A Message from Lisa Goodner, State Courts Administrator

As I said in my message in the spring 2014 edition, to reach our vision—that “Justice in Florida will be accessible, fair, effective, responsible, and accountable”—the judicial branch’s people, places, and tools must be adequately funded. In this year’s legislative budget request, we pressed for funding for all three areas of need—and I’m happy to report that lawmakers responded to our call, appropriating $501 million to the court system: a 13.1% increase over last year’s budget.

Of those three areas of need, our people were, and continue to be, our top priority: we steadfastly advanced that we can fulfill our vision only if we have the ability to hire and retain a capable, well-qualified workforce. Although our request for a 3.5% across-the-board competitive pay adjustment for judges and court personnel was not funded, the legislature did appropriate $8.1 million in recurring dollars for a raise for targeted court personnel to address salary equity, retention, and recruitment issues. I want to emphasize that this is a huge step toward addressing specific situations where the judicial branch has been paying less for comparable work than other Florida government entities. And we owe this success—and the other gains we realized this year—to the dedication of a super team that included numerous DCA and trial court judges, the chief justice, and OSCA staff.

Parenthetically, I want to add that this is an issue for which the branch has been ardently advocating for nearly as long as I’ve been state courts administrator—and it means so much to me to see these efforts bear fruit as I prepare to retire at the end of June…which brings me to the subject of transition planning. In early April, Chief Justice Polston announced the selection of the new state courts administrator, Patricia “PK” Jameson, an attorney with 20 years of policy and executive management experience in Florida state government. I’ve known and worked with PK for many years in her various positions in the executive and legislative branches, and I have full confidence that she will be able to take on the responsibilities of this office and keep OSCA on its path to ever-greater heights.

We’ve also been preparing for another transition: on June 30, Chief Justice Polston will be handing the gavel, a symbol of the authority of the chief administrative officer of the branch, to Justice Labarga. For the last few months, the entire office has been engaged in briefings and orientations with Justice Labarga and PK to prepare them for the roles they’ll be assuming on July 1—and they will be ready to go!

And, finally, after 24 years, what can I say to thank all of you I have worked with along the way? To members of the Supreme Court and to the judges and court administration staff from across the state, thank you for enabling my leadership—and then strengthening my leadership by letting me lead. The Court may have given me the job, but all of you provided the opportunities. You’ve offered me wise counsel, constructive criticism, a helping hand when times have been tough, and friendship and humor to ease the way.

In closing, I want to share with you one of my favorite quotes, which I wrote down on a sticky note many years ago and have kept on my desk where I can see it frequently: “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.” I hope we have done that as a branch, as fellow workers in public service, and I hope I have achieved that personally. I know I will miss you. But my path through life is at a turn in the road, and as the old view fades away, a new and exciting view is appearing! I am ready to embrace it.

Thank you and God bless you all,

Lisa Goodner
Legislative Update

Funding, Benefits, and Pay for the 2014 – 2015 Fiscal Year

On Friday, May 2, the 2014 legislative session came to a close, with lawmakers approving a $77.1 billion budget—nearly 3.5% higher than the budget they passed last year. With the legislature working with a surplus again this year, it turned out to be another good year for the state.

“This was also a very productive session for the state courts system,” said Sarah Naf, director of OSCA’s Office of Community and Intergovernmental Relations: “The budget includes funding for important projects such as facility replacement and repair in the district courts of appeal. In addition, a number of substantive judicial branch agenda issues were enacted. And funding was also included for the branch’s top priority—its people,” she emphasized.

“Critical to the courts’ success,” she added, “was the active participation of judges from the budget commissions and the judicial conferences, whose experience plays a valuable role in communicating judicial branch issues to legislators.” Under the leadership of the chief justice and with the support of the OSCA Legislative Team, everyone worked diligently together, speaking with one voice, to keep attention focused on branch priorities and to ensure adequate funding for the courts. Also invaluable were the efforts of the many judges who came to Tallahassee or met with their local lawmakers to provide insights into matters affecting the branch.

This article summarizes some of the key budget issues relating to state courts system funding, benefits, and pay.

Funding

For fiscal year 2014 – 2015, the court system received $501 million—a 13.1% increase over last year. This includes funding for three new DCA judgeships: two in the Second DCA and one in the Fifth DCA (the last time the judicial branch was awarded funding for additional DCA judges was in 1999). The budget also includes funding for a new courthouse for the Fourth DCA as well as for maintenance, repairs, and some security issues at the Second, Third, and Fifth DCAs.

Problem-solving courts also fared well: $5.5 million was earmarked for the eight existing adult post-adjudicatory drug courts; $100,000 for training for judges and court employees who work in problem-solving court dockets (i.e., those dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues); $1,000,000 to expand the veterans court program to Duval and Orange counties; and $250,000 for the mental health diversion program in Miami-Dade.

Lawmakers also addressed conflict counsel payments. Last year, the legislature provided an increase in the amount of funds in the budget of the Justice Administrative Commission (JAC) to cover criminal conflict counsel payments in excess of flat fees, increasing the threshold that had to be reached before the courts became responsible for payment of these bills; nonetheless, despite each circuit’s best efforts to monitor costs and scrutinize fee requests, one big case had the power to “break the bank.” This year, the legislature eliminated the statutory requirement that holds the court system responsible for the excess fees awarded to private counsel after the funds appropriated to the JAC for that purpose are exhausted. This means that trial court budgets will be subject to less unpredictability and the circuits will have more resources for other due process costs.

Benefits

Benefits for all state workers, including judges and court personnel, remain unchanged from last year. Lawmakers made no changes to the employee retirement contribution or to the retirement system. Nor did they make any changes to the state life and state disability insurance plans, health insurance plans, or employee-
paid premiums. Co-pays for the prescription drug program also remain the same—but one change was made to the program: currently, for certain maintenance drugs, members of Preferred Provider Organizations can fill a prescription up to three times at a retail pharmacy, after which they are required to fill the prescriptions by mail order; now, however, if a retail pharmacy agrees to provide 90-day prescriptions for these maintenance drugs at a cost no higher than the cost for filling mail-order prescriptions, PPO members may continue to fill such prescriptions at a retail pharmacy after the initial three fills. In addition, the legislature authorized the payment of Florida Bar dues.

Pay

State employees did not get an across-the-board raise this year; nor did legislators authorize the merit bonuses that the governor had proposed. Also not funded was the judicial branch request that judges and court employees receive an across-the-board competitive salary adjustment of 3.5%.

However, included in the legislature’s budget package is $8.1 million in recurring dollars “for position classification salary adjustments for judicial branch employees, excluding judges, to encourage employee retention, provide equity adjustments to equalize salaries between judicial branch and other governmental entities for similar positions and duties, and provide market-based adjustments necessary to remedy recurring employee recruitment problems for specific position classifications” (HB 5001).

Comprehensive research has shown that, for comparable work, Florida’s court system lags behind other state government employers in pay: in a comparison of 14 broad job categories, the average salary of court employees is 12.59% below the average salary of other state government workers. In addition to making it difficult for the branch to award merit among staff, this salary inequity has instigated devastating turnover and created challenges in attracting talented job candidates. With this $8.1 million appropriation for salary adjustments, the branch will be able to begin addressing one of its longstanding priorities—the creation of what Lisa Goodner refers to as a “level playing field” for court employees.

Note that this funding will not be used for an across-the-board raise; rather, the branch will implement a targeted raise for court personnel based on recruitment, retention, and equity problems. After seeking recommendations from the two budget commissions and the state courts administrator, the chief justice will file a plan for position classification salary adjustments with the Legislative Budget Commission.

Court Operations

Mortgage Foreclosure Reduction Initiative: Celebrating Successes

The court system has been making decisive headway in reducing Florida’s backlog of residential foreclosure cases while ensuring the due process rights of the parties. Statewide, on July 1, 2013 (the beginning of the fiscal year), more than 329,000 foreclosure cases were pending before the courts; at the end of April 2014, approximately 185,823 were pending, and 74,356 new foreclosure cases were filed in that time span. Altogether, the courts disposed of 193,922 cases between July 1 of last year and April 30 of this year.

Indispensable to this success has been the $21.3 million that the legislature, in 2013, appropriated to the trial courts from the National Mortgage Settlement funds: $16 million for human resources such as additional senior judge days, general magistrates, and case managers, and $5.3 million for technology enhancements. (The funding was designated for fiscal years 2013 – 14 and 2014 – 15.)

Equally fundamental to the progress in paring down the pending foreclosure cases has been the trial courts’ implementation of many of the practical strategies promulgated in judicial branch’s Foreclosure Backlog Reduction Plan. Developed by a Trial Court Budget Commission workgroup, the plan, which was adopted by the supreme court in a June 2013 administrative order, is based largely on process improvements that were already showing great promise at the local level.
The Foreclosure Backlog Reduction Plan recommends four main solutions to the problems impeding the just and timely processing of foreclosure cases. First is to implement more active judicial or quasi-judicial case management and adjudication, including expanded use of general magistrates into the civil division (the supreme court revised rule 1.490, Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, to authorize referral of residential mortgage foreclosure cases to general magistrates with implied consent of the parties). Second is the requirement that each chief judge develop a case management plan that optimizes the circuit’s use of existing and additional resources in the resolution of foreclosure cases. The third solution proffered in the Backlog Reduction Plan calls for additional case management personnel to allow for focused attention on older foreclosure cases. And the fourth solution is the deployment of technology resources to help judges move the foreclosure cases forward; specifically, the plan advocates the use of a judicial viewer, a web-based application that provides judges with real-time and reliable access to case information; lets them access and use information electronically in the courtroom; lets them prepare, electronically sign, file, and serve orders in the court; and generates case management reports that help judges manage these cases efficiently.

