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Legal Trailblazer Marie L. Garibaldi Dies at 81

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

Retired New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Marie L. Garibaldi, 81, who achieved several professional firsts in a storied legal career, died Jan. 15.

Justice Garibaldi made New Jersey legal history as the court's first female justice when then-Gov. Thomas H. Kean named her to the bench in September 1982.

''It's a move long overdue in a progressive state like New Jersey," Kean said when he announced his intention to nominate her.

Justice Garibaldi authored more than 225 opinions during her nearly 18 years on the court and was devoted to developing and expanding programs to resolve cases outside of traditional litigation. She retired in February 2000.

Justice Garibaldi was president of the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA) – the first woman to serve in that role – when Kean nominated her to the high court. Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz swore her in on Nov. 17, 1982.

"It is not just that she was a woman who was first, but it was how she was first," Chief Justice Stuart Rabner said in a statement. "She left an army of admirers behind her in every job or appointment she held. Her colleagues refer to her as among the best one could hope to know. And her law clerks, numbering 46 strong over her 18 years on the bench, remain

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Justice Marie L. Garibaldi was the first woman to serve on the New Jersey Supreme Court and the first female president of the New Jersey State Bar Association. She authored more than 225 opinions during her tenure on the bench from November 1982 until February 2000.

A Life Changed Through Adoption: One Person's Story

By Pete McAleer
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

The couple had arrived at a Halloween party in Ewing, set up by the foster care system, intending to adopt just one child.

The baby of the family.

As the oldest of four children, 9-year-old Eddie McCallister believed he was already too old and too damaged to be given a chance at a life with a family that loved him.

Throughout his young life, Eddie had known only disappointment, tragedy and horrific abuse as he and his

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Why Criminal Justice Reform Is Important for New Jersey

Judge Glenn A. Grant

By Judge Glenn A. Grant
Acting Administrative Director

We are now less than a year away from implementing one of the most historic and comprehensive changes to how the New Jersey Judiciary administers justice.

As the Jan. 1, 2017 deadline to effectuate criminal justice reform nears, we are preparing to launch pilot programs during the first quarter of this year in the Camden, Morris/Sussex and Passaic vicinages.

Criminal justice reform is the result of a committee Chief Justice Stuart Rabner formed and chaired, a constitutional amendment, and the enactment of the bail/speedy trial

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Retired Supreme Court Justice Marie L. Garibaldi Dies at 81

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a close-knit community, loyal to her and to each other."

Because Justice Garibaldi, an only child, never married and had no children, she thought of her law clerks as her extended family. She lived for much of her life in Weehawkin, Hudson County and maintained her chambers in the William J. Brennan Courthouse in Jersey City.

"We were delighted to be part of her life that way, and her in ours," said Appellate Division Presiding Judge Jack M. Sabatino, who was one of the justice's first law clerks when he served in 1982-1983. "Not a birthday went by without getting a card from her."

Justice Garibaldi was born in Jersey City on Nov. 26, 1934. She attended Stevens Academy in Hoboken and graduated from Connecticut College, in 1956. She graduated from Columbia University Law School in 1959, was admitted to the bar the same year, and received a master's degree in tax law from New York University in 1963.

Justice Garibaldi was a prosecutor for the Internal Revenue Service in New York before she went to work at the law firm of Riker, Danzig, Scherer and Hyland, where she became a partner in the mid-1970s, a time when it was not common for women to hold such positions. She also sat as judge of Weehawkin's municipal court from 1973 to 1975.

Justice Garibaldi served as president of the NJSBA from May 1982 to November 1982, when she joined the court. Her term resulted in the advancement of women in the association in leadership positions, establishment of the NJSBA's Resource Center for Law Office Management, the Bar Foundation Mock Trial program and a special task force to investigate alternative dispute resolution, which is now a fundamental part of the settlement of legal disputes in New Jersey.

