet twice a year to receive training, share ideas and strategies, and lend each other support. They now have their own FCPIO website and are in the process of formalizing the FCPIO organizational structure.

Craig credits the FCPIO with having helped its members deal so adeptly and efficiently with this year’s high-profile cases. In fact, PIOs Chris Stotz (Seventeenth Circuit) and Glen Rubin (Fourth DCA)—and Debbie Thomas (Fifth Circuit) and Eunice Sigler (Eleventh Circuit)—each received a Florida Court Public Information Officer Award at last June’s Florida Bar Meeting, the first two, for the Anna Nicole Smith case, and the last two, for the John Couey trial. It’s important to note that these award winners were selected by a majority vote of out-of-state court PIOs, which means that the candidates were evaluated from a national perspective. At the same meeting, Craig was honored with a lifetime achievement award for his “tireless advancement of the profession and committed leadership in the creation of FCPIO.”

Given that the level of public interest in court cases both famous and infamous is likely to continue growing over time—and given the hitherto unimaginable speed with which people have access to information—Florida’s courts are fortunate to have professional PIOs who are well-versed in communications field trends and who are skilled in developing and maintaining effective relationships with the media.

Recount, the Movie, Looks at Election 2000

by Phillip Pollock

An HBO crew of approximately 90 members descended on the Florida Supreme Court November 3-4 as part of the filming of Recount, which took place in Tallahassee for approximately one week. The film revisits the Bush v. Gore presidential election 2000 turmoil that embroiled the court and Tallahassee proper for several weeks after the polls closed that November. Ultimately, 36 days after the national election, the U.S. Supreme Court announced Bush the winner of the election by reversing the decision of the Florida Supreme Court that had ordered a recount of the state’s undercounted votes. The film is scheduled for release in the spring of 2008.

The movie is directed by Jay Roach and scripted by Danny Strong, and it stars Kevin Spacey, John Hurt, Denis Leary, Bob Balaban, and Ed Begley, Jr. The film attempts to show what happened behind the scenes from Election Day through the U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended Vice President Al Gore’s challenge and handed Bush the presidency.

The two-day filming at the court involved not only the vast HBO film crew but also several hundred extras who filled the streets in crowd scenes outside the court, as well as a smaller number in the courtroom who listened to the oral arguments surrounding the controversy of recounting votes due to the closeness of the initial count.

A long-time court employee who worked at the court during the election (and who also served as an extra in the movie’s courtroom scene) said the filming brought back very clear memories. “It certainly brought it all back to me,” she said. “But I doubt the filming can quite recapture the true drama, or certainly the intensity, of the time. History was being
made every day the vote was in question—I mean, there was a lot of tension in the air.”

[Phillip Pollock is the Web Administrator for OSCA]

Reality and fiction briefly shake hands when the real Justice Pariente (on left) is introduced to Annie Cerillo, the actor who plays her in Recount.

Legislation

Complying with the Federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act

In July 2006, a week after the U.S. Senate unanimously passed the bill, the U.S. House passed the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, which was signed into law by President Bush on July 27, 2006. The purpose of this act is to protect the public, specifically children, from violent sex offenders. It is the culmination of a twenty-five-year effort by Reve and John Walsh, whose six-year-old son Adam was abducted in 1981 from a Hollywood, Florida, shopping mall and was found murdered 16 days after his abduction.

In addition to creating three tiers of sex offenders, the Adam Walsh Act creates a comprehensive, nationalized, Internet-based sex offender registry; requires all jurisdictions to enact criminal penalties for sex offenders who fail to comply with the registration requirements (i.e., it imposes a fine and/or imprisonment for up to 20 years on offenders who knowingly fail to register or to keep their information current); makes registration a mandatory condition of probation and supervised release; requires sex offenders to appear in person to verify their registration; and eliminates the statute of limitations for prosecutions of child abduction and felony sex offenses against children.

This year, to comply with the provisions of the Adam Walsh Act, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1604, creating Chapter 2007-209, Laws of Florida, and thereby effecting significant changes in Florida’s sex offender laws. The bill, approved by Governor Crist in June, went into effect on July 1, 2007.