In developing the plan, the budget commission’s goal was to present the trial courts with an array of viable, resourceful, cost-effective, home-grown solutions to consider in addressing their backlog crisis. (To read the plan, follow this link.)

Almost a year has passed since the trial courts began implementing their new foreclosure initiatives. And, although challenges still persist—e.g., some courts are still having trouble getting accurate data, and the development of the technology solutions is taking time—on the whole, each of the 20 circuits has made notable progress, and each deserves accolades. Although space is lacking to chronicle the successes of every circuit, this article will highlight the successes of four circuits, selected to reflect jurisdictions of different sizes in different parts of the state—and to exemplify the range of effective approaches to improving the foreclosure process. Based on interviews with members of the mortgage foreclosure program teams in the Second, Seventh, Eighth, and Twentieth Circuits, this story explores what each is doing to reduce the significant backlog while being mindful of the rights of the parties involved in litigation.

Second Judicial Circuit

Trial court staff attorney Melissa Hamilton, who supervises the Second Circuit’s Mortgage Foreclosure Program, identified four components of her circuit’s success. First, for all backlogged mortgage foreclosure cases, the circuit utilizes one senior judge, The Honorable William Gary, which means that rulings are consistent, and the parties are able to develop a good grasp of local proceedings and expectations. The circuit’s second strategy is to work to keep pace with the incoming caseload, thereby avoiding adding to the backlog. So while all backlogged cases (i.e., those that are 18 months old or more) are set on Judge Gary’s docket, sitting judges continue to hear the newer cases.

“Our incredible support staff” is the third component that Ms Hamilton identified: “We couldn’t do this without” the staff whom the circuit hired with mortgage foreclosure initiative dollars: case manager Dierdre Harris; senior case manager Barbara Hettich; judicial assistant Selena Lane; and trial court staff attorney Kelly Vance.

The first three strategies adopted by the Second Circuit are all features of active case management; the fourth element is a technology enhancement, the judicial viewer: “Before, we couldn’t see specific case information or pinpoint problem areas, but the judicial viewer and dashboard show us the areas we need to work on,” she explained. On the whole, she summed up, “We’ve been able to slash our active cases in half,” adding, “We’re very proud of this undertaking.”

Between June 30, 2012, and March 31, 2014, the Second Circuit disposed of 52.3% of its overall available cases (which includes both pending cases and newly-filed cases).
Courtney Pringle, senior court program specialist with the Seventh Circuit’s Family Court Services, noted that her circuit was fortunate because the trial court administrator, Mark Weinberg, chaired the Trial Court Budget Commission workgroup that developed the Foreclosure Backlog Reduction Plan, so her mortgage foreclosure program team was able to position itself for success early on.

The circuit’s greatest priority, in the beginning, was to get useful data. Before the legislature appropriated National Mortgage Settlement funds to the trial courts, the foreclosure team utilized existing resources to determine what kinds of data it could quickly access on its own; collaborating with the clerks’ offices, Ms Pringle was able to get Comprehensive Case Information System (CCIS) data on pending foreclosure cases. With these data, the team is able to triage the backlogged cases: they start with the oldest cases—but don’t lose sight of the new filings coming in, to keep the pending caseload from growing. Having accurate data was key, she stressed: “If we hadn’t been able to tap into the data and avoid waiting for specialized case reports, we wouldn’t be as far along as we are.”

The team also developed an efficient case management process for addressing the backlog: “Everyone realized the need for a consistent model to achieve the best outcomes,” she noted. A representative group of judges from around the circuit came together to develop a model and presented it to the other judges, who agreed to handle their cases accordingly. Judges set a consistent tone and establish procedures from the beginning so that everyone—judges, support staff, and parties—understands the process and knows what to expect. One element of the process involves identifying cases that can potentially reach disposition without dedicating a large amount of judicial time first—such as cases for which a motion of summary or final judgment had been filed but never called up for hearing by the plaintiff. These kinds of cases can be disposed of readily, Ms Pringle explained, and by identifying these cases early in the process, judges and the rest of the team can devote more of their time and attention to the more complex and contested cases. Another case management practice involves issuing a single notice for multiple events. For example, parties receive a notice that advises them both of a case management conference date and a non-jury trial date approximately 30 days thereafter. By addressing outstanding matters at the case management conference, judges can resolve any issues that might inhibit disposition, thereby ensuring that cases are ready to proceed at the time of the non-jury trial.

The final, but most important, component of the Seventh Circuit’s strategy is having an excellent team, which includes sitting judges (Chief Judge Terence Perkins and Judges Patti Christensen, Dennis Craig, Terry LaRue, Howard Maltz, Robert Rouse, William Parsons, and Raul Zambrano); senior judges (Judges Maurice Giunta, Pope Hamrick, Ed Hedstrom, Art Nichols, Ed Sanders, and John Roger Smith); and case managers (Margot Meeks, Burma McDermott, Susan Mull, Steven Porturica, Jenny Quesnel, and Courtney Pringle). “The judges’ willingness to abide by the circuit’s backlog reduction plan and roll up their collective sleeves to focus their efforts on these cases cannot be overstated,” Ms Pringle remarked. The circuit also has good, open relationships with all of its clerks’ offices. “Collaboration and communication” with the clerks have been critical to the circuit’s success.

Reflecting on the bigger picture, Ms Pringle added, “Our goal is to resolve all cases with filing dates of 2012 or older by the end of the summer and to move seamlessly into 2013 filings forward.”

Between June 30, 2012, and March 31, 2014, the Seventh Circuit disposed of 38.4% of its overall available cases (which includes both pending cases and newly-filed cases).
Eighth Judicial Circuit

“Remarkably simple” are the words Magistrate Paul Silverman used to characterize the process that the Eighth Circuit developed to address its backlogged foreclosure cases. He attributes his circuit’s success to its adoption of four strategies.

The first is its development of what has come to be called the “magistrate model.” The Eighth Circuit began to develop this model in 2010, when the legislature first appropriated some funding for temporary judicial and case management resources to reduce the backlog. With these new dollars, the trial courts had the option of hiring senior judges or magistrates to help process these cases. His chief judge and trial court administrator knew they wanted someone who could both adjudicate and do case management, so they decided to employ a magistrate—in fact, theirs was the only circuit that embraced this option at the time. Hired from the beginning expressly to handle foreclosure cases, Magistrate Silverman worked closely with Judge Stanley Griffis to set up and hone the process.

The second strategy that Magistrate Silverman described is his circuit’s team approach. That team includes Chief Judge Robert Roundtree, who was in the TCBC workgroup and has supported and directed the program; Kathy Janous, foreclosure case manager; and Fred Buhl, the court technology manager, who developed the circuit’s judicial viewer. Also essential is the support of the judges, he added. To adjudicate foreclosure cases, magistrates require the consent of the parties; fortunately, “If the parties do object, our judges are willing to hear cases on a moment’s notice. Because they’re willing to make themselves available to hear cases, there is no delay in the process,” he explained.

The third ingredient of the Eighth Circuit’s success is the judicial viewer: “The judicial viewer generates lists of all pending foreclosure cases with the dates they were filed; without it, we wouldn’t know how many cases are out there or how long they have been pending,” he remarked. Using this technology, they can identify and begin working on the oldest cases first; the next step is to set up a case management conference, during which the case is either resolved or a date is set for trial.

In closing, Magistrate Silverman pointed out that they also owe their success to having adopted differentiated case management techniques: “Before 2010, foreclosure cases were lumped with other civil cases. Separating them out from other cases made it possible to address them more effectively,” he added. All told, this four-pronged approach “has led to the best process to move cases through the system toward resolution while maintaining litigants’ due process rights,” Magistrate Silverman emphasized.

Between June 30, 2012, and March 31, 2014, the Eighth Circuit disposed of 61.4% of its overall available cases (which includes both pending cases and newly-filed cases).

Twentieth Judicial Circuit

Sheila Mann, the civil/family division director for Lee County, and Debbie Mravic, court program specialist II who heads the foreclosure docket for Collier County, pointed out that having sufficient resources is crucial. Both counties utilize part-time senior judges and part-time magistrates for their backlogged foreclosure cases. Lee County has four senior judges (Judges Hugh Starnes, James Thompson, Thomas Reese, and James Seals) as well as a magistrate (Lytvette Vazquez) who is authorized to hear everything a senior judge hears, unless a party objects. Collier has one senior judge (Judge Daniel Monaco) and one magistrate (Toni Butler). Staff support—case managers, assistants, and secretaries—is also critical to the initiative’s success in these counties.

Both counties have also developed effective case management practices. They work with data from the clerks and from OSCA’s Foreclosure Performance Indicator Dashboard and give priority to the older cases while also addressing new cases as they come in.
In Lee County, Ms Mann credits Judge Starnes with taking the lead in developing “a very fluid, organized process.” The team is “constantly reviewing the cases and setting them for case management, if needed.” Staff review every docket of Judge Starnes and “flag” all old cases and indicate the issues so that he can address them at the case management conferences. The case management reports are processed immediately, and either the case is disposed or a court date is set. In addition, “Clerks are in court with the judges, setting the next court date before the parties leave and sending us the orders right away; the plaintiff’s party must notice all parties of the next court date.” Throughout the process, “We continuously run our list, which helps us stay on track; if any cases have fallen between the cracks, we find them.”

