

JUDICIARY TIMES

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Spring 2015

Assignment Judges Retire in Essex, Morris/Sussex

By Janie Rodriguez

Ombudsman and

Brenda Lee Soto-Rivera

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Morris/Sussex Vicinage

Morris/Sussex Vicinage will bid a fond farewell and extend best wishes to Assignment Judge Thomas L. Weisenbeck, when he retires on May 27.

In a legal career spanning more than 40 years, Weisenbeck practiced at such well-known firms as Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, Hannoch Weisman, and Bressler Amery & Ross before he became a judge in 2005.

He said he has enjoyed helping clients resolve problems and noted that many clients have become close friends.

Weisenbeck also served for 8½ years as a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office, where he handled organized crime, political corruption, bank fraud, and drug cases.

But he particularly cherishes his 10 years on the bench. Weisenbeck was appointed to the bench in May 2005, initially serving in the family division. He was named presiding judge in August 2009 and was appointed assignment judge in May 2011.

"The most rewarding part of my career has been my experience as a judge," he said. "I wanted to get back into public service, and I was particularly interested in the family division, where I felt I would have the greatest positive impact on litigants and their families."

Weisenbeck's decision to pursue a legal career came while he served in the U.S. Army.

"I was a lieutenant stationed in Da Nang, and one of my duties was to serve as defense counsel to soldiers in special court martial proceedings," he recalled. "That experience ignited my interest in the law."

When he heard that law school entrance exams were to be conducted on a local naval base, he decided to sign up. He and others took the day-long test in a Quonset hut in 100-plus degree weather.

Despite the grueling conditions, he did well and upon returning stateside, attended Rutgers School of Law--Camden.

After joining the bench, Weisenbeck returned to the Morris/Sussex Vicinage and served as a law clerk to Judge Robert Muir Jr.

Weisenbeck explained that Muir, a prior Morris/Sussex



Morris/Sussex Vicinage Assignment Judge Thomas L. Weisenbeck will retire on May 27, capping a 10-year judicial career that included service as the presiding family judge. He became assignment judge in May 2011.

By Sarah Hatcher

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Essex Vicinage

Nearly 400 judges, attorneys and staff gathered in the rotunda of Newark's historic courthouse on Feb. 28 to bid a warm farewell to Essex Vicinage Assignment Judge Patricia K. Costello, who served as a judge for more than 25 years before she retired.

A strong advocate for transparency and communication, Costello firmly believed that trust, credibility and fairness were essential to the administration of justice.

"We are not an industry which produces a commercial good," Costello said. "Every case is as important as the next. We provide our litigants with justice and their experience with us will leave a lasting impression."

A 1978 graduate of Rutgers School of Law-Newark, Costello was in private practice as an associate and then

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Weisenbeck: 'A Consummate Professional, A True Gentleman'

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assignment judge, has been and is a cherished mentor.

He said B. Theodore Bozonelis, whom Weisenbeck succeeded as assignment judge, has provided valuable advice, as have others who have served in that role.

"My 10 years in this organization have been truly rewarding," Weisenbeck said. "It has been my pleasure to work for Chief Justice Rabner and Director Grant, who are extraordinary leaders of our Judiciary. Also, Trial Court Administrator Rashad Shabaka-Burns and I have collaborated very successfully, as we tend to view important issues similarly and speak candidly to each other."

"As trial court administrator, every day is an adventure, and there are always serious decisions to be made, with far-reaching implications," Shabaka-Burns said. "Judge Weisenbeck always found a way to help me put an issue into perspective, whether through

humor or through encouragement and support."

Weisenbeck's love for the law also invigorated others.

"He was among those who strongly encouraged me to become a judge when I was still in private practice" said Family Division Presiding Judge Catherine Enright. "The most important thing I learned from him is that each judge, regardless of the amount of time served on the bench, has qualities and strengths that assist our litigants and their families. Judge Weisenbeck and I have joined forces on many occasions, in an effort to come up with a resolution for countless cases. Collaboration is critical to the enhancement of our family division."

Asked what he liked best about the role of assignment judge, Weisenbeck said that he found it gratifying to be able to develop and implement meaningful programs that benefit the public.

"One of Judge Weisenbeck's trademarks is the courtesousness with which he treats everyone. A jurist deeply empathetic and genuinely interested in people and humanity" said Amalia DeJonghe, who served as Weisenbeck's secretary for 10 years.

Under his leadership, the vicinage launched the Special Needs Program, which provides internship and volunteer opportunities for young adults on the autism spectrum; created a Pro Bono Assistance Program for family division cases in which volunteer attorneys provide free 30 minutes sessions to help self-represented litigants; and opened a new Court User Resource Center that provides a quiet area for court users to prepare their court forms, conduct legal research, and receive direct assistance from the ombudsman and the resource center staff member.

Weisenbeck has a long standing focus on service and determination to respond to the needs of the public.

While in private practice, Weisenbeck served as president for the board of trustees of Deidre's House, a child

advocacy center that serves victims of child abuse and neglect and children who have witnessed domestic violence.

As assignment judge, he has served on various Supreme Court committees, including the Advisory Committee on Access and Fairness, the Committee on Judicial Education, the Advisory Committee on Public Access to Court Records, and the Domestic Violence Working Group.