SB 1604 revises the criteria for designation as a sexual predator or sexual offender (it expands the population of offenders required to register to include some juveniles adjudicated delinquent of certain crimes); it requires predators to register with the FDLE through the sheriff’s office; it requires predators to register in the county in which they were designated as predators; it increases the frequency of re-registration; it provides for notification upon release of specified offenders; and it allows certain sexual predators and offenders to petition for removal of the registration requirement (e.g., youthful offenders who meet the criteria of the so-called “Romeo and Juliet” exemption).

Although it is unusual for federal statutory law to have an impact on state courts, the Adam Walsh Act clearly does. Now, if an individual is convicted under certain sections of the Florida Statutes—specifically section 800.04, which addresses lewd and lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of individuals who are under 16—the court is required to make additional written findings indicating whether the offense involved sexual activity, whether it involved force or coercion, and whether it involved unclothed genitals or genital area. For certain qualifying offenses, the court also has to make a written finding of the age of the victim and the offender at the time of the offense.

In response to the recent state legislation resulting from the passage of the Adam Walsh Act, OSCA’s Office of Court Improvement sent out a one-page information sheet to delinquency judges and family court managers highlighting the new findings that are required of the court. In addition, several ideas are being considered for facilitating the court’s collection of the data prescribed by SB 1604. According to one promising proposal, the Florida Bar Criminal Rules Committee would amend the Form Relating to Judgment and Sentencing (rule 3.986) in the Florida Rules of Criminal Procedure to expedite the gathering of this new information.

Ultimately, the hope is that, in toughening the registration requirements for sexual offenders and predators, this bill will enhance the safety of children throughout the state.
Awards and Honors

Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis received the Pursuit of Justice Award from the American Bar Association; this award recognizes attorneys and judges who have shown outstanding merit and have made a significant difference in ensuring access to justice through the courts.

Justice Raoul G. Cantero, III, received the 2007 Class of ’66 Award from Florida State University College of Law Alumni Association; this award recognizes a non-FSU College of Law graduate for his/her distinguished service to the law school and to the community.

Justice Barbara J. Pariente received the inaugural Justice Barbara J. Pariente Award from the Palm Beach County Chapter of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers; this award was bestowed on her for supporting and advancing women in the legal profession and for being a role model and mentor in Palm Beach County and throughout the state.

Judge Ralph Artigliere, Tenth Judicial Circuit, received the Justice Harry Lee Anstead Award for the Florida Board Certified Lawyer of the Year at The Florida Bar’s annual convention in June.

Judge John Carassas, Pinellas County, was appointed by Governor Charlie Crist to serve on the nine-member statewide Commission on Open Government, which is responsible for evaluating the public’s access to government meetings and records.

Judge Crockett Farnell, Sixth Judicial Circuit, received the George W. Greer Judicial Independence Award by the Clearwater Bar Association.

Judge Juan Ramirez, Jr., Third DCA, attended a workshop on Foundations of American Law at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, sponsored by the American Academy of Judicial Education; he is one of the first Third DCA judges to attend a judicial education program on this topic. His attendance was supported by a scholarship awarded by the State Justice Institute.

Judge Walter L. Schafer, Jr., and retired Judge Susan F. Schaeffer, Sixth Judicial Circuit, were inducted into the St. Petersburg College Hall of Distinction, which recognizes alumni and friends of the college who, through their superlative achievements in professional and civic life and their continued support over the years, have brought honor to themselves, the community, and the college. Also, at the college’s commencement ceremony, Judge Schaeffer was named the college’s Outstanding Alumna for 2007.

Judge Louis H. Schiff, Broward County, received the Conference of County Court Judges’ Harvey Ford Award, which recognizes the county court judge who has shown the highest service to the community, the legal profession, and the conference.

Judge Irene Sullivan, Sixth Judicial Circuit, and Judge Lester Langer, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, were appointed to the statewide, 25-member “Blueprint Commission” that is charged with developing a plan for reforming Florida’s juvenile justice system. Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Walter McNeil said the committee of community leaders, juvenile justice stakeholders, and policy experts will address key concerns, such as juvenile recidivism, over-representation of minority youths, and the trend involving girls—the fastest-growing segment of the juvenile justice population.