To ensure that “everyone is prepared and there are no delays” in Collier’s foreclosure docket, Ms Mravic explained that, “If any pending motions are in the court file, the attorneys have to be prepared to argue them at the judicial case management conference.” Also, a case manager is always in the courtroom with the judge, and “no one leaves without an order—a trial date, another hearing date, or a status conference date.” In addition, her county regularly runs a “lack of prosecution docket” for cases that haven’t had any activity for 10 months; the parties have a chance to show good cause, or the cases are automatically dismissed. She describes this as an opportunity to “clean up those cases or make sure they get addressed.” In Collier County as well, efforts are made to ensure that no case “gets lost”: “Once we touch a case, we hold onto it until it is resolved.”

At the same time, to protect litigants’ due process rights and maintain the integrity of the resolution process, the circuit established definitive foreclosure case scheduling practices that limit the number of events before the court based on hearing type. For example, mixed dockets are used for motions for summary judgment and orders to show cause, with 12 cases set at half-hour increments; case management conferences, which enable the court to monitor and control the pace of litigation, are scheduled with no more than eight cases set at half-hour increments; and uncontested non-jury trials are set throughout the week with no more than eight cases set at half-hour increments. The circuit sets morning and afternoon dockets for each of these three hearing types.

Furthermore, Ms Mann and Ms Mravic stressed the importance of technology to their progress, praising their scheduling system, the Judicial Automated Calendaring System (JACS), which feeds into the clerks’ docketing systems. Through JACS, attorneys can schedule their own motion times, including motions for summary judgments, which “eliminates 70% of the phone calls,” saving time for the court and the clerk, Ms Mravic pointed out. Also, as Ms Mann noted, JACS “puts the onus on the attorneys and other parties to be ready to have their cases disposed of” on the date they have selected.

Finally, teamwork, good internal communication, and regular follow-up are essential to each county’s success. Equally important is having a strong relationship with the clerk’s office. “Basically, we’re all working toward the same goal,” Ms Mann emphasized. And Ms Mravic agreed: “We could not do this without one another.”

Trial Court Administrator Scott Wilsker emphasized that, as a result of implementing these practices, “The circuit has been able to reduce the pending foreclosure case backlog by almost 50% since January 2013.”
Between June 30, 2012, and March 31, 2014, the Twentieth Circuit disposed of 51.8% of its overall available cases (which includes both pending cases and newly-filed cases).

Drug Court Updates

OPPAGA Report on the Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program

Now in its fifth year, Florida’s Adult Post-Adjudicatory Drug Court Expansion Program is designed specifically for prison-bound, nonviolent felony offenders who agree to participate in drug court in lieu of being sent to prison. The program, which was piloted in eight counties, was initially funded with $18.6 million in federal stimulus dollars that the legislature appropriated to the court system over three-and-a-half years. The federal grant expired on June 30, 2013, and the state has been funding the program in the current fiscal year. At the same time the legislature appropriated this year’s funding, it directed its Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to evaluate the effectiveness of the expansion drug courts, using output, cost, and outcome measures.

The OPPAGA report, titled Expansion Drug Courts Can Produce Positive Outcomes Through Prison Diversion and Reduced Recidivism, was released in January of this year. The report evaluated the time period between January 2010 and June 2013, and its data are based on the more than 2,200 offenders who had been sentenced to the eight adult post-adjudicatory drug courts and the 53% of participants who had successfully completed the program.

Among its findings, the report concluded that diverting prison-bound offenders to drug courts can provide some costs savings: OSCA calculates that participating in expansion drug court costs, on average, $19.36 per person per day; on the other hand, being housed in prison costs $47.50 per person per day (as documented by the Department of Corrections). The report emphasized that expansion drug courts produce the greatest savings when they serve prison-bound offenders (as opposed to offenders who would have been placed on some other form of community supervision): if 100% of the drug court graduates had been prison-bound, costs savings through diversion would have been $7.6 million, the report estimates.

The report also concluded that participants who successfully completed drug court have a reduced rate of recidivism as measured by data on felony convictions and prison sentences. Compared to similar offenders, drug court graduates had fewer felony convictions: only 9% of drug court graduates received a felony conviction within two years of completion compared to 19% of the comparison group. Successful drug court completion also reduced prison sentences: only 2% of drug court graduates received a prison sentence within two years of completion compared to 9% of the comparison group. The report also posited that these lower recidivism rates might reduce future costs, estimating that the annual savings through reduced recidivism is about $500,000. (This link goes to the OPPAGA report.)

In part thanks to the findings documented in the OPPAGA report, in the recently-adjourned 2014 legislative session, lawmakers appropriated $5.5 million in recurring dollars to continue the program long-term.

Drug Court Data for 2013

Florida’s drug courts admitted more than 8,000 participants
More than 5,000 participants graduated from Florida’s drug courts
124 drug-free babies were born to female drug court participants
Well over 100 parents who participated in drug court were reunited with their children
And, thanks to drug court, almost 200 children were reunited with their parents
Celebrating 25 Years of Drug Court

Drug court, which kindled a profound change in the way the US responds when a person suffering from substance and/or alcohol addictions is arrested, is often called “the most successful criminal justice reform in our nation’s history.” Drug court was conceived in Florida 25 years ago. This past April, in honor of National Drug Court Month and the twenty-fifth anniversary of drug court, a celebration was hosted in the county where it all began, Miami-Dade. Via the miamidade.gov web portal, circuits throughout the state were able to participate in this inspiring ceremony.

Emceed by Judge Jeri B. Cohen, drug court judge with the Eleventh Circuit, the event treated spectators to a remarkable set of speakers. Among them were Rebeca Sosa, chair of the county’s board of county commissioners; US Representative Joe Garcia; Tim Murray, executive director of the Pretrial Justice Institute; and General (ret.) Barry McCaffrey, former director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. The speaker lineup also included three dignitaries who themselves are “in recovery”—David Markus, a criminal defense attorney; West Huddleston, CEO of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals; and Michael Botticelli, acting director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy—all of whom spoke poignantly about their past and the ways it informs their commitment to helping other substance abusers turn their lives around. The ceremony also offered special accolades to retired Judge Herbert Klein, Eleventh Circuit, who pioneered the Miami-Dade Drug Court in 1989.

This twenty-fifth anniversary event was sponsored by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, OSCA, the Florida Association of Drug Court Professionals, the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, and the Miami-Dade Drug Court.

Governance

Judicial Management Council Workgroups Make Great Strides

For more than 60 years, the branch has relied on the guidance of its judicial management councils (JMC), described as high-level management consultants to the supreme court. The current council is the judicial branch’s fifth. Established in November 2012, this JMC grew out of a recommendation of the Judicial Branch Governance Study Group, established by the supreme court in 2009 to offer suggestions about how to “strengthen the governance and policy development structures of the branch, improve the effective and efficient management of the branch, and enhance communication within the branch.” In its report to the supreme court, the study group wrote that it conceptualized the reauthorized JMC as “a forward-looking advisory body to deftly assist the chief justice and the supreme court in proactively identifying trends, potential crisis situations, and means to address them.” (This link goes to the study group report.) In keeping with this concept, Chief Justice Polston, who chairs the council, refers to the JMC as the “headlights” of the branch, shining a high beam toward the future.

The council, which meets at least quarterly, comprises 15 voting members—two justices (the current chief and an associate justice), three DCA judges, three circuit court judges, three county court judges, two attorney members, and two public at-large members—as well as the state courts administrator, who serves as a non-voting member. It has five main areas of responsibility: to identify potential crisis situations affecting the branch and develop strategies for addressing them; to identify and evaluate information that will assist in improving the performance and effectiveness of the branch; to develop and monitor
progress related to the branch’s long-range planning endeavors; to review the charges of the various court and Florida Bar commissions and committees with an eye toward coordinating, and, if appropriate, consolidating these bodies; and to address other issues the court may bring before it.

The JMC had its first meeting in January 2013, and, based on the council’s charges and on issues raised by members at that inaugural meeting, the chief justice formed three workgroups—the Access to Justice Workgroup, the Education and Outreach Workgroup, and the Performance Workgroup—and invited each member to identify a preference for service on one. Since then, workgroup members, who communicate regularly, have been making significant headway in addressing their responsibilities.

**Access to Justice Workgroup.** Chaired by attorney Thomas Edwards (Jacksonville), the Access to Justice Workgroup was established to respond to the JMC’s first charge: to identify potential crisis situations affecting the branch and develop strategies to address them. This workgroup chose to focus first on implementing automated, interactive forms in order to facilitate better access for self-represented litigants. Last November, the workgroup went before the full council to propose that it partner with the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers and other stakeholder groups to create web-based interactive forms, giving priority to family law forms, which are already approved for statewide use by the supreme court. The JMC endorsed the proposal and approved it for formal consideration by the supreme court in April. The court considered a report and recommendation from the JMC; the recommendation was approved, and work is underway to develop an implementation plan with the input of various stakeholder groups (e.g., clerks of court, Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers, relevant Florida Bar committees).

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The workgroup has also begun to address the problem of declining financial resources for legal aid providers who have traditionally relied on Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) funds. At its February meeting, the workgroup heard a presentation on the financial hardships faced by the legal aid community since 2008, when funding began to diminish drastically, and on the urgent need for innovative solutions and service alternatives. The workgroup identified communication as the first step toward addressing this problem, and efforts are currently underway to bring the various stakeholder groups together. In the future, the workgroup plans to address the creation of plain-language forms, docketing best practices, and data collection on pro se filers.