"It is important to look out for people, and respond to their needs if at all possible," said Weisenbeck.

That approach extends to the vicinage and the public.

"I enjoy working with people, and I care about maintaining a positive work environment. As I prepare for my next chapter, the friendships I have developed will be my fondest memories," he said.

Weisenbeck's commitment to service and concern for others is well known to everyone who has worked with him. Judges, managers, law clerks, and vicinage staff, when asked to describe Weisenbeck, agreed on one phrase: a true gentleman.

"Judge Weisenbeck is a consummate professional, a true gentleman, and most importantly, a wonderful person. It has been an honor to work with him over the years," said Civil Division Presiding Judge Rosemary Ramsay. "He has a terrific sense of humor and infectious laugh. For that reason, we have shared too many laughs to count. His ability to handle significant adversity with aplomb and dignity is remarkable. He teaches us all the value of patience and kindness even during times of stress. He will be missed but remembered with great fondness."

"The most important thing I learned from Judge Weisenbeck was how to be an effective leader, with grace and good humor," said Thomas Jindracek, assistant trial court administrator. "He taught that by example."

Former law clerk Michael Riordan said he could talk to Weisenbeck about

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The chief justice is Stuart Rabner. The acting administrative director of the courts is Judge Glenn A. Grant.

Please send short news articles, photos and suggestions to Mike.Mathis@judiciary.state.nj.us. Submissions are subject to editing, and not all can be published.

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Costello Retires As AJ in Essex Vicinage; Was Jurist for 25 Years

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partner at McAlevy & Costello, where she tried cases in the New York and New Jersey state and federal courts. She was appointed to the bench in 1989 by Gov. Thomas Kean.

Costello was succeeded by Sallyanne Floria.

“Judge Costello has been a tireless advocate for the Essex Vicinage for the past decade,” Chief Justice Rabner said when he announced Floria’s appointment. “Under her leadership, the vicinage has maintained its strong reputation for fairness, efficiency and service. She retires from a rich career with the Judiciary with our gratitude for her extraordinary service.”

Costello spent the first 15 years of her judicial career in the criminal, civil and family divisions in the Hudson Vicinage. She was slated to become the presiding criminal judge when Chief Justice Deborah Poritz named her Essex Vicinage assignment judge on 2004.

At the time of her appointment, Costello faced significant challenges in Essex.

As assignment judge, Costello was responsible for the management of more than 150,000 cases each year and the county’s 22 municipal courts.

“Judge Costello is an innovative leader, dedicated to the continuous improvement of the Judiciary both on a local and statewide level,” Trial Court Administrator Amy DePaul said. “Her ability to steer Essex through tough times while gaining the respect of the judges, staff and all whom she worked with is a testament to her character, knowledge and strong abilities as an administrator, judge and mentor.

“She is a fair yet firm leader with a keen sense of human nature. An undeniable wealth of information, she was an asset to the Judiciary and those like me whom she mentored along the way,” DePaul said.

Costello’s leadership and evenhanded management approach brought praise from various entities in and outside the Judiciary.

A complex individual known for her astute intelligence, kind demeanor and



Essex Vicinage Assignment Judge Patricia K. Costello retired Feb. 28 after a judicial career spanning more than 25 years. She spent the first 15 years of her judicial career in the criminal, civil, and family divisions in the Hudson Vicinage before she was named assignment judge in Essex Vicinage in 2004.

fair approach, she was not one to shy away from a challenge.

“Judge Costello has always demonstrated a skillful understanding of the law,” said Assistant Essex County Prosecutor Stephen Pogany. “She was a knowledgeable jurist who handled cases with wisdom and fairness. Even if you were on the wrong end of a decision, you were confident that you received a fair and impartial decision. It was a pleasure to appear before her.”

“She managed with a sense of calm and treated everyone equally,” said Judge Ronald Wigler, criminal presiding judge. “She was a fair but firm leader who brought Essex judges into the fold and improved morale.” Passionate about education, Costello’s continued commitment to education was not limited to judicial training within the state and nationally through the National Center for State Courts and National Judicial College.

Her desire to share honestly with her peers made her a resource, a decisive sounding board, for many of her colleagues throughout the state.

The consummate teacher, Costello

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anything, be it a personal issue or sports.

“One of my favorite stories was when we both kept track of the Germany v. Brazil match from the last World Cup,” said former law clerk Michael Riordan. “As we finished working for the day, we just started yelling to each other through the walls and it became pretty funny as it basically turned us into a *Saturday Night Live* skit about soccer hooligans in a courthouse.”

“He’s very open-minded,” Riordan said. “He’s both a curious person and a natural teacher. He taught me to think critically, and consider issues from as many vantage points as possible. What was and is most important to me is that I felt 100 percent comfortable going into his office and asking to speak with him, even about something incredibly personal.”

Sallyanne Floria Named to Succeed Costello in Essex Vicinage

By **Tamara Kendig**

Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Judge Sallyanne Floria began leading the Essex Vicinage on March 1.

She succeeded Assignment Judge Patricia K. Costello, who retired after more than 25 years on the bench and more than 10 years as assignment judge.