Judge Teretha Lundy Thomas, Miami-Dade County, received the Gwen S. Cherry Black Women Lawyers Association’s Outstanding Member Award for her longstanding service as a member of the association and for her active service during the year.
Chief Justice Lewis presented Justice Teaching Awards at The Florida Bar’s annual convention to the following judges: Philip J. Padovano (First DCA); Morris Silberman (Second DCA); Linda Ann Wells (Third DCA); Fred A. Hazouri (Fourth DCA); Thomas D. Sawaya (Fifth DCA); T. Michael Jones (First Circuit); Janet E. Ferris (Second Circuit); Leandra G. Johnson (Third Circuit); Karen K. Cole (Fourth Circuit); Patricia Thomas (Fifth Circuit); Nelly N. Khouzam (Sixth Circuit); Shawn L. Briese (Seventh Circuit); Victor Hulslander (Eight Circuit); Faye Allen (Ninth Circuit); Ralph Artigliere (Tenth Circuit); Michael A. Genden (Eleventh Circuit); K. Douglas Henderson (Twelfth Circuit); Raul C. Palomino, Jr. (Thirteenth Circuit); Jim Fensom (Fourteenth Circuit); Kathleen J. Kroll (Fifteenth Circuit); Wayne M. Miller (Sixteenth Circuit); David H. Krathen (Seventeenth Circuit); Lisa Davidson (Eighteenth Circuit); William L. Roby (Nineteenth Circuit); and John C. Carlin (Twentieth Circuit).

A 249-member team comprising the Office of the State Courts Administrator, the Department of Law Enforcement, and the Department of Corrections won a Prudential Financial-Davis Productivity Award for implementing, ahead of schedule, the Jessica Lunsford Act, which requires lifetime monitoring of child-sex offenders released from prison. The award honors state employees for their innovations and productivity improvements.

In Memoriam

Judge Isaac Anderson served on the bench in Lee County (appointed in 1981) and in the Twentieth Judicial Circuit (1991-present).


Retired Justice Joseph A. Boyd, Jr., Florida’s fifty-ninth justice, served on the Supreme Court from 1969-1987; he was chief justice from 1984-1986.

Trial Court Administrator Susan Ferrante served the Fifteenth Circuit (1986-2007).

Former Judge Douglass Bourne Shivers served on the First DCA from 1979-1992; he was chief judge from 1989-1991.
January 2008
2-4 Florida Conference of County Court Judges Annual Education Program, Amelia Island, FL
6-11 Florida Judicial College Phase I, Orlando, FL
10-11 Steering Committee on Families & Children in the Court, Tallahassee, FL
11 ADR Rules & Policy Committee (location TBD)
15-18 DRC County Mediation Training, Volusia County
16-19 FL Bar Midyear Meeting, Miami, FL
25 Task Force on Treatment-Based Drug Courts, Tallahassee, FL
27-30 Conference of Chief Justices Midyear Conference, Williamsburg, VA
28 FL Court Public Information Officers Midyear Meeting, Tampa, FL
31 Pro Bono Awards Ceremony, Tallahassee, FL
31 FL Supreme Court Historical Society Annual Dinner, Tallahassee, FL

February 2008
5-8 DRC County Mediation Training, Ft. Myers, FL
6-10 Judicial Assistants Association of FL (JAAF) Winter Educational Conference, Destin-Ft Walton Beach, FL
15-16 Court Interpreter Program Orientation Workshop, Jacksonville, FL
17 Court Interpreter Program Written Exam, Jacksonville, FL
21-22 Supreme Court Committee on Standard Jury Instructions in Civil Cases, Tampa, FL
29 Standing Committee on Fairness & Diversity, Tampa, FL

March 2008
2-7 Florida Judicial College Phase II, Orlando, FL
4 Florida Legislature convenes
9-11 National Association for Court Management (NACM) Midyear Conference, Charleston, SC
13 ADR Performance & Accountability Meeting with TCAs & ADR Directors, Orlando, FL
14 ADR Rules & Policy Committee (location TBD)
28 Judicial Management Council Meeting, Tallahassee, FL