"Her legacy is profound," said NJSBA President Miles S. Winder. "As the first woman to serve as president of our organization, the first woman to serve on the New Jersey Supreme Court, as the author of 225 opinions on issues that touch the foundations of our lives from the rights of women to freedom of the press to the death penalty, Justice Garibaldi leaves this state richer for her grace and her lifelong dedication to the fair administration of justice."

Sabatino and Tax Court Presiding Judge Patrick DeAlmeida, who clerked for Justice Garibaldi from 1991 to 1992, said she encouraged them to pursue careers in public service.

DeAlmeida said she conducted business with a reassuring, calm demeanor.

"She opened my eyes to the idea of public service," said DeAlmeida, who worked at a law firm in New York for two years before his clerkship. "She fostered our professional development. She was a joy to be around and didn't take herself too seriously."

Sabatino said Justice Garibaldi frequently arrived at her chambers at 6:30 a.m. and had already read many newspapers before her law clerks arrived for work.

"She was a step ahead of all of us," Sabatino said of the justice, who spoke at his 2001 swearing-in. "She always maintained an upbeat and positive outlook."

The chief justice called Justice Garibaldi "a vibrant and intellectually curious person right up until the end of her life. We are grateful to her for all that she left us. She will be missed."

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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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LGBT Issues Focus of Camden Vicinage Forum

By Natonya Phillips
EEO/AA Officer
Camden Vicinage

To celebrate Diversity Month the Camden Vicinage Minority Concerns Committee and Vicinage EEO/AA Advisory Committee on Oct. 21 held a panel discussion to help staff eliminate barriers for the LGBT community.

The panel for the discussion, *The Judiciary and the LGBT Community,* included Katie R. Eyer, associate professor at Rutgers Law School–Camden, whose work includes LGBT employment rights and anti-discrimination; David Beverly, EEO/AA officer for the Union Vicinage who conducts transgender training for the Judiciary; and Maisie Chin Smith, a lawyer whose solo practice provides legal representation for the LGBT community. Criminal Presiding Judge Edward J. McBride Jr. served as moderator.

The panelists, vicinage employees and members of the local Minority Concerns Committee engaged in a lively discussion that involved inclusion and diversity strategies to further incorporate LGBT equality in the workplace, identifying potential concerns for LGBT persons who have not self-identified in the workplace, stereotype pitfalls to avoid, combating implicit bias and improving the perception of the courts by LGBT court users.

Move Toward Criminal Justice Reform Accelerates in New Year

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

With a mandatory Jan. 1, 2017 deadline looming, the historic move to reform the criminal justice process, including shifting from a resource-based to an objective-based system of release and how quickly defendants are tried, continues to move rapidly.

Staff from the Administrative Office of the Courts and the 15 vicinages continue to work to implement major changes to how the Judiciary administers justice.

The newly established pretrial services unit that is now being formed will have staff in each of the state's 15 vicinages. They will be trained to administer a comprehensive, evidence-based electronic risk assessment tool to assess the risk that a defendant will engage in violence, commit a new crime, or fail to appear for future court events. Unit staff will inform judges of the results and supervise defendants who are released pending trial.

Meanwhile, pilot programs in three vicinages, Camden, Morris/Sussex and Passaic, are scheduled to begin during the first quarter of 2016.

Under the leadership of Chief Justice Stuart Rabner and Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, the Judiciary is enhancing its information technology infrastructure to more fully automate key components of the criminal justice process; updating court rules governing applicable practice and procedure; and engaging in an extensive educational outreach and communication initiative in collaboration with judges, staff and stakeholders outside the Judiciary who will be affected by the changes.

The changes stem from a committee formed and chaired by Chief Justice Rabner. The committee made recommendations that led to the passage of legislation and a voter-approved constitutional amendment in 2014.

"Our efforts to reform the criminal justice system with our partners in state, county and municipal government will proceed more rapidly now that a new year has begun and we have a firm deadline to meet, said Judge Grant. "We and our criminal justice system partners are committed, despite any hurdles or impediments we might encounter, to creating a fairer system of justice."

