A Message from Lisa Kiel, State Courts Administrator

Those of you who have been working in the Florida courts system since 2014 or earlier may remember me by my former surname, as Lisa Goodner. Back then, when I wrote what I thought was my last Full Court Press message, I never imagined I would be in this office again, writing another newsletter message! But because of my love for the branch, my appreciation for the work of judges and court employees, and my respect for the rule of law, I could not say ‘no’ when Chief Justice Canady called to recruit me out of retirement.

In truth, I never stopped following the judicial branch’s many successes, even while I was away, enjoying the calm of my post-work pace. The Do-It-Yourself Florida project, the Self-Help App, the great accomplishments of the Judicial Management Council workgroups—these are just a few of the important initiatives that got underway in the intervening years, and I was as enthusiastic about these advances as I would have been if I were still working here. A more recent achievement that is truly exciting is this year’s legislative appropriation of $10.3 million in recurring salary dollars to address recruitment, retention, and equity salary issues affecting non-judge court employees: I can’t think of a more satisfying way of marking the beginning of my temporary return to the courts.

This appropriation is especially meaningful because it signifies the achievement of a priority issue that judicial branch leaders began promoting many years ago (soon after I became the state courts administrator the first time, in 2003). Back then, we launched efforts to obtain adequate funding for the judicial branch’s people, places, and tools—with our people being the top priority. We contended that we could fulfil the judicial branch vision—that “Justice in Florida will be accessible, fair, effective, responsible, and accountable”—only if we had the ability to hire and retain a capable, well-qualified workforce.

With this year’s appropriation, the legislature has strengthened our ability to attract, hire, and retain highly qualified and competent court employees. It means so much to see those years of effort bear fruit. For this attainment, thanks go to the vision and persistence, over the years, of various court teams that have included many DCA and trial court judges, several chief justices, and an abundance of OSCA staff.

Since I returned to OSCA, I have also had the pleasure of witnessing firsthand the important work you have been doing on behalf of the branch. In early May, when we observed Public Service Recognition Week at OSCA, I shared an Arnold Schwarzenegger quotation about the bounty of benefits that public service confers, and I hope the quotation resonates with you as well. He wrote, “Help others and give something back. I guarantee you will discover that while public service improves the lives and the world around you, its greatest reward is the enrichment and new meaning it will bring to your own life.” I want to end by thanking all of you for your invaluable contributions and commitment to Florida’s courts; your hard work does not go unnoticed.

Sincerely,
Lisa Goodner Kiel
Access to Justice

The Seventeenth Circuit Launches Community Court

Among their many duties, Florida’s trial court chief judges are responsible for “ensur[ing] the efficient and proper administration of all courts within [their] circuit” [Florida Rules of Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(3)]. In this capacity, they are authorized “to do everything necessary to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice” in their courts [s. 43.26(e), Florida Statutes]. Branch leaders are continually advancing strategies for improving the administration of justice in Florida. One such strategy is the creation of specialized dockets designed to address the root causes of justice system involvement.

The most widely recognized specialized docket in Florida is drug court—a “problem-solving court” concept that was pioneered in Dade County in 1989 and has been implemented world-wide. But also prevalent are veterans courts, mental health courts, early childhood courts, and DUI courts (currently, Florida is home to approximately 170 of these courts). Using the drug court concept as a model, chief judges across the state have developed other specialized dockets to respond to pressing needs in their circuits; for instance, Florida is now home to domestic violence courts, gun courts, human trafficking courts, neighborhood restorative justice courts, truancy courts, and teen courts.

Recently, a new specialized docket was launched in the Seventeenth Circuit. The idea grew out of Chief Judge Jack Tuter’s observation of a highly disturbing pattern in the courts in Broward County: homeless people, charged with petty crime and municipal ordinance offenses, were cycling perpetually from the streets to the courts to the county jail and then onto the streets again. Knowing that it costs approximately $140 per day to house a person in the Broward County Jail, he understood that jailing people for non-violent offenses like panhandling or sleeping on the beach is “a very inefficient way to spend tax dollars.” Nor does a jail term resolve the underlying reasons for a defendant’s behavior. After doing extensive research to learn how other courts in the nation have been handling this dilemma, and after 10 months of preparation—and with the help of a two-year, $200,000 federal grant from the nonprofit Center for Court Innovation—on January 9, 2019, Chief Judge Tuter launched Broward County’s first Community Court.

Community Court is designed to “address the needs of at-large, homeless and low-level first time and repeat misdemeanants and municipal ordinance offenders.” While holding individuals accountable for their conduct, it aims “to address root causes of each defendant’s behavior and to apply a therapeutic and community service-based component to punishment,” states the administrative order establishing the specialized docket. The idea is to encourage offenders to take control of and overcome their problems, thereby helping them to permanently alter their behavior.