“I am confident that Judge Floria and the talented and dedicated judges and staff of the Essex Vicinage will continue to serve the public with distinction,” Chief Justice Stuart Rabner said when he announced Floria’s appointment.

“Judge Floria is recognized nationally for her achievements in overseeing the family division and for her work, in particular, in children in court cases. I know that she will bring the same level of dedication and excellence to the efforts of the vicinage overall,” he said.

Floria was first appointed to the bench on July 27, 1998 by Gov. Christie Whitman. She sat in the criminal division of the Essex Vicinage until 2000, when she moved to the family division. She has served as presiding judge of the family division since 2008.

As chair of the Conference of Family Presiding Judges since 2013, Judge



Sallyanne Floria

Floria is a member of the Judicial Council. She chairs the Children in Court Improvement Committee, of which she has been a member since 2005. She also serves on the Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Education and is a former chair of the Facilities and Securities Committee.

On the national stage, Judge Floria received an achievement award from the National Association of Court Management in 2007 for developing a post-termination project to expedite permanency for children whose parents’ rights have been terminated. She also received the Peter W. Rodino Law Society Professional Excellence Award in 2005.

the following words with Essex judges and staff: “Everything I know about being an assignment judge was learned “on the job, with the help of all of you, a wonderful, talented and dedicated group of public servants. You really understand what it means to work for the good of society, and you make a difference every day in the lives of many people.

“I am excited to pass the torch to Judge Sallyanne Floria, I know she will appreciate every one of you as much as I do. Thank you for a wonderful ten years,” she said.

She has published two articles in national journals: “Aging Out Seminars: Addressing the Needs of Young Adults Leaving Foster Care,” in the Spring 2010 issue of *Juvenile and Family Justice Today*, and “More Good than Harm: Legal Orphans and the New Jersey Post-Termination,” in *The Juvenile and Family Court Journal* in 2008.

Floria is a director of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, serves as vice-chair of the Juvenile Law Advisory Committee and is a member of the Diversity Committee for that organization.

“It is a privilege to be a judge and has been an honor to serve as presiding judge of the family division in Essex.” said Judge Floria. “I am grateful to the chief justice for the opportunity to lead the Essex Vicinage and I want to thank Judge Costello for her guidance and leadership over the last 10 years.”

Floria is a graduate of Fordham University and Seton Hall University School of Law. She began her legal career as an assistant prosecutor in the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office before opening a law partnership, Floria and Callori, where she worked in private practice until her appointment to the

Costello Retires

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enjoyed the opportunity to mentor others and share practical advice with young lawyers.

“She would meet with our interns following their supervised oral argument,” recalled Pogany. “Affording law students the opportunity to be critiqued is invaluable at that stage of their career. It was something that she didn’t have to do, but did so willingly.”

Costello leaves behind a legacy of “doing the business of justice” that included, among other accomplishments, bringing the appellate division to Newark.

Upon her departure, Costello shared

Did You Know?

The Judiciary uses Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to communicate the work of the courts to the public and court staff?

The Judiciary uses RSS feeds and SMS text alerts to inform users about court news, closings and Supreme Court decisions.

To sign up for these services, go to nj-courts.com and look for the icons on the right side of the page.

Did You Know?

The Justice William J. Brennan Jr. Courthouse in Jersey City was built between 1906 and 1910 at a cost of \$3.3 million. The building served as the seat of Hudson County government until the Hudson County Administration Building opened in the 1960s. More information about the building can be found at <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/hudson/brennan.htm>

Vicinages Developing Improvement Plans on Access and Fairness

Editor's Note: Each quarter, the Judiciary Times features stories focusing on a specific program or issue. This edition highlights the Judiciary's Access and Fairness initiative.

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

The New Jersey Judiciary's website, njcourts.com.

Interpreting services and forms.

These are among the things that people asked be improved in a statewide survey administered to measure the public's perception of how accessible and fair they find the courts.

The Supreme Court Committee on Access and Fairness has been studying and developing ways to address the results of the survey since it was administered in every Superior Court courthouse in the state, the Superior Court Clerk's Office at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton, and at many off-site court facilities such as probation offices over five days in October 2013.

More than 16,000 court users completed the survey, which was available in nine languages.

The access and fairness committee met on March 19 to identify major items from the survey.

"They have been moving on it," said Kathy Gaskill, staff to the committee. "Our vicinages have hit the ground running and have started to identify areas to work on."

While areas of concern vary among the 15 vicinages, improvements to njcourts.com, how interpreting services are dispensed and the availability of forms surfaced as common themes across all the vicinages, Gaskill said.

Each vicinage is preparing an improvement plan to target specific improvements that they can implement to ensure that all court visitors experience the courts as accessible and as fairly as possible.

Some areas are already being addressed.

For example, the Judiciary has formed a committee of judges and staff to

develop a new language access plan that will improve how interpreting services are delivered to the public.

A group will be formed to revise the Court User Satisfaction Survey so that it can be adapted for use in the state's more than 500 municipal courts and possible production of a video detailing what a day in court looks like, forming partnerships with outside agencies to explore services that the court can't provide.