Vance Hagins, chief of the Judiciary's newly formed Pretrial Services Unit, speaks about criminal justice reform at a meeting of the New Jersey Association of Counties. Pilot programs in the Camden, Morris/Sussex and Passaic vicinages are schedueled to begin in the first quarter of 2016.

Historically, many poor defendants who pose a minimal risk of danger and flight remain jailed because they can't post even modest amounts of bail, losing access to their families, medication and their jobs.

Meanwhile defendants accused of serious violent crimes who pose a significant risk of danger and flight can afford bail and are released, creating a public safety issue for witnesses and the public.

After Jan. 1, 2017, the pretrial services unit will utilize a public safety assessment (PSA) tool to prepare a risk assessment and release recommendation for consideration by a judge.

Many defendants will be released on their own recognizance or released on non-monetary conditions. Monetary bail that is used in the current system will be a release option only in certain circumstances.

For certain defendants who are detained in the county jail, the speedy trial component will set limits on the amount of time from detention to indictment and from indictment to trial, with appropriate extensions of time for pretrial motions, competency hearings, plea negotiations, the consent of the parties, and other valid reasons.

The Judiciary's Information Technology Office is making sweeping changes to its systems to accommodate several new and automated enhancements. These include development of the evidence-based tool to determine a defendant's risk-level for purposes of pretrial release and interfaces with systems that capture fingerprint identification and criminal background check, an extensive outreach effort to internal and external audiences is continuing.

The multifaceted outreach effort included development of a page on the Judiciary's intranet, known as the InfoNet, that includes committee agendas and meeting minutes, videos, reports, a broadcast message archive and reference material, and development of a comprehensive toolkit that assignment judges, trial court administrators and central office staff are using to deliver a consistent message on criminal justice reform

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Why New Jersey Is Reforming Its Criminal Justice System

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reform law. The state will shift from a system that relies principally on setting monetary bail as a condition of release to a risk-based system that considers objective factors unrelated to a defendant's ability to pay monetary bail.

Criminal justice reform will change the procedure judges use to set conditions of release and how quickly a criminal defendant is tried. It will have a positive impact on thousands of people who would otherwise be detained until trial because they cannot afford even a modest bail amount.

A risk-based system promotes community safety and also considers whether the defendant will appear for future court appearances and whether the defendant is likely to obstruct the criminal justice process.

In my column in the fall edition of the *Judiciary Times,* I answered several questions about this initiative. Additional questions and answers can be found below, and others will appear in future columns.

Why are we doing this?

The criminal justice system is rooted in two principles: That those accused of a crime are innocent until proven guilty and that they have a constitutional right to a speedy trial.

Under the current system in which judges set a dollar amount of bail, poor defendants who pose little risk of danger or flight are sometimes held in county jail because they can't make even modest amounts of bail.

One study revealed that about 12 percent of New Jersey's county jail population remained in custody because they couldn't post bail of $2,500 or less. More than two-thirds of these indigent defendants were members of racial and cultural minority groups.

Meanwhile, under current law, defendants with assets can post bail and be released even if they pose a serious risk of flight or danger to the public.

How will the bail system change under criminal justice reform?

Under criminal justice reform, judges will assess the level of risk each defendant presents and impose conditions of release. Judges will use an objective risk-assessment tool that has been tested and validated with data from thousands of actual cases in New Jersey.

Judges will consider factors such as the defendant's age at the time of arrest, pending charges, prior convictions and whether any of those involved violence, prior failures to appear, and prior jail sentences.

With that information, each defendant will be classified as low, moderate, or high risk and may be released on conditions without having to post monetary bail. Defendants who are released pretrial will be monitored by pretrial services staff, similar to those in the federal system and a number of states.

The staff, who will be employed in a pretrial services unit that will be part of the Judiciary, will complete risk assessments so that a judge can set conditions of release within 48 hours of each arrest. The staff will monitor defendants on release based on the level of supervision that each defendant requires. For low-risk defendants, that could amount to just a phone call or text to remind them to show up in court. As the risk level increases, the nature of the monitoring will be enhanced.