To function most effectively, this specialized docket adopts a non-adversarial approach to handling eligible offenses (Community Court may address municipal ordinance violations such as trespass, disorderly conduct/disturbing the
peace, public intoxication, and panhandling; it may also address state law violations such as misdemeanor drug possession, resisting arrest, simple assault, and loitering and prowling). Moreover, its success relies on a team approach among justice system stakeholders, Broward County municipalities, and various for-profit and not-for-profit service and treatment centers, both governmental and private.

With Justice Alan Lawson in attendance, the first Community Court was held at City Hall in Fort Lauderdale and was presided over by the chief judge and Broward County Judge Florence Taylor Barner, who heard four cases, all open container ordinance violations. On site to offer support to the defendants were the following service providers: Care Resource, Sunserve, Second Chance Society, Opportunities Industrialization Centers of South Florida, Florida Licensing on Wheels, and Transportation and Mobility. In return for utilizing the Community Court program, participants, when they are healthy enough, will be assigned 10 hours of community service in Downtown Fort Lauderdale.

At this point, Community Court dockets will be heard once a week, every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at City Hall. Chief Judge Tuter, who indicated that additional locations may be established in the future, touts the strategy “of offering services in lieu of punishment. The Court’s long-term goal,” he added, “is to work with City and County government to find both temporary and permanent housing for those who enter into and complete community court goals.” If Community Court works as anticipated, it’ll be a “win” for everyone in the county, for recidivism rates of repeat offenders will begin to decline; in turn, overall criminal justice and incarceration costs will decrease, and the safety and quality of life for all Broward County residents will be enhanced.

Guardianship Update: WINGS Workgroups Share Their Accomplishments

With a grant and technical assistance from the American Bar Association’s Commission on Law and Aging and the National Center for State Courts, the Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) has been guiding a Florida Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) initiative, a broad-based, synergistic enterprise focused on improving practices in adult guardianship. Chaired by Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten, Ninth Judicial Circuit, WINGS has been working to kindle collaborative approaches to addressing guardianship issues; in facilitating the coordination of key representatives from the various stakeholder groups, the initiative aims to ensure that efforts are not duplicated and that collective impact is preserved. Through their focus on identifying, assessing, and improving guardianship practices and other decision-making alternatives, the approximately 50 WINGS stakeholders from across Florida aim to enhance the quality of care and the lives of vulnerable adults.

Since the WINGS launch in July 2017, members have participated in five full-day, in-person summits and one half-day conference call. Before their first year was through, they identified four areas on which they believe the initiative must focus (Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation; Alternatives to Guardianship; Process Improvement and Standardization; and Education and Awareness); developed a strategic plan for guardianship reform in Florida; and distinguished and prioritized eight concrete goals. At their fourth summit, in May 2018, they divided into three workgroups to direct their efforts toward the first three goals: develop a recruitment plan to
increase the number of physicians serving on examining committees; develop a decision-making options toolkit for the public; and create a tool to help law enforcement and first responders recognize and respond to elder abuse and similar issues affecting vulnerable populations.

The most recent summit, this past May in Tallahassee, began with workgroup chairs giving presentations on their progress thus far. The first workgroup surveyed physicians from circuits around the state to determine the reasons for low physician participation in examining committees and, based on what they learned, developed a comprehensive plan that includes both recommendations and recruitment strategies for boosting physician engagement. The second workgroup created an Exploring My Decision-Making Options brochure for the public: this concise, user-friendly, and visually appealing guide addresses topics such as money management options, power of attorney, representative payee, trusts, health care surrogacy, mental health advance directives, living wills, do not resuscitate orders, and a description of the difference between guardian advocacy, guardianship, and limited guardianship. In addition, this workgroup built a straightforward checklist designed to help people explore their decision-making abilities and determine whether they need any supports. When complete, these tools will be posted on the WINGS website. And the third workgroup prepared a draft of a Law Enforcement and First Responder Protocol for Investigating Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults, which offers a three-step process for recognizing and responding to elder abuse as well as lists of resources for law enforcement and first responders and for victims and their families.

Following these workgroup presentations, OSCA employees Nathan Moon and Melinda Coulter, who staff WINGS, gave a preview of the e-learning modules on guardianship currently under development. Partnering with Stetson University’s Center for Excellence in Elder Law, the National Judicial College (national experts in judicial training), and judges and attorneys from across the state, they are producing four modules, each with comprehension checks and active learning exercises. Roles and Responsibilities of Judges and Attorneys is nearly ready to post; soon to follow will be modules on Ethical Considerations in Guardianship Cases; Decisionmaking Alternatives; and Eldercaring Coordination. As they are completed, these e-learning modules will be posted on the WINGS website.