**Education and Outreach Workgroup.** Chaired by Judge Kathleen Kroll, Fifteenth Circuit, the Education and Outreach Workgroup is responsible for addressing issues connected to communication within and outside of the judicial branch, public trust and confidence, and the expression of clear unification of purpose within the branch. So far, members have researched these issues using a range of resources—administrative rules; summaries of state courts system plans, activities, and initiatives; public opinion survey results; the JMC’s 2000–2006 Communication Plan; and newsletters, articles, and other publications produced by a variety of court-related entities.

Members have also focused on thinking strategically about organizational identity and image—and on ways to coordinate messages to create and sustain a consistent character and presence. To enhance and clarify these discussions, members participated in a facilitated session on the judicial branch image, its vision, and its communication strategies, both internal and external. Based on their research and discussions, workgroup members are substantially revising the judicial branch’s communication plan. At the JMC meeting in May, the workgroup presented a draft communication plan to the full council, which approved it, subject to a few revisions. The plan emphasizes education and training for judges and court staff as well as the effective use of technology and social media, as appropriate, to ensure clear, dexterous communication both internally, throughout the branch, as well externally, with the general public, justice partners, court users, and the media.
**Performance Workgroup.** Chaired by Judge Robert Morris, Second DCA, the Performance Workgroup was created to address the JMC’s second charge: to identify and evaluate information that will assist in improving the performance and effectiveness of the branch. This workgroup has been focused on seeking mechanisms to best capture better, more reliable, more meaningful data in order to measure, and ultimately improve, efficiency. The information it seeks includes, but is not limited to, data on internal operations for case flow and budget performance as well as statistical information by court and case type (e.g., number of cases filed, aged inventory of cases, time to disposition, and clearance rates).

The workgroup began by initiating a comprehensive review of filing trends and possible causation factors. Next, it will review available data on time to disposition by case type. The forecasted filing trends combined with the available time to disposition data will be used to apprise the full JMC and the supreme court about future needs and opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of the judicial branch while meeting the demands for services.

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**Education and Outreach**

**Education Program Offers Senior Judges Fairness & Diversity Training**

Senior judges contribute substantially to the administration of justice in Florida. When a certified need for new judges remains unmet, the continued public service of senior judges ensures parties’ access to the courts, shortens trial calendars, and reduces interruptions caused when judicial offices are vacant, when sitting judges are ill and unable to serve, or when sitting judges have to devote sustained periods of time to complex, lengthy cases. The service of senior judges is especially appreciated when the courts face temporary caseload spikes and backlogs; currently, for example, senior judges are playing a crucial role in ensuring the just and timely resolution of the pending mortgage foreclosure cases. These days, more than 190 active senior judges continue to share their expertise with Florida’s court system and with the people who rely on its services.

Defined as "retired judges who are eligible to serve on assignment to temporary judicial duty" [rule 2.205(a)(3)(D). Florida Rules of Judicial Administration], senior judges are also called upon to cover for sitting judges who have to take time off the bench to attend education programs—because they are preparing to change divisions and seek to be well-informed and up-to-date on the law or because they must satisfy their continuing judicial education requirements (judges are obligated to earn a minimum of 30 approved credit hours of continuing judicial education, or CJE, every three years).

Senior judges are bound by the same judicial education requirements as active judges. But, because they typically fill in for sitting judges who are attending education programs, they can find it challenging, at times, to earn the education credits they need.

This dilemma did not go unnoticed by Melissa Henderson, senior court analyst with OSCA’s Court Education Section: “Because I handle everything to do with CJEs, I hear their plight,” she explained. She noted that, starting in the summer of 2009, the challenge became especially evident, for that’s when the budget crisis led to a reduction in the number of education programs offered each year—resulting in fewer opportunities for senior judges to earn CJEs. In particular, she added, senior judges reported having difficulty satisfying a policy, effective January 1, 2012, requiring that every judge attend one full day (6.5 hours) of a live, in-person fairness and diversity training for which CJE credit is available.

Embodying the OSCA organizational values of innovation and excellence, Ms Henderson swiftly developed a solution to this dilemma: in a proposal addressed to OSCA Court Education Chief Martha Martin, Ms Henderson advocated the coordination of an annual or biennial education program for senior judges. She suggested that one day consist of a diversity course, enabling senior judges to meet the new requirement, and that a second day or half-day be dedicated to topics pertinent to senior judges. She also offered sug-
gestions about how to keep costs within fiscally-responsible parameters that would have minimal impact on established educational programming—such as coordinating regional programs and limiting them to a day-and-a-half to minimize travel, lodging, and meal expenses.

The proposal was approved, and, last June, the Senior Judge Education Pilot Program was held in Tallahassee; funded by the Florida Court Education Council, the program offered 18 senior judges from the Florida Panhandle a full day of diversity training and a half day of Florida law updates. Altogether, attendees earned 10.5 CJE credits, including their fairness and diversity hours. This year, on April 28 – 29 in Orlando, a similarly-designed program was attended by 22 senior judges who still needed to take the full day of diversity training. The programs have been well-received, receiving excellent evaluations, and senior judges have indicated that they truly appreciate these opportunities: this year’s event garnered comments about the excellence and the wealth of knowledge of the presenters and the timeliness of the material; “very valuable program,” summed up one of the participants.

Now that the council has funded two education programs for senior judges, most have satisfied the 6.5-hour, in-person fairness and diversity training, so Ms Henderson is hoping that, next year, the council will consider sponsoring a stand-alone, possibly statewide, program that will address other topics of relevance to senior judges. She, and the rest of the Court Education Section, are dedicated to ensuring that all judges, including senior judges, have access to first-class education and training opportunities so that they can continue to perform at the highest professional levels.

Senior Judge Application Is Now Online

Becoming a senior judge requires both forethought and planning. Retiring judges who would like to continue their service as senior judges are encouraged to initiate the application process three to six months before they retire.

Information about becoming a senior judge, and the senior judge application packet, are now online and can be accessed at the following:

http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/employment/senior-judges.shtml

The 3rd Florida Court Personnel Institute Welcomes 113 Court Employees

Efforts to build a vibrant education program for court personnel began in 2006, when the Florida Court Education Council hired a consultant to perform an education needs assessment of six categories of court personnel and to make recommendations about their training needs and the most effective methods for addressing them. Not long after, the council established the Florida Court Personnel Committee, which is responsible for developing strategies for meeting these needs. Since the 2008 – 09 fiscal year, the committee has funded sundry instructional initiatives developed at the local level, as well as several statewide programs for court personnel groups. In addition, for the last three years, the committee has shaped and supported
the Florida Court Personnel Institute—a singular event that strives to provide education and training to the greatest possible number of court employees across the state.

At this year’s institute, held in Orlando in early February, participants were assigned to one of four discrete tracks. Track one, Motivation and Team Building in Today’s Court Workplace, addressed building strong teams during change, handling conflicts, communication skills and internal customer service, and leading and motivating no matter what your title is. The second track, called Are You Getting Your Message Across, included sessions on written communication in the court environment, electronic communication, and effective use of in-person communication skills. Track three, Public Perceptions of Fairness, focused on the collision of private life and work life; confidentiality, social media, and electronic communication; politics, religion, and you; and providing legal and ethical service to pro se litigants. And in the fourth track, which was a faculty training program, participants were introduced to principles of adult learning, assessing learners’ needs and progress, composing learning objectives, and structuring a course, organizing the content, and preparing the course materials. Institute faculty included Florida judges and quasi-judicial officers, Florida court employees, and two private, nationally-renowned trainers.

All told, 113 court employees from across the state participated in the two-day program. Pleased with the level of instruction they received and with its direct applicability to their work lives, attendees were energized by the experience, and they also delighted in the opportunity to meet others at similar professional levels throughout the court system.

At this juncture, Judge Kathleen Kroll, Fifteenth Circuit, is about to step down after having chaired the Florida Court Personnel Committee since its inception, eight years ago. Under her leadership, the committee has worked tirelessly to build the repertoire of education opportunities for court employees—many of whom never, or only rarely, had a chance to participate in trainings before. Judge Kroll has focused on ensuring that court employees have the tools to perform their work with competence, quality, fairness, and impartiality, recognizing that everyone—employees, administrators, judges, court users, and taxpayers—benefits when the judicial branch has a professional, highly-skilled workforce: “There are over 3,000 court employees besides judges. Giving interdisciplinary educational opportunities to the people who support the judiciary is essential to delivering justice,” she emphasizes.

Indeed, thanks to the work of the committee over the last six years, the number of court employees who have been able to take advantage of educational offerings has increased remarkably: in addition to the three Florida Court Personnel Institutes, the committee has funded close to 90 education initiatives for court personnel groups—which have enhanced the abilities of nearly 4,000 attendees altogether. Most impressive is that all of this has been achieved with a quite modest budget, largely because the vast majority of programs are developed and offered on the local level.

Although Judge Kroll is preparing to step down from her role as chair, the important work of the Florida Court Personnel Committee will continue.
2014 Justice Teaching Institute
By Vanessa Rueda, intern with the Public Information Office, Florida Supreme Court

The Justice Teaching Institute (JTI) is a law-related civics education program that was established in 1997 by then Chief Justice Gerald Kogan. In recent years, the program has been under the wing of Justice R. Fred Lewis, who has taken a leadership role for numerous years. The concept of the Justice Teaching Institute is novel in that every year, it provides a select group of about 25 Florida educators with a unique opportunity to participate in a series of workshops designed to teach them all about the judicial branch and the way the judicial system works in Florida. The Justice Teaching Institute has a successful curriculum that leaves educators inspired and excited to pass what they have learned to the students in their classrooms, educating the youngest citizens of Florida about a branch of government that is often unfamiliar to them.