Judges also will be able to order those defendants who pose a serious risk of flight, or a serious risk of danger to the community or to witnesses, to be held without bail.

How will the speedy trial component work?

The speedy trial component will set limits on the amount of time a defendant can remain detained before trial. There are three distinct speedy trial limits: 1) from arrest to indictment,
2) from indictment to trial, and 3) an overall limit from detention to trial. The law contains appropriate extensions of time for pretrial motions, competency hearings, plea negotiations, the consent of the parties, and other excludable time.

While these reforms represent a dramatic transformation in how our criminal justice system will operate, I am confident that our dedicated judges and staff, working together as they do on so many other initiatives, will make criminal justice reform a reality.

Criminal Justice Reform Moving Swiftly Ahead

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to staff and to groups, such as, state, county and local officials.

Meetings with government and community groups will continue throughout 2016.

Did You Know?

The old Salem County Courthouse is the the oldest active courthouse in New Jersey and is the second oldest courthouse in continuous use in the United States. It was built in 1725.

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.

Editor's Note

The deadline for the spring 2016 edition of the *Judiciary Times* is Friday, March 11.

Feature stories about court programs and newsworthy profiles about judges and court staff are welcome.

Adoption Day: Celebrating The Formation of New Families

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siblings were shuffled back and forth between family members and foster care.

But the couple that showed up to adopt a single child that day ended up adopting Eddie and his three other siblings as well.

That was 25 years ago. Today, Eddie McAllister is the Rev. Edward Days, an assistant pastor at Solid Rock United Pentecostal Church in Hopewell, son of Angela and Michael Days, and a married father of three young children.

In November, Days shared his story at a National Adoption Day ceremony at the Trenton War Memorial, where six Mercer County families celebrated recent adoptions. Similar Adoption Day events were held in all 15 vicinages.

At the War Memorial event, several of those in attendance wiped back tears as Days recounted his life story in candid detail.

While living with his birth parents, Day and his siblings were often left unattended. He watched one brother die in his arms after being hit by an ice cream truck. Another brother suffered abuse that left him severely burned and permanently disabled. Another brother nearly drowned because of neglect.

The foster care system presented its own set of horrors. Days recalled being chained to a bed and sexually assaulted as a young boy. All the while, he tried to act as a father to his younger siblings.

While the Days family kept him safe from further abuse, the adoption did not bring him immediate peace. That came later.

"At the time, the only power I had was to act out," Days remembered. "In my mind, this was the one part of me I did not have to relinquish."

As a teenager, Days got a hold of his mother's credit card and copied the number down. Over the course of the next year, he used those numbers to spend thousands of dollars. When he was finally caught, the authorities asked Days' adoptive parents if they wanted to press charges. They declined.

The Novak family, Mike; Mary, 5; Jayden 2; Carole and Robert, 12, are shown following Adoption Day ceremonies at the Trenton War Memorial. The Mercer County celebration was one of many held statewide. For information on Adoption Day festivities in other vicinages, see Page 6.

That summer, while vacationing in Maryland, Michael Days offered words that allowed his teenage son to finally dare to believe in his future.

"My father sat me down and he put me on his leg," Days told the group at the War Memorial, his voice stirring and confident. "He said to me 'Why would you do this to me, son? I told you that I loved you. I told you that no matter what, I would never let you go. You are my son and I love you. And I'm telling you today, no matter what you do, I will never let you go." And that resonated in my spirit like I had never felt before. From an emotional standpoint, this was the turning point in my life."

On a day of celebration, Days' story served as both a reminder of the dangers faced by the thousands of children in New Jersey waiting to find a permanent and loving home and as a testament to the way young lives can be saved when couples choose to adopt. Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, called the event "a day to rejoice in the new memories that are being created."

A former presiding judge of the Essex County Family Division, Grant reminded those in attendance that adoptions are only accomplished through a collaboration of governmental agencies and volunteers linked together with "devoted and generous families who are willing to open their doors and hearts in order to make a difference in the life of a child."