Although their accomplishments are impressive, WINGS members made it clear that they are not about to rest on their laurels. In fact, they have already begun gearing up to address the next set of priority areas. Workgroups have just been established to accomplish the following: develop and pilot a volunteer court visitor program; establish a process for courts to notify the Social Security Administration when a guardian of the property who is also a representative payee is removed; and design an evaluation guide for courts to use when approving family guardianship training courses in an effort to improve course consistency, quality, and content.

The May 10 summit was the last WINGS meeting underwritten by the American Bar Association grant. So, as a prelude to discussing sustainability plans for WINGS, the time was ripe for members to share whether, and how, WINGS—which is the first endeavor to bring all stakeholder groups together to collaboratively advance guardianship reform in Florida—has been helpful to the guardianship-related work that each of them performs. On the whole, members were very enthusiastic about their WINGS experience; they are excited about the tools they have developed collectively and about the opportunities that WINGS has given them to learn about resources created by other stakeholder groups. And they also appreciate having regular networking and collaboration opportunities and remarked on the ways in which their awareness has increased from working closely with stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The kind of fruitful relationship-building that WINGS has sparked can only support efforts to map a global strategy for improved processes and increased effectiveness—and, ultimately, to enhance the lives of people who have, or may need, guardians.
Judiciary Education

The New Appellate Judges Program:
Offering Strategies for “How I Can Do My Job Better”

Florida is among the nation’s judicial education pioneers. For more than four decades, branch education leaders have been working to ensure that judges have sufficient opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities and are thereby equipped to effectively perform the challenging work of the courts and to meet the needs of the people they serve.

Efforts to systematize continuing judicial education began in 1972, when the supreme court established an interim education program to help new circuit and county judges carry out their judicial responsibilities. Realizing that a permanent program was needed, in 1976, the court created the College for New Florida Judges (an embryonic version of the Florida Judicial College). Then in 1978, anticipating the flourishing of judicial education for all Florida judges and for some court personnel groups, then Chief Justice Ben F. Overton established the Florida Court Education Council to coordinate and oversee the creation and maintenance of a comprehensive education program and to make budget, program, and policy recommendations to the court regarding continuing education.

Soon thereafter, judicial education truly began to thrive, and starting in 1988, with the implementation of an opinion authored by Justice Overton, it became mandatory for judges: since then, judges are required to take 30 hours of continuing judicial education every three years. New judges, in addition to being assigned a mentor judge from their respective tier, are required to satisfy additional education requirements.

Participation in the New Appellate Judges Program is required of all judges newly appointed to the appellate bench. Established in 1991, this program assists the recent appointees with the transition to their new responsibilities—a challenging passage for those who previously served as trial court judges, and all the more exacting for those appointed directly from the practice of law. As the dean of the program and its lead faculty member, Chief Judge Jonathan Gerber, Fourth DCA, says, for those who seek to learn “how I can do my job better, this program will help,” for it “gives you things to think about” and opportunities to share “ideas with the different faculty members and your colleagues here.”

Consisting of a balance of lecture-style sessions and participatory learning experiences, the curriculum for the New Appellate Judges Program offers attendees many opportunities to absorb, analyze, discuss, and put to the test practices designed to help them do their jobs better. A portion of the program consists of information-imparting sessions on topics like ethics, certiorari and writs, motions and fees, statutory interpretation, and post-conviction issues. The other sessions, which tend to be more interactive in nature, give participants practical opportunities to ponder, and to engage in energetic discussions about, matters of pertinence to those who sit on the appellate bench—such as jurisdictional considerations, oral argument do’s and don’ts, opinion writing skills, and...
working collegially (participants reflect on crossing from the “solitary work of a trial court judge or lawyer” to being part of, and learning to work and to write as part of, a panel of judges).

The 2019 New Appellate Judges Program took place during the first week of April at the Florida Supreme Court. When the program takes place in Tallahassee—which it has regularly done since 2015—it offers a special perk: participants get a chance to meet and interact with all the supreme court justices. This year, their first opportunity came on the first day of the program: built into the schedule was “Lunch with the Florida Supreme Court.” During this informal lunch hour, after introductions were made all around, Judge Gerber invited the justices to share some advice about being an appellate judge—and they responded openly and helpfully.