Other initiatives the A&F committee is addressing is implementation of a toolkit for managers to educate staff on the importance of access and fairness and training of sheriff's officers on the importance of the Judiciary's core mission of keeping an open door to justice.

"Everyone has to be invested in access and fairness," said Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts. "We strive every time an employee encounters a member of the public to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect."

Of the visitors who took the survey, 87 percent reported that they were treated with courtesy and respect by court staff, and 83 percent reported that court staff paid attention to their needs.

In addition, 80 percent of respondents said that they were treated the same as everyone else, and 75 percent of respondents agreed that the court's decision was fair.

"There is much to be proud of in looking at our survey results," said Judge Grant.

"On the other hand, we want to examine all of the responses to see where we can further improve our facilities and our services for court users," he said. "We are grateful to everyone who took the time to fill out the survey. You can be assured that we will carefully consider all of the responses."

The survey results are available at njcourts.com.

Keeping Hudson Moving



The Hudson Vicinage recently was cited by New Jersey Smart Workplaces (NJSW) for creating programs that provide and promote commuting options for employees. The vicinage worked with the Hudson Transportation Management Association to help court staff plan alternatives to driving to the Hudson County Courthouse in Jersey City in light of the ongoing repair of the Pulaski Skyway, which links Jersey City and Newark. Pictured are (from left) Assignment Judge Peter F. Bariso Jr., Trial Court Administrator Silvia Gonzalez and Hudson County Improvement Authority CEO Norman Guerra.

Jennifer Perez Named Director of Trial Court Services at AOC

By **Tamara Kendig**

Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Jennifer M. Perez has been named director of Trial Court Services for the New Jersey Judiciary.

She succeeds Robert W. Smith, who recently retired.

Perez will oversee the Judiciary's five case management divisions, criminal, civil, family, municipal, and probation, in addition to the automated trial court services and the programs and procedures units.

She will play a critical role in strategic planning and project implementation and monitoring for the Judiciary and will work closely with other senior managers to ensure the smooth operation of the courts.

"Jennifer Perez is a respected and innovative leader," said Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts. "After reorganizing and modernizing operations in our Superior Court Clerk's Office, she partnered with ITO in leading our eCourts project and has made significant strides in moving us in the direction of building a paperless court system. I know that she will bring the same skill and dedication to her new role as



Jennifer M. Perez

director of Trial Court Services."

Perez holds a bachelor's degree from St. Joseph's University and a law degree from Rutgers Law School-Camden.

She served as a law clerk to Superior Court Judge Joseph M. Nardi Jr. before joining the firm of Klein and Halden as an associate. She later worked at Dubois, Sheehan, Hamilton & Levin.

In 1998, Perez joined the judiciary as a court services supervisor in the family division of the Camden Vicinage. She was named civil division manager for the vicinage in 2002.

In 2008, Perez was named clerk of the Superior Court. Since 2013, she has been the chief of the automated trial court services unit at the Administrative Office of the Courts, which provides requirements for system development, application testing, and direct user

support and training.

In this role, she oversees both legacy system maintenance and the transition to modern technology initiatives, such as the Judiciary's eCourts project.

While at the Judiciary, Perez received training as a certified public manager and completed her training through the National Center for State Courts' Institute for Court Management.

She has served on the Supreme Court Special Committee on Electronic Filing and the Advisory Committee on Public Access to Court Records, and currently serves on the Advisory Committee on Information Technology.

"Serving Judge Nardi as a law clerk 20 years ago, I could not have imagined where my career with the Judiciary would lead me. Having worked in a number of roles, I am keenly aware of the wide range of issues facing our organization, and I continue to be amazed by the talent and commitment of our judges and staff," said Perez.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the public in this new role, and I want to thank my colleagues for their ongoing support and partnership," she said.

Easty Named Appellate Division Clerk for Administrative Services

By **Tamara Kendig**

Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Leigh Easty has been named deputy clerk for administrative services for the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court.

As deputy clerk, Easty will be responsible for assuring the daily operations of the official court record statewide, including all electronic recording systems (audio and video), court reporters, and all transcripts generated from all judicial proceedings. She also will be responsible for personnel, budget and other administrative services of the Appellate Division, and overseeing



Leigh Easty

reporting services, e-filing and technology applications. Easty also will be responsible for Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations,

facilities, security and other management duties for the Appellate Division.

"Leigh is a dedicated and talented employee of the Judiciary who understands how the Appellate Division fits into the larger organization," said Judge Carmen Messano, presiding judge for administration of the Appellate Division. "We are delighted that she has been appointed deputy clerk."

Easty has worked for the Judiciary for 19 years, most recently as the manager of Programs and Procedures Unit in the Trial Court Services Division of the Administrative Office of

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Howard Williams: A Bergen Vicinage Probation Pioneer

By **John Fuhrman**

Vicinage Chief Probation Officer
Bergen Vicinage

On June 1, 1974, the Bergen County Court began a Pre-Trial Intervention (PTI) program following experimentation with the concept in the Essex and Hudson vicinages.

The program was an outgrowth of the President's Commission on Crime and Delinquency 1967 report, which recommended alternative programs that diverted first offenders and those charged with lesser crimes from full prosecution.