The Justice Teaching Institute is held every year in Tallahassee, Florida, at the Florida Supreme Court. Funding for the program is provided by The Florida Bar Foundation, and the program is coordinated by the Florida Law Related Education Association. The supreme court sponsors and hosts the program. Teachers are selected to participate from all over Florida, but first must undergo a strict selection process. There is an application for teachers who wish to participate in the program, and upon filling the application out, instructors are asked to submit their resumes, which are reviewed by the staff in charge of selecting the top applicants. (Take this link for information about applying to the program.)

This year’s Justice Teaching Institute program was held during the week of March 23-27. Upon their arrival on Sunday, instructors were provided with an agenda that was filled with activities for them to participate in, all of which helped them gain a better understanding of the judicial process in Florida. Throughout the course of the week, the teachers attended sessions that were often led by the justices of the Florida Supreme Court. These sessions revolved around essential information such as the structure, function, and funding of the state courts system; state versus federal courts; judicial independence and judicial selection; the role of a fair and impartial judiciary in American democracy; elements of a good oral argument; and accessing legal research materials; teachers also participated in a Florida Constitution scavenger hunt.

One of the highlights of this year’s Justice Teaching Institute was a mock oral argument on a Fourth Amendment Terry Stop case (brief detention of a person on “reasonable suspicion” of criminal activity), for which the instructors spent a lot of time preparing. Beginning on Monday, the instructors were given the facts regarding the Terry Stop case, and were presented with a lecture by Justice Lewis regarding the history of the Fourth Amendment as well as cases relevant to the Terry Stop. The teachers then had until Wednesday to prepare for their mock oral argument, which was held just before justices heard the actual oral argument on that very case.

The mock oral argument was very exciting to the teachers, for they were given a chance to put into practice everything that they had learned during
the week at the Justice Teaching Institute. As eighth grade US history teacher Frank Stockman, from Kenneth Middle School in Rockledge, Florida, described, "You have a week to go through material, and the teachers have fantastic preparation" for the mock oral argument. A JTI fellow in the past who was invited to return as a mentor teacher, Mr. Stockman then elaborated on how some teachers choose to use their own free time to prepare for the oral argument, noting that it is not uncommon to see someone preparing late into the night.

"We take this [mock oral argument preparation] seriously," said AP government instructor Rose Carbone, from Seminole Ridge Community High School in Loxahatchee. It is clear that the mock oral argument experience successfully encompassed everything that the instructors were taught at the Justice Teaching Institute and provided them with a chance to put their skills to use before passing them on to their students. As she also mentioned, after attending the Justice Teaching Institute, teachers know that they have support when they need resources for teaching their students about the judicial system in Florida. From the education page of the Florida Supreme Court website, http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/education/index.shtml, teachers can access educational resources such as mock oral argument cases that they can use when instructing their students about the judicial branch of government.

This year’s Justice Teaching Institute proved to be fruitful, and teachers left with an essential knowledge about the judicial branch, which they can impart to their students using resources similar to those they were provided with. The program was also enjoyed by the instructors who were fortunate enough to participate; in fact, one of the teachers compared the experience of attending the institute to being at Disney—in the sense that it was like a dream come true for her. The next Justice Teaching Institute will be held in 2015, and as several of the instructors emphasized, it is an opportunity that should not be missed.

Florida Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence
2014 Regional Training Program

The judicial branch recognizes that judges who handle any aspect of civil domestic violence injunctions should have access to specialized domestic violence trainings that focus both on the procedural and substantive matters pertaining to these injunctions and on the dynamics of domestic violence and the impact of domestic violence on children. The branch also recognizes the importance of creating contexts in which judges who address the issues and challenges of these cases have opportunities to discuss their best practices; the sharing of best practices introduces judges to tested strategies, enhances statewide consistency and uniformity, and leads to improvements in the handling of this critical area of domestic violence.

To support branch efforts to realize these goals, OSCA’s Office of Court Improvement has coordinated a set of regional trainings for judges who have any involvement with domestic violence injunctions specifically, or with domestic violence issues generally. Featuring Judge Carroll Kelly, Miami-Dade County, and Judge Peter Ramsberger, Sixth Circuit, the Florida Judicial Institute on Domestic Violence: 2014 Regional Training Program is scheduled as follows:

- Jacksonville, FL: September 15 – 16
- Tallahassee, FL: September 18 – 19
- Miami, FL: October 2 – 3
- Orlando, FL: November 3 – 4
- Tampa, FL: November 6 – 7
- W. Palm Beach, FL: December 4 – 5

To register or to get more information, please contact Kathleen Tailer at tailerk@flcourts.org
Craig Waters Speaks at Stetson Law School

Craig Waters, communications counsel at the Florida Supreme Court, was invited to Stetson Law School’s new Institute for the Advancement of Legal Communication to present several lectures to faculty and students. Launched in fall 2013, the institute serves as a nexus of research, teaching, and service to improve the quality of legal communication, especially legal writing, among law students, lawyers, members of the judiciary, and other legal professionals. Mr. Waters was selected as one of the institute’s first guest lecturers because of his role in developing the Florida Supreme Court’s public communications program, especially during the Bush v. Gore period in 2000.

Addressing students and faculty in several different venues over two days, Mr. Waters focused on the role of lawyers as communicators: he gave talks on the development of high-tech communications by courts, effective tips for communicating orally and in written materials, and the emerging world of wireless communications as smartphones and tablets begin to replace desktop computers. He also gave a presentation on Non-Traditional Legal Jobs—The Road Less Travelled: My Role as Communications Counsel at the Florida Supreme Court.

Welcomes

Patricia (“PK”) Jameson, State Courts Administrator

The supreme court selected Ms PK Jameson to serve as the next state courts administrator.

Ms. Jameson has 20 years of policy and executive management experience, spanning the branches of Florida state government. In her prior position, she was the general counsel and deputy chief financial officer at the Department of Financial Services, where she oversaw approximately 350 staff. Other executive branch entities for which she worked include the Office of Policy and Budget (in the Executive Office of the Governor), the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and the Department of Elder Affairs.

In the legislative branch, she was senior policy advisor to the Senate president, chief of staff in the House, as well as staff director or senior attorney in a variety of substantive legislative committees in both chambers (among them, House Judiciary; Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs; House Real Property & Probate; and Senate Governmental Operations).

She holds a bachelor of science in business administration and accounting from Glenville State College in West Virginia and a juris doctor from the Florida State University College of Law; while at FSU, she served as a research assistant to Justice Leander J. Shaw.

Ms Jameson started on May 12, giving her seven weeks for orientation to her new duties prior to Lisa Goodner’s retirement on June 30.

Thomas (“Tad”) David, OSCA General Counsel

On May 1, Mr. Thomas “Tad” David began his duties as OSCA general counsel.

Mr. David came to the state courts system from the Department of Financial Services, where he served as the director of the Public Records Unit within the Office of the General Counsel; in addition to being responsible for public records requests submitted to the department and its 14 divisions, he also monitored and analyzed relevant proposed legislation. Before that, he was the assistant general counsel in the Division of Legal Services at the Department of Financial Services.

Mr. David holds a bachelor of business administration from the University of Georgia and a juris doctor from the Florida State University College of Law.
Farewell…

Lisa Goodner, State Courts Administrator, Looks Toward Retirement

Celebrating the noble, gratifying calling of public service at OSCA’s recent Employee of the Quarter Awards Ceremony, State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner illustrated its many rewards and satisfactions with a quotation from former Indiana Congressman (and Daytona Beach native) Lee H. Hamilton: “I can assure you, public service is a stimulating, proud and lively enterprise. It is not just a way of life, it is a way to live fully.” Indeed, given Ms Goodner’s longstanding, vigorous, and exemplary career as a public servant, anyone who has worked with her could easily believe that she herself authored this quotation.

Ms Goodner began her employment with the state of Florida in December 1978, working in various divisions of the Department of Administration until 1984, when she left to become the assistant chief of personnel at the Department of Corrections. The turning point came in 1990, when her career path with the court system began. She was hired to serve as chief of Personnel Services, but her advancement was swift: three years later, she was promoted to deputy state courts administrator. After serving in that capacity for a decade, she was appointed state courts administrator, stepping into that role on July 1, 2003. This year, on June 30, she will be retiring after 24 brimming, highly eventful, and often challenging years with the judicial branch.

In her 11 years as state courts administrator, Ms Goodner served under six chief justices: Harry Lee Anstead, Barbara Pariente, R. Fred Lewis, Peggy Quince, Charles Canady, and Ricky Polston. During the course of this period, she was instrumental in supporting the branch’s navigation through what many have called its “two most complex and arduous challenges in modern history”: the implementation of Revision 7 (the constitutionally-mandated budgetary unification of the judicial branch) and the withering reductions in judicial branch operating funds and staff positions resulting from the decline in state financial resources during the Great Recession. Through both of these exceptionally trying chapters, Ms Goodner worked tirelessly to enhance the courts’ ability to serve the families and businesses of Florida, advocating for adequate court funding and for preserving the independence of the judicial branch.

In addition, throughout her term as state courts administrator, she spearheaded efforts to secure funding to address salary equity and retention issues for court staff, resolutely upholding the branch’s position that it can achieve its mission and its vision only if it has the funding to hire and retain a competent, well-qualified workforce. This year, lawmakers enabled her to realize this aspiration, appropriating $8.1 million for position classification salary adjustments.