The justices began by emphasizing the great responsibility the attendees shoulder in being district court judges. The work of a DCA judge is “phenomenally important,” in part, because their court is the court of last resort for most litigants: it’s “the only appeal most people can get.” For this reason, the justices urged the new judges to “explain your opinions; everyone, especially the litigants, should be able to understand why we’re doing what we’re doing. And it’s also important to the credibility of the court,” they stressed. In addition to making a case for accessible and well-explained opinions, the justices counseled the new judges to “think carefully about every word” they use in their opinions and to limit themselves to “deciding only the issues brought by the litigants, saying nothing more than what needs to be said.” The justices also noted that “An opinion can take on a life of its own. It is not just for the litigant” whose case is before the court. Indeed, “Opinions have all sorts of broader implications, maybe not intended.” That’s why it’s critical that the new judges “Never make opinions personal; you’re an error-correcting court; don’t be, or make your opinion, personal,” the justices coached. They also advised the new judges to “Be timely with your opinions. You are part of a team. Don’t make the whole court wait on you.”

Several justices brought up the issue of “tone,” as well. In addition to exhorting the new judges to pay attention to the tone of their opinions, they also stressed that tone is critical in “how you treat one another if you disagree, how you treat the trial courts below, how you treat the lawyers arguing before you.” “Be nice, play nice,” as one justice succinctly put it.

While noting the great responsibility of being an appellate judge, the justices also pointed out that the job is great fun: “The work is always interesting, engaging, and intellectually challenging,” they pointed out; “You get to think creatively, deeply, about things no one has decided before. You are a shepherd of the law.”

Above all, being an appellate judge is also a great honor. As Chief Justice Canady reminded everyone, “It’s a privilege for all judges to serve the people of Florida. Every day you go to work, go with a sense of gratitude.”

One of the benefits of holding the New Appellate Judges Program in Tallahassee is that participants have a chance to meet and interact informally with the supreme court justices. On day one of the program, while everyone meets together over lunch, the justices share some words of wisdom about being an appellate judge.
Education and Outreach

The Florida Supreme Court Teacher Institute

Sponsored by the supreme court, underwritten by The Florida Bar Foundation, and coordinated by the Florida Law Related Education Association, the Florida Supreme Court Teacher Institute (formerly known as the Justice Teaching Institute) annually offers up to 25 of Florida’s middle and high school teachers the chance to study closely, and to see in action, the operations of the third branch. Established in 1997, the institute was conceptualized by former Chief Justice Gerald Kogan (on the supreme court from 1987 – 1998) as a component of the court’s Sesquicentennial Celebration, and it has been thriving ever since. The interactive five-day program is challenging and intense—to participate, teachers undergo a competitive selection process. Nonetheless, each year, the teachers enthusiastically agree that the education they received is peerless.

Under the tutelage of the supreme court justices, the Court Teacher Institute fellows delve deeply into a wide range of court-related topics. For this year’s institute, held from Feb 17 – 21, Chief Justice Canady talked about the Structure, Function, and Funding of the State Courts System; Justice Polston offered a Comparative Overview of the State and Federal Courts; Justice Lagoa focused on the Courts and the Constitution; Justice Labarga’s topic was Judicial Independence and Judicial Selection; Justice Muñiz discussed Judicial Review: The Case of Marbury v. Madison; and Justice Luck facilitated a Florida Constitution Scavenger Hunt. In addition, Justice Lawson presented information about the Fourth Amendment “search and seizure” case that the teachers were studying in preparation for their mock oral argument: the centerpiece of the

After the teachers complete their mock oral argument, and after they watch the justices conduct oral arguments on the very same case, everyone gathers together for a group photo.
Court Teacher Institute experience—and the moment for which the teachers spend much of their time learning and readying themselves during their five days in Tallahassee. Indeed, the teachers enacted their mock oral argument on the very case that the justices held their very real oral argument later that same morning.

In addition to their sessions with the justices, teachers visited the Leon County Courthouse and the First District Court of Appeal for a hands-on opportunity to learn about the criminal court process and about how a case progresses through the state courts in Florida. Also enriching their Court Teacher Institute experience was the daily mentoring of Ms. Annette Boyd Pitts, executive director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, and of the two mentor judges—this year, Judge Kelly McKibbon, Eighteenth Circuit, and Judge Ross Goodman, First Circuit—who helped the teachers hone their mock oral argument skills, provided general instruction about the courts system, and recommended strategies for teaching young people about the judicial branch.