Bergen Vicinage Assignment Judge Theodore Trautwein, Criminal Presiding Judge Fred Galda, and Chief Probation Officer Richard Albera were the advocates for PTI.

Once the legal and logistical framework for a PTI program within the probation division was set, Principal Probation Officer II Howard Williams was named Bergen Vicinage's director of PTI.

Probation officers were assigned, and Williams operationalized the concept into processes and procedures to operate the program from an office on Hudson Street in Hackensack.

Williams had been sworn as a Bergen County probation officer in June 1960 and was assigned to the chancery

division, now the Child Support Enforcement Unit. He was later assigned to the narcotics division and was promoted to principal probation officer II in 1972.

Williams is a lifelong Hackensack resident who is enshrined in the Hackensack High School Hall of Fame for Football and Track.

He graduated from Johnson C. Smith College in Charlotte, N.C. and became active in civil rights groups in Bergen County.

In 1957, Williams became the first African-American to run for Hackensack City Council. He was a leader in the Urban League, the Hackensack Human Rights Commission, and was elected president of the Bergen County NAACP.

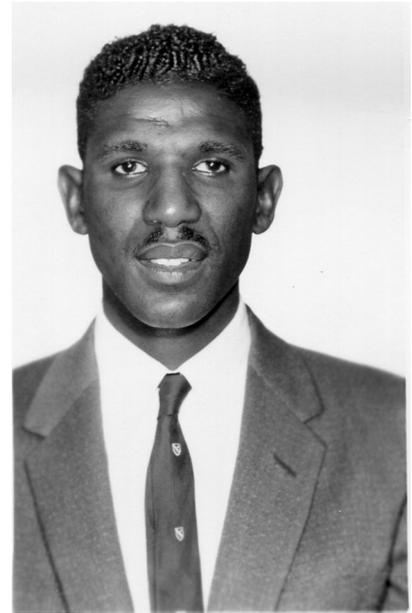
He was a calming force during a time of civil unrest in Bergen County.

Williams' focus remained on young people and he was instrumental creating job training and employment programs at the NAACP.

Williams' community experiences and his interest in helping young people succeed shaped his management of PTI.

He handled high profile cases and legal challenges and absorbed many changes to state law governing PTI with diplomacy.

He was the thread uniting diverse



Howard Williams, pictured here in 1960, was a Bergen Vicinage probation officer when he was named director of the Pretrial Intervention Program in 1974.

stakeholders in a program whose goal was helping first offenders to improve the direction of their lives without the stigma of a criminal conviction.

He is the individual who was instrumental in shaping the Bergen Vicinage PTI Program to be a statewide and national model.

Williams remained director of PTI for 20 years until he was promoted to vicinage assistant chief probation officer in April 1993. His responsibilities included oversight of the PTI program and other area of the probation department.

His retirement in October 1994 capped his distinguished career.

Maintaining his interest in young people, Williams became the attendance officer at Hackensack High School in retirement.

Leigh Easty Promoted Deputy Clerk of Appellate Division

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the Courts. In that role, she had general oversight of interpreting services, jury management, forms and translations, volunteer programs and the annual production of the Judges' Emergent Duty Procedures Manual.

She served as staff to the Supreme Court Committee on Complementary Dispute Resolution and as the liaison to the Conference of Operations Managers.

Prior to joining the AOC in 2007, she served as the operations manager and the criminal division manager in the Burlington Vicinage.

Easty holds a bachelor's degree from Lafayette College. She lives in Hamilton Square with her husband Bob.

Editor's Note

The deadline for the summer 2015 edition of the *Judiciary Times* is Friday, June 5.

Feature stories about court programs and newsworthy profiles about judges and court staff are welcome. Submissions can be sent to mike.mathis@judiciary.state.nj.us.

Law Day 2015 Celebrations

Throughout May, courthouses across New Jersey have conducted a variety of activities to mark Law Day, an annual celebration established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1958. Reports on celebrations in each vicinage will appear in the summer edition of the *Judiciary Times*.

Artifacts, African-American Pioneers Focus of Bergen Event

By Cheryl Cohen

Administrative Supervisor 3
Bergen Vicinage

The Bergen Vicinage recognized Black History Month with a luncheon celebration on Feb. 20 in its jury room, organized by the Bergen Vicinage Black History Month Committee.

Attendees were treated to food and an entertaining round of trivia questions about African-American pop culture and history, presented by human resources employee Windy Bernier, followed by guest speaker Neal Brunson, director of the Afro-American Historical Society Museum in Jersey City.

Brunson's discussion centered on this year's national Black History Month theme: *A Century of Black Life, History and Culture*. He brought a trunk of authentic artifacts from the museum that he used to accompany his presentation.

Brunson showed everyone a first edition of the book *The Clansman* while talking about how his grandmother would recall the Klan marching in New Jersey when she was young.

He also displayed slave shackles that bore engraved symbols meaning "Perform the impossible."

More disturbing was a smaller set used for children, and he explained that most of the shackles were made by the slaves themselves.

As Brunson showed attendees an African Mende mask, he relayed the story of Mende warriors captured and



Neil Brunson, director of the Afro-American Historical Society in Jersey City, discusses many facets of African-American history during a program at the Bergen County Courthouse in Hackensack. Brunson brought artifacts from the museum to accompany his presentation.

taken aboard The Amistad slave ship and how they rebelled and took control of the vessel.