Mercer Vicinage Assignment Judge Mary C. Jacobson gave thanks "for the beautiful children who are here today and the adults who are giving them a family and a future."

Toward the back of the auditorium, Carole and Michael Novak of Wrightstown celebrated the adoption of 2-year-old Jayden, who has been with the family for eight months. In the past two years, the couple also adopted Mary, 5 and Robert, 12. They also have five biological children who are now grown.

"There are a lot of children who need a home and we wanted to help them out," Carole Novak explained.

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Smiles and Celebrations Mark Adoption Day 2015 in N.J.

National Adoption Day, held annually on the third Saturday in November, gives judges, attorneys, court professionals and child advocates the opportunity to come together as they witness the courtrooms fill with smiles as children become a permanent part of their new families. For those who are committed to creating forever families for these children, this annual event has become a highlight they look forward to every year.

The following is a look at Adoption Day activities across the state.

Atlantic/Cape May

The vicinage celebrated National Adoption Day on Nov. 19 in Atlantic County and Nov. 20 in Cape May County. A total of 22 adoptions were completed in two days.

In Atlantic County, Assignment Judge Julio L. Mendez and Judges Damon G. Tyner and Jeffrey J. Waldman joined Surrogate James Curcio and staff, law guardians, the Department of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), and Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to complete 13 adoptions.

A breakfast reception for the families was hosted by Family Division Manager Florine Alexander, Assistant Family Division Manager Sharnett Clark and the Atlantic County Children in Court (CIC) team. Team Leader Joanna James-Nelson read the poem *The Gift of Life* and certificates were presented to Kris Brady and the Atlantic County CIC Services Team for their participation in National Adoption Day.

In Cape May, Mendez and Family Part Presiding Judge Nancy L. Ridgway completed nine adoptions with the assistance of Surrogate M. Susan Sheppard and staff, law guardians, DCP&P, and CASA. Trial Court Administrator Howard H. Berchtold Jr., Assistant Family Division Manager John Thomas and the CIC team hosted a breakfast reception for the families.

On average nationally, most children wait four years before receiving permanent homes. When one adopting parent remarked on the length of the process, Mendez replied, "The process takes time because it is a very important thing that we are doing here. We are talking about the lives of these children, and what is best for them."

"Although the process can at times be lengthy it is done by design. Terminating parental rights is very serious, and making sure that these children have permanent loving homes where they can thrive is paramount," he said.

Earlier in the week, Judge John R. Rauh completed an adoption, one of many completed throughout the year. "It is always nice to take the day to celebrate these children and their families, but the work done by the family division judges, the CIC team, surrogates office, CASA volunteers and DCP&P continues year-round to assure that the health and well-being of each child is given the utmost priority," Cape May County CIC Team Leader Bernadette Myers said.

Peterson Bellinger, a senior at Freehold High School, spoke about his struggles as a child in an abusive home and his adoption by a loving family. "If it wasn't for all the things I went through, I wouldn't be here today," he told adoptive families, judges and staff at the Monmouth County Courthouse in Freehold.

Bergen

The Bergen Vicinage celebrated its seventh annual National Adoption Day celebration on November 13 in the Jury Assembly Room of the Bergen County Courthouse in Hackensack.

Family Division Presiding Judge Peter J. Melchionne finalized 26 DCP&P agency placement adoptions and Judge Lisa A. Firko finalized 10 private adoptions for children who cannot be raised by their birth families.

Melchionne said Adoption Day is one of the happiest and most rewarding days of the year for judges, staff, families, and especially the children. DCP&P, the Bergen County Surrogate's Office, CASA and CIC hosted a celebratory breakfast for participating families. The celebration included the presentation of gifts for the children, family photos and activities for all children awaiting their adoption hearing.

Essex

The Essex Vicinage celebrated National Adoption Day on Nov. 20. It was vicinage's 14th consecutive year of participation in the nationwide event

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Vicinages Across New Jersey Host Adoption Day Ceremonies

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that raises public awareness about the number of children in foster care waiting to find "forever families." Assignment Judge Sallyanne Floria; Family Presiding Judge David B. Katz and Superior Court Judges Stephen J. Bernstein, Linda Lordi Cavanaugh, Wayne J. Forrest, and Marysol Rosero finalized the adoption of 43 children.