The Court Teacher Institute is surely a gift that keeps on giving, for when the teachers return to their schools, many develop a courts unit for their classes, and others facilitate training programs for the teachers at their, and neighboring, schools. These teachers have educated and inspired generations of students about the history, roles, and consequence of the third branch. The institute is undoubtedly one of the courts system’s most promising efforts to introduce young learners to the vital role courts play in society. This link goes to more information about the Court Teacher Institute.

Teaching Teachers: Educators’ Perspectives on Learning at the Supreme Court of Florida
By Aimee Clesi and Linnea Dulikravich, interns with the supreme court’s Public Information Office

The Florida Supreme Court Teacher Institute is an annual education program that invites approximately 25 middle and high school teachers from across the state to learn about the supreme court and our judicial system. The Court Teacher Institute is highly selective in choosing from among its applicants, and those invited to participate in the program are exposed to the teachings of all seven justices of the supreme court, as well as other legal professionals, who prepare them to educate their students about justice and the rule of law when they return home. Although the rigorous educational program of the Court Teacher Institute lasted for only five days, from Sunday, February 17, to Thursday, February 21, 2019, it has sparked a lasting desire in its participants to inform and educate others, especially students, about the operations and importance of the court system and the constitutional rights we are fortunate to have.

Teachers met the seven justices during their study of case law and discussions about the Florida Constitution, journeyed to Florida’s Second Judicial Circuit and First District Court of Appeal to learn about the “trail of justice,” and weighed in on a legal case, handpicked by Justice Alan Lawson, that is currently before the supreme court. Through their study of this case, teachers garnered first-hand experience of the justice system and became fully enveloped in their roles as lawyers and justices for a mock oral argument on this case.

After speaking with the teachers, we could see how much the Court Teacher Institute meant to them. Dr. Marjorie Chiarelloanzio, a social science instructor at Oxbridge Academy in West Palm Beach, supervises the Model United Nations team at her school and enjoys participating in continuing education opportunities. She praised the diversity and camaraderie of the institute: “In this experience, I was among a group of my peers! Geographically diverse, but also philosophically diverse. We teach different types of students and come from different backgrounds, perspectives, and opinions.” Yet everyone worked together so well, she said. She also appreciated the interactions with the justices: “The accolades we received from the justices—we never get that kind of feedback, ever! The gratification we usually get is from students, rarely from colleagues and [our] superiors.”
The behind-the-scenes experience was the most appealing part of the program to attorney-turned-teacher Jeffrey Van Treese, II, an instructor for the Law Academy at Palm Beach Lakes Community High School. He said the institute provided him with a “more intimate understanding of the supreme court and how justices hear and decide cases,” knowledge that the justices hope will be passed on to students in lesson plans and engaging learning activities in schools.

And Mr. Michael Rogers, an instructor from Lake Asbury Junior High School in Green Cove Springs, voiced that “It was really liberating to witness the checks and balances that are built into each layer of our judicial process.” In experiencing a case from start to finish, he said he gained a unique perspective on how the judicial branch operates. He found Justice Ricky Polston’s talk especially resonant: “You’re going to be very glad you watched and saw how our judicial system works,” explained Justice Polston on the second day of the institute, reminding the teachers of “how important it is for everyone to get a fair shot with a jury.” Mr. Rogers teaches at a school where the majority of students are the first in their families to go to college—and some have an incarcerated family member; he emphasizes the importance of becoming educated to his classes and considers the civics program fundamental to their education. He said he wants his students to do the right thing and to learn from the mistakes of others so that they can become better, more civic-minded individuals. He knows the institute will help him help his students. Education, particularly knowledge pertaining to the law, will help them stay out of trouble, he said, adding, “I feel guilty leaving them [his students] for a week, but knowing what I will bring back to them [from the institute] makes it all worthwhile.”

The Court Teacher Institute was created over two decades ago with the mission to demystify the judicial system for teachers from a diversity of Florida’s schools. Ms. Annette Boyd Pitts, executive director of Civic MindEd, Inc./Center for Law Education (formerly the Florida Law Related Education Association), helps to coordinate the institute and strongly believes in the program’s purpose and the value it gives our state’s educators and, in turn, their students. In Ms. Pitts’ experience, “When public knowledge about the courts increases, so too does trust and confidence in the judicial branch,” which explains why she is so passionate about the institute. Designed to help teachers create replicable lesson plans about the roles and functions of the judicial branch, the institute is purposeful every day of the program. The quality of the instruction and of the lessons shared at the institute will support the teachers’ efforts to better educate their students about courts in the state of Florida. Thanks to the contributions of the justices and many local judges and program volunteers, the Court Teacher Institute has had a significant impact on Florida’s teachers that is sure to travel beyond the marble interior of the supreme court.