Brunson then spoke about African-American women who were business pioneers in the early 1900s, including self-made millionaire Sarah Spencer Washington.

Washington worked as a hairdresser in Atlantic City and opened a business selling hair care products.

She eventually opened beauty colleges and salons across the country and expanded her business internationally.

Washington owned a golf course outside Atlantic City and a hotel, and she worked to spread the idea of

entrepreneurship to other African-American women.

Local history was another topic of discussion, including the Afro-American Historical Society Museum in Jersey City, which was founded by Brunson's father, Theodore Brunson, who served as the museum's first director and was a member of the NAACP.

The vicinage Black History Month Committee arranged for cultural artwork by students of Hackensack High School to be displayed in the jury room, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Judge Grant Speaks at AOC's Black History Month Celebration

By Linda Taylor

Administrative Specialist 4
Administrative Office of the Courts

Then and Now was the theme of the Probation Services 2015 Black History Month celebration in February.

The celebration began with a conversation about the relevance of Black History Month led by Liz Domingo, assistant director of probation services, and Geraldine

Washington, formerly of the family practice division, in a conference room that was transformed into a museum for the celebration.

Through the month, engaging presenters gave their perspectives on fairness, diversity, perceptions, proportionality, and civil unrest.

Presenters included Theresa Andrews, Bobby Battle, Don Bornheimer, Donald Ellison, Tonya Hopson, Marlon Webb, Steven Wilkins and

others who work to impact their communities. The sessions also allowed Judiciary staff to discuss how those issues affected them.

The 11th Annual Black History Month Program and Luncheon closed a thought-provoking month.

Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, was the keynote speaker. His

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Speaker Recites King Speech in Character at Ocean Program

By **Sonal Pushko**

Court Executive 1b
Ocean Vicinage

The Ocean Vicinage held its Black History Month program Feb. 24 in Historic Courtroom 1 in the Ocean County Courthouse.

The program began with two presentations by members of the Lakewood Chapter of the New Jersey Orators.

Brianna Holland, 9, recited a poem, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* by James Weldon Johnson, and her younger sister, Cassandra Holland, 6, recited a poem, *My People* by Langston Hughes.

Judge Wendel Daniels, a member of the Ocean Vicinage Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns, introduced his former law clerk, Joseph M. Champagne Jr., who spoke about his journey from Haiti to the United States and how his life was transformed.

Champagne also recited a Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speech in character and explained that, while growing up, he memorized King's speeches while most kids memorized song lyrics.

The speeches were presented while images of rallies, speeches and pictures of King were displayed in a slideshow presentation that was put compiled by EEO/AA Advisory Committee members Monika Skurzynski and Nicole DeSalvo.



Participants in the Ocean Vicinage Black History Month program included sisters Briana and Cassandra Holland, who recited poems. The event was held at the historic courtroom in the Ocean County Courthouse in Toms River.

Warren County Family Division, Staffer Honored for Child Support Efforts

By **Julie McKeon**

Court Services Supervisor 2
Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage

The Warren County Family Division won the family division of the year award from the New Jersey Child Support Council at the annual Child Support Conference in Atlantic City in March.

Sherry Corriere of the Warren County Family Division was awarded the Family Division Supervisor of the Year at the conference.

The Warren County Family Division

has 18 team members including the non-dissolution team, which is composed of three probation officers and a supervisor. The team is responsible for handling cases involving the establishment and modification of child support, medical coverage, establishing paternity, and issues involving child custody and visitation.

During court year 2014, the team resolved 1,848 filings and rose from 13th in the state in 2013 to first in the state last year.

The team included Corriere and Probation Officers Lisa Boyd, Fabian

AOC BHM Event

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compelling remarks informed and inspired.

Comments from the audience included:

“One of the people at our table had never heard of Emmitt Till.”

“I am always surprised and grateful for learning something new every year.”

“We need to continue to put this information – and the food! – right in front of us in order to fill in the gaps in our education.”

“It was a wonderful series of events. Thanks for pushing the envelope.”

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New Monmouth Conference Helps Foster Communication

By Michael Mazza

Court Services Supervisor 2
Monmouth Vicinage

The Monmouth Vicinage has embarked on a new endeavor to create the first Vicinage Team Leader Conference (VTLC) in the New Jersey Judiciary.

The conference was formed to encourage court service supervisors, or team leaders, and administrative supervisors to share new concepts, suggestions and experiences. The conference also helps foster communication between team leaders and vicinage management.

The conference has addressed team leader roles, timekeeping responsibilities for staff, and eCATS timekeeping procedures. It also has developed an interdivisional employee transfer procedure, including a standard checklist to

help team leaders facilitate efficient and productive transfers of staff from one division to another.

A shadowing program also was created, allowing team leaders to observe the operations of a different division to expand their knowledge and experience in the vicinage.

Meetings are held quarterly off-site. A portion of each meeting is set aside for a guest speaker who presents information about topics in the workplace and community.