As Ms Goodner prepares for her departure, this article pays tribute to her sure, steady leadership in overseeing the operation of court initiatives and administrative functions and in liaising between the judicial branch and the auxiliary agencies of the court, national court research and planning agencies, the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the public, business community, and media.

To help flesh out this farewell piece, a variety of judges and court personnel shared their memories of her, reminiscing about their travels together, both literal and metaphorical, over the years. Despite the range of these individuals’ work experiences with Ms Goodner, all agree that she has been a singular leader, embodying the very best qualities of a dedicated public servant. In their words, she is focused, fully engaged, determined, professional—and always the most prepared person in the room. They call her logical, analytical, creative, visionary, inspiring, an excellent communicator, a systems thinker, and a transformative leader. They note her level-headedness, her calm, her courteousness—and her diplomacy, emphasizing that she can offer criticism without offending; she commands respect without wielding a stick; and she knows her job and doesn’t have to be loud about it. They describe her as honest, truthful, unimpeachable, and honor-
able—and, as a result, they stress, she is trustworthy, has impeccable credibility, and is highly respected. And they also point out that she is a thoughtful and caring person.

Below, readers will be treated to the recollections and ruminations of retired Judge Susan Schaeffer, Sixth Circuit; Chief Judge Charles Francis, Second Circuit; Mike Bridenback, TCA, Thirteenth Circuit; Justice Barbara Pariente; Judge Gary Flower, Duval County; Becky Bichard, judicial assistant, Ninth Circuit; Judge Richard Orfinger, Fifth DCA; and Dorothy Wilson, chief of Budget Services, OSCA.

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It would be impossible to write about Lisa Goodner without evoking the fraught, six-year stretch during which the judicial branch was working toward implementing Revision 7—for it can be seen, in many ways, as her baptism by fire, and it’s when most of the people interviewed for this story started working very closely with her. Retired Judge Susan Schaeffer, Sixth Circuit, shared this helpful background.

Technically a revision of section 14 to Article V of the Florida Constitution, the amendment commonly referred to as Revision 7 had two purposes: to relieve local governments of the increasing costs of subsidizing the trial courts and to ensure equity in court funding across each county in the state, thereby levelling the playing field between the “have circuits” (those that received ample funding from their counties) and the “have not circuits” (those in less affluent counties), as Judge Schaeffer explained. Proposed by the state’s 1998 Constitution Revision Commission, the amendment was approved by voters in 1998 and had an implementation deadline of July 1, 2004.

Not long after the amendment passed, the supreme court, under then Chief Justice Major Harding, established the Article V Funding Steering Committee to make recommendations on facilitating the funding shift. Chaired by Judge Schaeffer, the committee developed numerous implementation proposals for legislative consideration and also submitted, and the supreme court approved, a proposed rule creating the Trial Court Budget Commission (TCBC) in December 2000. The TCBC, also initially chaired by Judge Schaeffer, was given the laborious task of inventorying the costs of trial court operations to county governments, recommending state budget requests for the trial courts, and developing approaches to implement the shift to state funding. Ken Palmer, who had been the state courts administrator since 1985, worked intently with both of these entities—and Ms Goodner, one of the branch’s two deputy state courts administrators (the other was Dee Beranek), was also very involved because she was responsible for issues connected with the budget and administrative services.

In 2001, in the early stages of this intense preparatory process, Mr. Palmer suddenly fell ill, passing away not long after. With the looming implementation deadline, Ms Goodner, who had been “Ken’s right hand” in these matters, had to step up and become the TCBC’s lead staff person. Mr. Palmer was a superlative, nationally-renowned court administrator, Judge Schaeffer pointed out; “Everybody adored Ken, and no one could have replaced him at the time,” so having to step into his shoes in the midst of this colossal demanding process—while she, like so many in the branch, was mourning this great loss—could not have been easy for Ms Goodner, she surmised. But she did not shy from the challenge: “Lisa had all this history and knowledge…and she handled the job very well,” she underscored. (Meanwhile, the state courts administrator position was advertised, but, as Judge Schaeffer noted, “Lisa didn’t want the job at the time”; two years later, when the position became open again, however, she was ready to embrace it.)

After Mr. Palmer died, Ms Goodner became even more involved with the TCBC, and Judge Schaeffer started working very closely with her and getting to know her better. They began collaborating regularly; their labors together became especially consuming in 2003 and 2004, when, as Judge Schaeffer recalled, “I spent a lot time in Tallahassee with her, and we spent a lot of time travelling, running to meetings, committee meetings, and appointments—it was constant, and we were busy all the time because of the July 1, 2004, deadline.”

Thinking back to this period, Judge Schaeffer called to mind how scrupulous, conscientious, and principled Ms Goodner is and offered this example: “The whole time we were going through this [implementation]
process, the senate, house, and governor were suspicious of our numbers [i.e., numbers resulting from the TCBC’s inventories of the costs of providing various court services]. We gave them our numbers and told them our numbers were good, but they thought our numbers were too high. They thought they could get the numbers lower, so they did all their own studies at taxpayer expense. And when those numbers turned out to be even higher than ours, they ended up using OSCA’s numbers! Lisa made it clear that she wanted the real thing. And that’s what we gave them.” Situations like this helped cement Ms Goodner’s reputation for spotless credibility.

Judge Schaeffer also applauded Ms Goodner’s perpetually calm and courteous demeanor, even under pressure: “She got along with everyone, all different kinds of people—the 20 trial court chief judges and five DCA chief judges, the chief justices, TCBC members, court staff, legislators and their staff.” Some of these people “were not easy to work with,” she quipped, but “Lisa did it graciously,” adding, “She couldn’t yell at them, but I could, so I’d yell at them for her. And we became good friends.”

Asked about Ms Goodner’s leadership style, Judge Schaeffer suggested that the thank you memo she crafted after the successful implementation of Revision 7 sums it up best: “Lisa—you were our expert on state court administration. But more important, even if you don’t like the designation, we’ll always think of you as our Chief of Staff. We had to rely on you for nearly everything. You were our teacher, editor, confidant, and when necessary, our cautious critic….While I am personally in your debt for all you did for me as chair, all 807 trial court judges are in your debt—even if they don’t know it—for all you did for them....” At the close of the interview, she mused, “Ken was hard to replace. But Lisa replaced him. She made her own way. And did an admirable job.” (To listen to Judge Schaeffer talk about going “across the street” to the Capitol with Ms Goodner, click here. For a transcript, click here)

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Chief Judge Charles Francis, Second Circuit, was a newly-appointed judge when the TCBC was established in 2000, and, like Judge Schaeffer, was one of its founding members. He got to know Ms Goodner while serving on that commission and on the Trial Court Technology Committee. Indeed, during those hectic, stimulating years preceding the implementation of Revision 7, he would “often talk to her three or four times a day,” he recalled.

Thinking back to that four-year period prompted him to muse on the magnitude of the project on which the court system was engaged at the time. In the course of just a few years, he explained, “Basically, the TCBC defined the [trial] court system in Florida. At that point in time, there was no court system defined. The bill said what the county would pay for, what the state would pay for, but it was a pretty broad statement—the challenge was actually putting it into practice.” And that was a huge undertaking. For instance, the TCBC had to "define the court system’s responsibilities, define the clerks’ responsibilities. And it had to define the elements—those services the state would be obligated to fund—and it had to price them out. And it had to gauge how much it would cost to fund the elements; come up with funding methodologies for them; figure out a fair way to allocate the dollars to ensure the minimum level of justice everybody should have to equalize the system.” The pressure was fierce and the stakes were high because, starting on July 1, 2004, the courts would go from getting piecemeal allocations from their counties to "getting a big chunk of
money from the legislature—and we didn’t even know how much to ask for! Nobody had ever dealt with that before,” he exclaimed. “It was an interesting, intense time—and it was amazing to have put it together,” he added.

And at the hub of it all, he emphasized, was Ms Goodner—for she and “her excellent staff” made sure that the commission had all the information and accurate numbers it needed to make these momentous decisions: “I was glad she was there to tell us how to get everything done right,” he avowed.

Judge Francis attributes her success to her knowledge, her institutional history, her thoroughness, and her presentation style, describing it as calm, level-headed, factual, and logical—and calling it “very comforting to us.” Another of her strengths is that “She always tells the truth.” And that is the foundation for “the amazing credibility she brings with her across the street—she knows what she’s talking about, she has the correct figures, and the legislature believes her.”

He shared an anecdote that, for him, perfectly captures Ms Goodner’s method of operation. While preparing for the 2005 legislative session, he recalled, “In the midst of all this going back and forth, back and forth with the clerks, having a rough time with who’s going to do what and who’s going to provide what services for the court...everybody was just pulling their hair out....And this is Lisa’s style as far as I’m concerned: she came up with a draft of a bill...that basically says that if a clerk of court was providing a service as of July 1, 2004, they could not terminate that service to the court without a year’s notice. And the same thing for us: if we wanted to do something, we had to make a request, so everybody would have enough time to go get a budget. She just came up with that in the middle of the night...and the staff liked it, we presented it to the legislature, and they passed it just like that, and that fight just disappeared. It was very, very heavy, going back and forth. But that was Lisa: she didn’t make a big deal out of it anywhere; she just presented a very simple little two or three line statute and it passed, and it solved a major, major, major issue.” Judge Francis is referring to what those early TCBC members still fondly call “Lisa’s Law” (see section 28.44, Florida Statutes), which he sees as an embodiment of her leadership style: she acknowledges a problem, she studies it, and she quietly and calmly comes up with a clear and effective solution.