Take Our Children to Work Day at the Florida Supreme Court

The average age of the people enlivening the halls of the Florida Supreme Court Building plummeted noticeably on April 25, when nearly 40 children of supreme court and Office of the State Courts Administrator employees were on-site for this year’s education- and fun-packed Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.

Founded in 1993 as Take Our Daughters to Work Day—and expanded to include sons in 2003—this unofficial national holiday was conceived as an innovative way to expand children’s future opportunities, empowering them to imagine their tomorrows without gender limitations. Now celebrated around the world,
Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day is recognized on the fourth Thursday of April each year.

The Florida Supreme Court began marking this special occasion soon after it was introduced. The timing was propitious. The court had created a Gender Bias Study Commission and a Racial and Ethnic Bias Study Commission in the 1980s—and a Commission on Fairness in the 1990s—and the work of these bodies induced an awareness of the presence of various kinds of bias in our culture generally, and in the justice system in particular, noted Ms Debbie Howells, a court operations consultant in the state courts administrator’s office who has been helping to facilitate these programs since the beginning. Initially with a “Take Our Daughters to Work” focus, they were designed to encourage girls to consider entering the legal profession. But before long, sons were invited as well, and that tradition has continued unbroken ever since.

Coordinated by the supreme court’s Public Information Office, the April event began with a tour of the supreme court building—the library, the rare book room, the lawyer’s lounge, the courtroom, and the justices’ conference room. Next was a security demonstration staged by the supreme court marshals—always an exciting highlight, especially the taser demo! And the liveliness culminated in the courtroom, where the children performed their own mock oral argument.

This year’s happening beguiled the young visitors with an additional amusement: the opportunity to pose for a photo as Lady (or Gentleman) Justice within the sphere of a massive, wooden, eight-foot tall “stand-in” of the Florida Supreme Court Seal. Indeed, this prop has its own interesting history: according to Mr. Craig Waters, director of the court’s Public Information Office, it was used as part of a theatrical production performed at a dinner celebrating the Supreme Court Sesquicentennial on May 7, 1997, and had been lying about, forgotten, in the archives all these years. As some of the photos accompanying this story illustrate, the chance to participate in this solemn tableau was clearly a temptation for people of all ages.

Posing in the Supreme Court Seal stand-in appeals to most everyone, even supreme court regulars! Here, Justice Polston and his son Jonathan embrace the opportunity.

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day at the Florida Supreme Court is but one example of the judicial branch’s commitment to creating an abundance of opportunities for all “students,” regardless of age, to learn about the functions, processes, and accomplishments of their courts. And, by all accounts, this year’s event was a huge success. A thank you email from Ms Mary Craft, an accountant with the Office of the State Courts Administrator, wonderfully captures the appreciation the participants felt: “I wanted to let you guys know how much my granddaughter Machaela Melvin enjoyed everything during the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day. She has not stopped talking about it to her parents and siblings. She even held a mock trial at home for them. Thank you for allowing her to have such a rewarding experience.” The gratitude and enthusiasm conveyed by the young participants and their sponsors evince the fruitfulness of these kinds of educational endeavors.
Law Day at the Florida Supreme Court

Marked annually across the country on May 1, Law Day is set aside to celebrate the rule of law—a day to ponder the role of law in the foundation of the United States and to recognize its importance in preserving a just and civilized society. On Law Day, Americans are encouraged to contemplate the ways in which law and the legal process protect our liberties and contribute to the freedoms we cherish.

Law Day was established by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1958; in 1961, Congress issued a joint resolution designating May 1 as the official date for recognizing this event. Each year, the American Bar Association designates a Law Day theme to foreground an issue related to the law or legal system. This year’s theme—Free Speech, Free Press, Free Society—“focuses on these cornerstones of representative government and calls on us to understand and protect these rights to ensure, as the U.S. Constitution proposes, ‘the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.’”

This year, the Florida Supreme Court observed Law Day with an open house on Saturday, May 4, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. During this rare opportunity to tour the court on a weekend, court staff were on hand to answer questions about Florida’s judicial branch and provide information about the Florida Supreme Court and the treasures in its rare book room. And on their own, guests were invited to amble around the public areas of the building, checking out the library, the rare book room, the lawyer’s lounge, and the portraits of the current and former justices adorning the courtroom and the hallway walls. Especially enticing to the younger visitors was the opportunity to participate in mock oral arguments and to enrobe themselves and have their photos taken in the justices’ chairs. Incidentally, the children weren’t the only ones who eagerly embraced the chance to don a justice robe!