The first guest speaker was Robin Morante, assistant chief of court and judiciary security, who spoke about security and mental health. Future presentations for the conference will address topics such as gang awareness, sovereign citizens, working with a multi-generational work force and review of quarterly acknowledgement policies.

Upcoming projects include creating and updating presentations about each division in the vicinage.

A steering committee was developed to determine the composition and long-term goals of the conference. The committee consisted of Human Resources Division Manager Terry Mapson-Steed, Ombudsman Theresa Romano and several team leaders from different divisions.

Court Services Supervisor Michael Mazza from the criminal division chairs the conference and Court Services Supervisor Tim Wilson from the probation division serves as co-chair.

Their roles include creating agendas, soliciting guest speakers and ensuring that the meetings run smoothly and are productive. They also communicate ideas and information from the conference meetings to managers.

Following the Groundhog, Middlesex Hosts Job Shadowing Day

By Betty Agin

Administrative Specialist 4
Middlesex Vicinage

Middlesex Vicinage staff participated in a job shadowing program with 20 eighth graders from New Brunswick's McKinley School in February.

The shadowing was part of a national campaign that gives young people a new perspective on their studies through hands-on learning and a one-day mentoring experience. Students followed vicinage staff who work in areas including information technology, court interpreting, finance, and library services.

A job shadowing experience can make a difference in the life of a child by giving them a vision into their possible vocational future. The experience also can inspire a student to decide what to study in college.

For all of the students, it was their first time in a courthouse learning about jobs they never knew existed.

In the orientation meeting, the students introduced themselves to managers and each other and offered

three words that described their character.

Many students described themselves as hard-working, energetic and even shy.

The students were given a real first-hand experience of what it takes to run the courthouse. Each student learned about the job of the manager with whom they were paired.

At the end of the shadowing, each student interviewed their job mentor with a set of prepared career-oriented questions as part of a writing assignment about the experience.

The program culminated with a luncheon at which Trial Court Administrator Gregory Edwards spoke and the students discussed their shadowing experiences.

Employees who participated in the program were Edwards; Jury Manager Alona Jackson; Criminal Division Manager Vicki Dzingleski-DiCaro; Assistant Criminal Division Manager Ann Rizzi; Finance Division Manager Cam Churgin; Assistant Family Division Manager Teresa Merritt; Municipal Division Manager Cheryl

Williams; Interpreting Unit Supervisor Evelyn Armenta; Chief Probation Officer Kathie DeFuria; Assistant Chief Probation Officers Hector Marcano Julie Nomides, and Sonja Assante; EEO/AA Officer Lawrence Bethea; Ombudsman Luis Hernandez; Court Librarian Betty Agin; Court Executive John Kuhn; Assistant Civil Division Manager Margaret Fridella-Disch; Civil Division Manager John Pushko; IT supervisor Michael Otrinski; Human Resources Supervisor Nicole May-Bynes and Municipal Administrator Tiffany Leverett .

Did You Know?

The Hunterdon County Historic Courthouse on Main Street in Flemington was the site of the 1935 trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, who was convicted and later executed for the kidnapping and murder of aviator Charles Lindbergh's infant son. "The Trial of the Century" generated massive media attention.

Among the notable participants was Attorney General David T. Wilentz, father of Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz.

Judiciary Expands eCourts Initiative to Filings in Tax Court

By Tamara Kendig

Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

The New Jersey Judiciary has expanded eCourts to include cases filed in the Tax Court.

“The expansion of eCourts into the Tax Court brings us one step closer to becoming a paperless court system,” said Chief Justice Stuart Rabner. “I am pleased with the progress we have made in developing our electronic filing and case management systems, which will enable us to serve litigants, attorneys and the public more efficiently and effectively.”

The Tax Court began accepting electronic filings from registered attorneys on Feb. 9. Attorneys can file new complaints and case information statements in local property tax cases electronically through the eCourts portal at njcourts.com.

The data is entered automatically into the tax court case management system. The system automatically assigns a docket number and creates an electronic case jacket that is accessible for attorneys to inspect all of the submitted documents in that case.

The eCourts system also sends electronic court notices to the parties in the case, eliminating the need to mail paper notices.

The eCourts system also allows attorneys to file documents and pleadings on existing Tax Court cases concerning property taxes.

The Judiciary’s eCourts system is designed to accept documents filed online, to provide real-time remote

access to electronic case filings to judges, attorneys, and court staff simultaneously, and to store and retrieve electronic documents after the case has concluded.

The eCourts framework builds on previous e-filing initiatives in the municipal and civil divisions.

These systems set the foundations for eCourts through the e-filing of more than 300,000 civil cases annually. The municipal court system has enabled law enforcement to file about 5.5 million new municipal court cases since 2009.

The Judiciary began implementing eCourts for use in criminal cases in 2014.

As resources allow, the Judiciary’s eCourts system will be enhanced to allow its use in other case types. Over time, the eCourts initiative will prove itself not only convenient, but fiscally sound.

Electronic filing will reduce the costs associated with filing case documents, sending court notices through the mail, and storing paper files. It will streamline the work of judges and court staff and allow for greater public access to the courts.

The system is the result of a multi-year project led by the Information Technology Advisory Committee chaired by Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts.