In closing, Judge Francis said that he “never felt alone, lost in a committee hearing, with Lisa in the room.” And the advice he always gives to others: “Just follow Lisa, and you’re going to be on the right track.” (To listen to Chief Judge Francis talk about “Lisa’s Law,” click here. For a transcript, click here)

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Mike Bridenback, the trial court administrator of the Thirteenth Circuit, was another founding member of the TCBC. But he actually started getting to know Ms Goodner a decade before the TCBC was created: they met back in 1990, when she first began working at OSCA and when he still served in a dual role as OSCA’s director of Court Services and director of the Dispute Resolution Center (he was with OSCA until 1994, when he left to assume the TCA mantle at the Thirteenth).

Queried about Ms Goodner’s leadership qualities, Mr. Bridenback readily shared the following: “She’s very creative because she doesn’t accept the status quo; she’s a systems thinker—she sees the forest as opposed to the individual trees, a skill that not many people have; she’s analytical, using evidence-based information to make her decisions; and she’s also smart and an excellent communicator.” Then, calling to mind some of the inevitably emotional encounters during the dizzying, tension-ridden days leading up to the implementation of Revision 7, he added that she has solid mediation and negotiation skills as well: she was always “able to get everybody back on track.”
He also called attention to several “big issues for which Lisa played a role as orchestrator-navigator, and, as a result, the whole court system is in a much better place.” The first was her role in the preparations for implementing Revision 7: “Her leadership was critical to the success that was achieved in that process,” he remarked, and he called her “the front person, the face of that effort,” saying that “she’ll be remembered not only in the court system but also in the legislature for that.” The second was “her acumen in handling the whole budget crisis, which caused a lot of trauma and individual angst among everyone in the system.” He extolled “her ability to navigate the whole crisis and bring us out on the other side with as little harm as possible.”

The third big issue he mentioned is a bit more delicate. “After Ken died,” he reflected, “there was a gap in OSCA leadership for a few years. All of us in the trial courts, I think, believed that the relationship between the trial courts and OSCA was somewhat fractured during that transition. But Lisa filled that leadership gap gracefully,” he said, adding, “She brought trust and confidence back to OSCA.” Indeed, “In terms of the relationship between the trial courts and OSCA,” he continued, “we’ve never been in a better place in my whole history. Ken was a strong leader. But Lisa took the next step.” And he concluded, “OSCA has a special place in my heart, and I am gratified that Lisa was able to re-establish the primary and crucial role the office plays in carrying out the mission and goals of the court system. She restored the credibility Ken had established. Lisa was, and continued to be, the right person for the job.”

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When Justice Barbara Pariente arrived at the supreme court in January 1998, Lisa Goodner was already a seasoned deputy state courts administrator. Justice Pariente advanced to chief justice on July 1, 2004—the same day that Revision 7 was implemented—so she feels especially linked to this historic “transition to a modern court system” and to Ms Goodner, whose assistance throughout the evolution was so critical.

As a woman in a powerful leadership position herself, Justice Pariente understands some of the challenges Ms Goodner faced when she assumed the role of state courts administrator: “In our society, women have a more difficult time assuming leadership roles and commanding respect. But Lisa is unique,” she explained: “Because she conducts herself in such a professional and firm way, always being incredibly prepared, Lisa is uniformly respected and admired. Lisa commands respect without having to wield a stick.” She attributes this ability to “Lisa’s vision, her determination, her focus, her professionalism, and her no-nonsense style”—all of which have “earned her kudos not only in the state but around the country as a pre-eminent court administrator,” Justice Pariente declared. “Lisa also has an uncanny ability to tell you, without offending you, that you’re going in the wrong direction,” jesting, “She had to do that many times with me!...The most unfair thing Lisa’s ever done,” she added, “is to retire before me (I know I’m older)!”

Justice Pariente called attention to another sign of Ms Goodner’s professionalism—the fine quality of the staff she selects: she has “an amazing team of individuals who make the Office of the State Courts Administrator work in the most seamless way.” This was especially pronounced during the preparations for implementing Revision 7.

Pondering all the efforts preliminary to the implementation deadline, Justice Pariente noted that “Many judges played a role in the successful transition—but there was not one other person who was an architect and a leader both of the vision and of the implementation.” One of the reasons for her effectiveness is that she successfully “sold the trial courts, our court, and the appellate courts on the need for the whole branch to come together in a unified way,” she stressed. Another reason is that “Lisa never gave in. Her focus has always been on what’s best for the branch. And she is more than happy for other people to take the credit; it’s amazing how much you can accomplish if you don’t worry about who takes credit.”

In the end, Justice Pariente said, “The successful transition to statewide funding and bringing the courts and the justice system into the twenty-first century, kicking and screaming—that’s her greatest achievement, her legacy. She was the clear successor to Ken Palmer,” Justice Pariente pronounced, “and earned great re-
spect from the legislature and uniformly from the judges and justices.” Then, somewhat wistfully, she added, “I love Lisa; I can’t bear the thought she’s leaving the court system....” (To listen to Justice Pariente talk about her special bond with Lisa, click here. For a transcript, click here)

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Duval County Judge Gary Flower has also known Ms Goodner for a long time—14 years, he estimates. They’ve worked together in several capacities, mostly through his involvement with the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida (in his roles as conference president, legislative representative, and education committee chair).

“Fully engaged,” is the way Judge Flower described Ms Goodner. “No anecdote can capture her leadership style,” he continued, “but she’s always perfectly turned out, fully prepared, and endlessly dedicated. The respect she commands brings out the best in everyone she works with.”

Contemplating her achievements over the years, he identified several for which she will be remembered: among them, “She successfully navigated the leap from legal-size paper to eFiling”; she helped to make Florida “the national leader in judicial education”; she’s been instrumental “in habituating new justices to the culture of the supreme court”; and “She built a staff that has become a trusted resource for judges throughout the state.”

He also emphasized that “Lisa has always been on the leading edge of growth in the court system, enabling her to guide others through the radical changes within the system of the last decade”—among them, “the expansion of the court; the funding changes resulting from Revision 7; the establishment of the TCBC and the funding methodologies; the policy changes—for instance, the branch leadership initiative; and eFiling.” In closing, he added, under Ms Goodner’s guidance, “Florida is a leader and innovator in all these different areas.”

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Becky Bichard became a judicial assistant in the Ninth Circuit in 1991 but did not meet Ms Goodner until three years ago, when Ms Bichard became the president of the Judicial Assistants Association of Florida (JAAF). It is through her involvement with JAAF that she has come to work with Ms Goodner. Each year, JAAF sponsors an education program that’s open to all judicial assistants, and Ms Goodner has been a frequent guest and presenter at these events. According to Ms Bichard, “She’s a very good speaker, open and transparent, and is always willing to talk to us, go over any questions or issues we have, and tell us what she can. She has been a huge supporter of the JAs—and has gone to bat for us,
especially regarding pay and benefits issues.” The JAs “so appreciate her leadership and all she’s done for us over the entire 11 years she’s been state courts administrator.”

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Judge Richard Orfinger, Fifth DCA, first met Lisa Goodner in 1991, soon after he became a circuit judge in the Seventh Circuit. But his “real introduction to her in a significant way” occurred in the late-90s: serving as chief judge then, he began interacting with her regularly. Their work together increased after he became an appellate judge, particularly when he served on the DCA Budget Commission (and, even more particularly, during the two years he chaired the commission). Over the years, he’s “worked with Lisa in many different capacities, on many different projects—workgroups, commissions, studies, budget issues”; indeed, he joked, sometimes they worked together so intensively that “I saw her about as much as I saw my wife!”

Judge Orfinger calls Ms Goodner an “inspiring leader, a transformative leader” who “leads by example.” Signs of her talent are evident in her relationship with OSCA staff and with the judges and legislators with whom she’s worked. With her staff, he noted, “She has the ability to pick good people to put in key places”; she “values people” and “knows how to get the best out of them.” And in her work with judges and legislators, she impresses everyone with “her work ethic, her institutional knowledge, and her recall” (she has an “incredible ability to recall details,” he marveled, calling her memory “amazing”). Another of her strengths is that she invariably equips herself to handle any question or issue lobbed at her: “She is always the most prepared person in the room,” he remarked—which has earned her “great credibility in the court system and across the street.” It has also earned her influence: “Lisa is influential because people know they can trust her.” And he opined that people trust her because she is “absolutely truthful.” “One of the things I admire most about her is her willingness to speak truth to power;” he said, hastening to add that she’s “extraordinarily respectful,” but she also “points out when we’re wrong.” All the while, despite the great challenges of her job, “Lisa has a calm demeanor—she doesn’t show anger—which has helped her work so well with everyone: justices, chief justices, judges, and the legislature.”

Pondering Ms Goodner’s leadership qualities, he called to mind a book he’s been reading, in which the author distinguishes between a great manager and a great leader. Paraphrasing, Judge Orfinger explained that “A great manager hires good people and gets out of the way. A great leader sees the big picture and anticipates where we need to be down the road. Lisa is rare in that she does both well,” he said.