Altogether, more than 100 people—including at least 40 children—participated. The open house even drew international visitors—families from Brazil and South Korea were among the guests. The supreme court’s Law Day commemoration was in part inspired by the success of the court’s September 2018 Constitution Day open house, also held on a weekend. Given their popularity, the Public Information Office, which coordinated these programs, is hoping that both can become annual happenings at the supreme court.
Court History

With the Donations of Departing Justices Pariente and Quince, Florida Supreme Court Archives Grow

The Florida Supreme Court Library, established in 1845, is the oldest of Florida’s state-supported libraries. Serving the entire state courts system, the library also harbors the supreme court archives, which contain primary documents of Florida Supreme Court history related to the court and its justices. In 1982, the supreme court librarian at the time had the notion of engaging the assistance of some of the dignitaries of the legal community to seek out, collect, preserve, and make publicly available the important historical documents of the members of Florida’s highest court. His idea galvanized the creation of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society; together, the librarian and the historical society began the process of building the collection—and the archives came into being.

Thanks to the abiding partnership between the historical society and the library, the archives continue to thrive. Recently retired Justices Barbara Pariente and Peggy Quince were the latest donors. The records they donated include office files, travel files, opinion files, speeches, and correspondence. The archivist filled more than 240 boxes, all told (each box holds one and one-half cubic feet of papers). Though some of the papers are confidential, many of these records will soon be available to researchers, scholars, and other members of the public.

The collection now includes papers of 29 justices and comprises more than 1,100 boxes of records, including justices’ administrative papers, professional correspondence, texts of speeches, notes from their work on court committees, personal papers, and opinion files. The collection also includes the work of numerous court commissions, the 1966 Constitution Revision Commission papers, and papers related to the revision of section 14 to Article V of the Florida Constitution, commonly referred to as Revision 7 (a 1998 constitutional amendment that required the state to assume responsibility for funding the state courts system). (Follow this link to learn about the materials housed in the archives.)

Florida Supreme Court Archivist Erik Robinson is arranging the records donated by retired Justices Pariente and Quince; altogether, the documents filled more than 240 boxes.
Turning Points

Awards and Honors

**Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson, Leon County**, is the recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Judicial Service Award. This award honors outstanding and sustained service to the public, especially as it relates to support of pro bono legal services: in addition to the demands of her court docket, Judge Ashenafi-Richardson averages 15 to 25 hours a week in service to various legal or judicial programs, organizations, and statewide committees.

**Judge Martin Bidwill, Seventeenth Circuit**, received the Judge of the Year Award from the Fort Lauderdale Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates, whose mission is to uphold the jury system by educating the American public about the history and value of the right to trial by jury; Judge Bidwell, who has been on the bench since 2005, was honored for his many years of hard work as a jurist.

**Judge Alice Blackwell, Ninth Circuit**, was recognized as the 2018 Champion of Justice by Harbor House; this award recognizes leaders in the Central Florida community who work towards ending violence and creating lasting, positive change in the lives of domestic violence survivors.

**Judge Patricia A. Doherty, Ninth Judicial Circuit**, received the 2018 Trial Judge of the Year Award from the Central Florida Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

**Judge Kevin Emas, Third DCA**, received the 2019 Honorable Theodore “Ted” Klein Lifetime Achievement Award from the Greater Miami Jewish Federation; this award is presented to a judge whose career exemplifies long-term commitment to excellence in law and dedication to public service.

**Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit**, was awarded the Distinguished Jurist Award by the Palm Beach County Chapter of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers.

**Chief Judge Ronald Ficarrotta, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit**, is the recipient of the 2018 Luis “Tony” Cabassa Award for his extraordinary contributions to the Tampa Hispanic Bar Association.

**Mr. Gary Hagan, court technology officer in the Fourteenth Circuit**, was recognized with an Excellence in Technology Award at the Florida Digital Government Summit in Tallahassee; Mr. Hagan was responsible for restoring technology to five courthouses in the circuit’s six counties following devastation caused by Hurricane Michael in October 2018.

**Retired Judge Claudia Isom, Thirteenth Circuit**, was honored with the Florida Association for Women Lawyers’ 2019 Rosemary Barkett Outstanding Achievement Award; this award honors an association member who has helped to overcome traditional stereotypes associated with women by breaking barriers, molding a new reality and a new way of thinking about themselves, others, and their place in the universe.

**Chief Judge Frederick Lauten, Ninth Circuit**, received the 2019 James G. Glazebrook Memorial Bar Service Award by the Orange County Bar Association; this award is presented to a state or federal jurist who best demonstrates service to and support of the legal profession.

**Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County**, was awarded the 2018 Pardes Humanitarian Prize in Mental Health; presented by the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation, this prize recognizes him for his leadership in reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system.