Its goals were laid out in the 2009 report of the Special Committee on Electronic Filing, formed by Chief Justice Rabner in 2008.

The committee suggested that the Judiciary should develop a comprehensive e-filing system that addresses document filing, case management, records management, and public access.

It recommended that the courts adopt a standard format for e-filing so that attorneys, judges, court staff and others can become familiar with one system, even if they work in different practice areas.

The system should enable remote access to case files and should be Web-enabled for maximum accessibility.

Warren Family, Staffer Honored

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Lopez and Jennifer Zander. Judges Kimarie Rahill and Angela Borkowski were instrumental in having the cases reach disposition.

Corriere, whose award was based on her strong leadership, cooperation with colleagues and agencies and customer service in child support, began her career with the Judiciary in 2003 after 14 years working in child support in Northampton County, Pa.

Corriere served as a probation officer for two years on the non-dissolution team until her promotion to team leader in 2005. She has served on numerous statewide committees, including the one that helped rollout the NJKids automated child support system.

She assumed the role of Warren County Family Division team leader in the areas of Children in Court, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency and contempt last year.

Asked about her award, Corriere said she was “very surprised” and that it “was a nice ending to my 11 years (working) in the child support docket” in Warren County.

Did You Know?

The Essex County Historic Courthouse in Newark was constructed over several years at the turn of the 20th century between 1902-1906. It was designed by architect Cass Gilbert, who is recognized as a “skyscraper pioneer” for his design of many skyscrapers in New York City and Cincinnati.

Gilbert is world renowned for designing the Woolworth Building in New York City and the U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. The courthouse, which originally housed county offices and the courts, was dedicated in October 1907 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. It eventually fell into disrepair and was vacant from 1990 to 2003. Extensive interior and exterior renovations were completed in 2005 at a cost of about \$50 million.

Wired**Passaic Vicinage Judge Employs Technology for Hearings Over Recess****By Melanie M. Nowling**

Family Division Manager

Passaic Vicinage

Passaic Vicinage Superior Court Judge Sohail Mohammed gave litigants an unusual opportunity to be heard during the holidays when the courthouse was virtually empty.

He used virtual technology to conduct judicial proceedings.

Utilizing a state-issued secure laptop, Mohammed used video to conduct juvenile detention hearings, child support detainees and other emergent matters. CourtSmart was used to record each proceeding.

Litigants were able to see Mohammed on a large screen monitor and provide testimony as if the judge were physically in the courtroom. Mohammed was able to see the litigants, question them and examine documents.

“The proceedings over winter recess were expedient and organized,” Mohammed said. “I saw the participants from the same perspective as I do while sitting physically in the courtroom. I took testimony, made careful observations and even held off-the-record in-chambers conferences with counsel.

“Thanks to cooperation between the family division and IT division, we were able to offer litigants justice on demand,” Mohammed said.

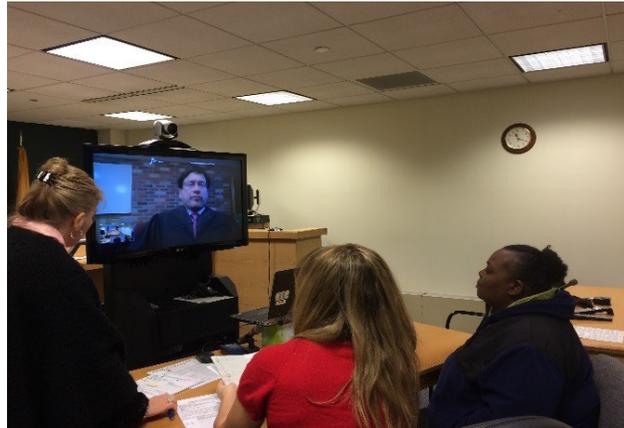
Providing litigants with meaningful access to the courts is the cornerstone of the Judiciary.

Court rule 1:30 states that “the courts shall be deemed always open for filing any proper paper, the issuance and return of process, the making of motions, the entering of orders and judgments, and the transaction of all judicial business.”

Inherent in the directive is the precept that courts are neutral bodies that will interpret the law fairly and provide equal access for all parties.

Utilizing virtual technology to conduct hearings while the court was in recess fulfilled this mandate and satisfied Passaic Vicinage’s commitment to provide quality service to all who enter the courthouse.

While the full extent that virtual technology will play in the courts remains unclear, one thing is certain: access to justice includes procedural and substantive justice, and using technology to hear emergent issues addresses both.



Judge Sohail Mohammed virtual technology to hear family cases at the Passaic County Courthouse in Paterson during the winter recess.

Learning About the Courts

Judge David M. Ragonese speaks with second grade students from Seventh Avenue Elementary School in Haddon Heights at the Camden County Hall of Justice in Camden. Ragonese spoke about court cases and explained where everyone in the courtroom sat. The children participated in a mock trial and were invited to tour the judge’s chambers. The children met earlier with Judge Gwendolyn Blue, who spoke about rules, staying out of trouble and their futures.

**Mission Statement of the New Jersey Courts**

We are an independent branch of government constitutionally entrusted with the fair and just resolution of disputes in order to preserve the rule of law and to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States and this State.