Summing up, he said that “one of her greatest leadership skills, both for the OSCA staff but more importantly to the judges of this state, is that she kept us—she required us—to stay focused on our core mission, which was to deliver timely, effective, and fair justice to the diverse people that we serve in this state. And that is what drove her to excellence....It always came down to, How do we best carry out the mission of the court system to serve the people of the state of Florida?” Although he called Ms Goodner’s departure “a big loss,” he was quick to point out that “She left us a great team in place.” (To listen to Judge Orfinger talk about “what drove Lisa to excellence,” click here. For a transcript, click here)

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In 1998, when Dorothy Wilson first began working at OSCA in the Personnel Services Office, Lisa Goodner was a deputy state courts administrator; in 2003, Ms Wilson was promoted to chief of OSCA’s Budget Services Unit, at which point Ms Goodner was the state courts administrator. “For 15 years,” Ms Wilson said, “we have worked closely together, hand-in-hand, through the challenges we faced with Revision 7, the budget cuts, and the stabilization issues with the State Courts Revenue Trust Fund.” She particularly called
attention to what she described as the branch’s “continuous battle for survival” during the recent economic meltdown. But, thanks to “Lisa’s leadership and guidance” during these turbulent periods, the court system remained stable and continued to run smoothly: “Without her leadership—and the respect and rapport she has with the legislature and the governor’s office—we would have sustained far worse cuts than we did,” Ms Wilson surmised.

Her leadership is also exemplified in her steadfast re-assessments of OSCA, in her consideration of ways to improve its effectiveness and efficiency for the benefit of the branch. For instance, “Lisa is always looking at the organizational structure, making changes as needed,” Ms Wilson explained, offering two examples: a number of years back, Ms Goodner supported the creation of a Publications Unit to oversee the production of benchguides and administrative publications like the state courts system newsletter and the Florida State Courts Annual Report; and, more recently, she boosted the creation of a Resource Planning and Support Services Unit to provide assistance on resource, workload, and revenue issues. Not only have these developments “contributed to the success of the organization,” but “the employees have benefitted from these changes” as well—as has the court system, she remarked. In addition, “Because of Lisa’s leadership, the branch as a whole—the appellate courts, the trial courts—has a better understanding of OSCA and the benefits we bring to assist them. It has not always been that way,” she granted.

Of all the interviewees for this farewell article, Ms Wilson is the only one who works under the state courts administrator, so she was able to furnish some distinct perspectives on Ms Goodner’s leadership qualities. First, she called attention to the high caliber of Ms Goodner’s staff: “Lisa makes good choices of people to work under her,” she emphasized, adding, “What’s unique to Lisa and speaks to her leadership is that all of us support and rally around her and give her 100% of our effort.” One of the many reasons for her staff’s appreciation is “Lisa’s commitment to giving OSCA staff opportunities to grow and be promoted within the organization.”

Finally, Ms Wilson talked about an aspect of Ms Goodner’s leadership to which she could personally attest: “Lisa has made OSCA a very family-oriented place to work; it cares about its employees, and its employees care about each other: everyone here rallies around someone in need.” OSCA has been able to develop this culture because “Lisa understands the balance between family and work,” she explained, “so she is understanding and caring when family issues arise. As a result, employees feel they have the support of their supervisor to take time away to take care of these matters.” And she declared, “That’s one thing that’s made me stay with OSCA as long as I have—its amazing kindness and understanding. No other organization I know of does anything like this.”

Summing up her 15 years of working with Ms Goodner, Ms Wilson observed, “When Ken died, he left a big pair of shoes to fill. Lisa was able to fill those shoes.” She paused thoughtfully for a moment—and then offered this revision: “Actually, Lisa made a whole new pair of shoes...."
“Lisa had a unique talent for doing this job,” former Chief Justice Charles Wells emphasized at the retirement ceremony.

Staging a mock awards ceremony, Deputy State Courts Administrators Eric Maclure and Blan Teagle present Ms Goodner with “the OSCA-R” for her “seemingly lifetime achievement in the performance as State Courts Administrator.”

In her farewell remarks at the end of the retirement ceremony in her honor, Ms Goodner reflected on her “opportunity to come work for the courts, where I obviously found my real calling, my real love, and I have spent the last 24 years in as rewarding, if challenging, a career as I could have ever hoped for.”

Ms Goodner enjoys a lighter moment with Judge Olin Shinholser, Tenth Circuit; Judge Meg Steinbeck, Twentieth Circuit; Judge John Stargel, Tenth Circuit; and Judge Jim McCune, Marion County.

“Lisa had a unique talent for doing this job,” former Chief Justice Charles Wells emphasized at the retirement ceremony.
Awards and Honors

Andrele Brutus, staff attorney at the Second DCA, was selected to be a part of the 2014 – 15 Florida Bar Leadership Academy. To become an academy fellow, she underwent a highly competitive selection process, and now she will join an exclusive group of attorneys from around the state who will be provided the opportunity to network, interact, collaborate, and build relationships with state and national bar leaders; develop and enhance leadership skills; and get an insider’s look at the important role The Florida Bar plays within the legal system.

Judge Nelly N. Khouzam, Second DCA, was elected a member of the American Law Institute, an independent organization whose elected membership is limited to 3,000 lawyers, judges, and law professors. For more than 90 years, the American Law Institute has been the nation’s most respected and influential organization working to clarify and improve the law; its law reform work, which is the result of a rigorous and scholarly process, is trusted and relied on by courts, practitioners, and legislatures and is part of the curriculum in nearly every law school.

Florida Taxwatch’s 2014 Prudential Productivity Awards honor 432 individuals and teams of state government employees throughout Florida for creating and implementing solutions and productivity improvements worth $558 million in cost savings and cost avoidances. Among the recipients of this year’s awards are the following state courts system individuals and teams:

Fred Buhl, court technology officer with the Eighth Judicial Circuit, was awarded a certificate of commendation for developing OpenCourt, a digital court recording system that enables the circuit to make high-quality audio and video recordings of court events without the high cost of commercial software. Until recently, the circuit was using a commercial system but lacked the funding to maintain or replace it. According to Mr. Buhl, “necessity (mixed with a little hubris)” inspired him to build his own system using open source programs (i.e., programs whose source code is available and free to the general public for use and/or modification from its original design). The circuit hopes to release OpenCourt as open source software so that other courts can make use of it.

The Sixth Judicial Circuit’s Fiscal Team—which includes Rob Snyder, Justin Thom, Tanja Fitzgerald, Mary Kris Lichtenberg, Inass Riyad, Stephanie LoBalbo, Chris Hover, and Susan Vega—was awarded a certificate of commendation for implementing four new programs that are resulting in tangible savings in the circuit’s expense budget, significant increases in its cost recovery account, and reductions in the amount or paperwork it processes. To achieve these goals, the Fiscal Team developed a “co-op” system of ordering supplies; implemented stringent cost-recovery standards; designed a strategy for reducing the number of invoices that must be processed, audited, and signed; and introduced a plan for reducing the costs associated with printing, paper consumption, and off-site storage.

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit’s Foreclosure Case Management Team—which includes Judge Peter D. Blanc, Judge Diana Lewis, Judge Robin Rosenberg, Devon Mugridge, and Michelle Spanenberg—was awarded a certificate of commendation for developing a differentiated case management plan that is significantly reducing the volume of pending foreclosure cases while ensuring that every litigant receives procedural due process and equal protection. In addition to establishing a docket control policy and uniform trial procedures, the differentiated case management plan requires parties to provide the court with a current service list; pre-addressed, postage-paid mailing envelopes for the entire service list; and a fully-executed case status form (the information included in the form enables the court to determine readily to which track cases should be assigned: uncontested, contested, or highly contested). These measures support the circuit’s efforts to manage its foreclosure dockets with greater efficiency.

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit’s Juvenile Division Team—which includes now-retired Judge Karen Martin, Cristy Altaro, and William Hutchings—was awarded a plaque for implementing a program that increases the appearance rates for juvenile defendants, thereby reducing delays in court processing, the number of warrants issued, and the utilization of detention beds. In short, when a
court hearing is approaching, a juvenile case manager contacts the juvenile and his/her family to ensure that they are aware of the hearing; the case manager also updates the court and the clerk on the juvenile’s status and his/her contact information, thereby ensuring the accuracy of official records. The program, which was developed in partnership with the local Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, has improved internal operations and expedited judicial case processing while reducing the number of defendants who fail to appear for court—and the associated costs therewith.

The OSCA Dispute Resolution Center’s Renewal Automation Team—which includes Kimberly Kosch, Penni Griffith, Dawn Burlison, Sherry Waites, Ramon Waters, and Jennifer Gray—was awarded a certificate of commendation for automating the mediator renewal process. Before implementing this process, Dispute Resolution Center staff had to print and mail forms, instructions, and rules to every mediator whose certification was coming up for renewal (for 200 mediators per month, on average). With just over 6,000 certified mediators across the state—each of whom has to renew certification every two years—the process had come to be both costly and time-consuming. The team was established to develop a mechanism for providing all renewal materials electronically, via email and the internet. The renewal process has been fully automated and paper-free since January 1, 2013, and both the certified mediators and the state are reaping benefits: mediators now have access to all renewal materials 24/7—and can print only those materials they need; and the state is saving human and fiscal processing costs—and, in using considerably less paper and toner, is also having a positive environmental impact.

In Memoriam

Judge Pat Caddell served on the bench of Pinellas County from 1986 – 2014.


Senior Judge William T. Swigert served on the bench of Marion County from 1973 – 74; on the bench of the Fifth Circuit from 1974 – 2005; and as a senior judge in the Fifth Circuit from 2005 - 2014.
### On the Horizon

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<td>FL Partners in Crisis 2014 Annual Conference and Justice Institute,</td>
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<td>Florida Conference of Circuit Judges Annual Education Program,</td>
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Under the direction of
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State Courts Administrator Elisabeth H. Goodner
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