**Judge Janeice Martin, Collier County**, was honored with the 2018 Murray Hendel Civic Achievement Award by the Collier Citizens Council; she was distinguished for her extraordinary contributions to the community, particularly for running all three Collier County Treatment Courts—drug, mental health, and veterans courts—in addition to carrying a full caseload as a county court judge.
Retired Justice Peggy A. Quince was distinguished by the Tampa Bay Inn of Court with its first award of honorary lifetime membership; she was also recognized as one of the Inn’s founding members and one of its early presidents.

Judge Heather Rodriguez, Ninth Circuit, is a recipient of a 2019 Inspire Award for Florida State University Women of Distinction.

Judge Jose Rodriguez, Ninth Circuit, was honored with the inaugural Honorable Jose R. Rodriguez Legacy of Service Award by the Hispanic Bar Association of Central Florida Foundation; the award, inspired by its namesake, honors “his deep value of service and his commitment to the Hispanic Community.”

Judge Meenu Sasser, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, was recognized with a Leadership Award from the Palm Beach County Hispanic Bar Association; the award honors her for being “an inspiration to the legal profession with her passion and dedication to mentoring young diverse minority attorneys and doing so with grace.”

Judge Gilbert A. Smith, Jr., Twelfth Circuit, was awarded the Robert E. Burt Boy Scout Volunteer Award by the National Society of the Sons of American Revolution (SAR) for his distinguished service to scouting.

Chief Judge Bertila Soto and Ms Rene Tew, assistant general counsel, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, were honored with 2019 Women of Impact Awards, titled “Visionary Women: Champions of Peace and Nonviolence.” These awards, presented in March each year in celebration of Women’s History Month, are sponsored by the Women’s History Coalition of Miami-Dade County, Inc.

Judge Jessica Ticktin, Fifteenth Circuit, received the Jurist of the Year award from the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

Mr. Craig Waters, director of the Florida Supreme Court’s Public Information Office, was distinguished with the Pete Weitzel/Friend of the First Amendment Award, created to recognize the significant contribution made by Pete Weitzel—former managing editor of The Miami Herald and founder and past president of the First Amendment Foundation—in support of open government. Given annually to someone in Florida who has made a significant contribution to the cause of furthering open government, the Weitzel Award honors Mr. Waters for his tireless efforts as the public face in the weeks following the 2000 election.

Judge Andrea R. Wolfson, Eleventh Circuit, was named the recipient of the William M. Hoeveler Judicial Professionalism Award, given annually by The Florida Bar’s Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism and the Standing Committee on Professionalism; this award recognizes an active judge who best exemplifies strength of character, service, and competence as a jurist, lawyer, and public servant.

When judges and court personnel receive honors or acclaim for their contributions to the branch, please share that information with OSCA Publications.
In Memoriam

**Former Judge Charles David Hood, Jr.**, served on the bench of the Seventh Judicial Circuit from 2014 – 2016.

**Former Judge Felix Andrew Johnston, Jr.**, served on the bench in Jefferson County from 1983 – 1996.


**Former Judge William A. Van Nortwick, Jr.**, served on the bench of the First District Court of Appeal from 1994 – 2015.
Spring 2019

ON THE HORIZON

June 2019
6 – 7  Florida Court Education Council’s Florida Court Personnel Committee Meeting
7      Dispute Resolution Center Advanced Mediator Ethics Training
18 – 21 Court Interpreter Orientation Workshop
20 – 21 Steering Committee on Problem-Solving Courts Meeting
20 – 21 Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court Meeting

July 2019
9 – 11 Annual Education Program of the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida

August 2019
5 – 7  Annual Education Program of the Florida Conference of Circuit Judges
5 – 7  Annual Education Program of the Trial Court Administrators
8 – 9  Judicial Faculty Training Course
8 – 9  Florida Courts Technology Commission Meeting
15     Annual Alternative Dispute Resolution Directors Meeting
15 – 17 Dispute Resolution Center Annual Conference
20 – 23 Florida Courts Public Information Officers Annual Meeting

September 2019
4 – 6  Florida Conference of District Court of Appeal Judges Annual Education Program
4 – 6  Appellate Clerks and Marshals Education Program
6      Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice Meeting
12 – 13 Joint Meeting of the Steering Committee on Problem-Solving Courts and the Steering Committee on Families and Children in the Court
24     Joint Investiture of Justice Robert Luck and Justice Carlos Muñiz

Under the direction of
Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Canady
Interim State Courts Administrator Lisa Goodner Kiel
Chief of Innovations and Outreach Tina White

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