Each child and sibling received a book and a stuffed animal. Every adopted child was given a National Adoption Day pen, which the judge used to sign their adoption judgment.

Following the proceedings, families enjoyed a reception at Rutgers School of Law-Newark sponsored by DCP&P and CASA. The festivities included a cupcake table, face painting, photographs and other child-friendly activities.

The success of the event was the result of the collaborative efforts of attorneys and many agencies, including the DCP&P, CASA and the Essex County Surrogate's Office. Volunteers and nonprofit agencies such as the Junior League of Montclair/Newark, Seton Hall University Law School and the Help if You Care Club from Caldwell also assisted.

Morris/Sussex

Judge James A. Farber finalized eight adoptions during Adoption Day in Sussex County on Nov. 18, at the Sussex County Judicial Center in Newton. Boy Scout Troop 82 from Sparta presented the colors, and *The Star Spangled Banner* was sung by Andrea Halstead, a probation officer in the family division.

Farber, Family Division Manager Kerri Lynn Walsh-Wood and Sussex County Surrogate Gary Chiusano and gave welcoming remarks. Farber spoke of the day as being "the happiest day in the family division all year."

The keynote speech was given by an adoptive parent who spoke of the journey that he and his partner traveled in their effort to adopt his nephews. A reception for the adoptive families and guests followed. Special features at the reception include Tweedles the Clown, a working photo booth and a make your own craft station. Representatives from DCP&P, the family division, Sussex County Surrogate's Office, CASA, Office of the Law Guardian and Sussex County Bar Association collaborated to organize the event.

Presiding Family Judge Maritza Berdote Byrne presided over eight adoption finalization hearings at the Morris County Courthouse in Morristown on Nov. 20. Elaine Mico, a DCP&P caseworker supervisor in the Morris East office, was master of ceremonies and Judge Berdote Byrne gave the opening remarks. Several adoptive parents shared their experiences and the crowd was clearly moved by their heartwarming stories.

The ceremony for the adoptive families and guests followed. It included activities and giveaways for the children who attended and a cake from Carlo's Bakery, *Cake Boss* Buddy Valastro's bakery. The event was cohosted by the family division, DCP&P, CASA and the Morris County Surrogate's Office.

Mercer

Mercer Vicinage celebrated its eighth annual Adoption Day on Nov 20, beginning with a number of adoptions taking place in the Mercer County Civil Courthouse in Trenton that morning. The celebration continued at the Patriots Theater at the War Memorial in Trenton, where 50 children adopted and welcomed into their forever homes throughout the year were invited to attend with their families.

The day's event was a collaboration of a number of stakeholders and agencies including DCP&P, Judiciary staff, CASA and Anchor House.

Welcoming remarks were given by Assignment Judge Mary C. Jacobson followed by Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, Elder Edward Days from Solid Rock United Pentecostal Church and the Rev. Darrell L. Armstrong from Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton.

Through the generosity of One Simple Wish, CASA, Main Event, My Fairytale Dream, and Bridge of Books, the children received gifts, created framed handprints, took family photos and even got tattoos from pirates. Boomer, the Trenton Thunder mascot, made a guest appearance and interacted with the children.

Monmouth

The Monmouth Vicinage held its 10th Adoption Day ceremony on Nov 19. Forever families were established

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A table with goodie bags and other treats awaited youngsters whose adoptions were finalized at the Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth.

Forming Forever Families on Adoption Day in New Jersey

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for 26 children and one adult at a warm and joyful celebration.

Family Division Presiding Judge Kathleen A. Sheedy opened the program and spoke about the courthouse being "full of happiness" as those being adopted "begin their journey in life in their new forever homes."

Sheedy noted the importance of public awareness about safe haven laws that allow a parent to surrender a child anonymously to any police station or hospital emergency room if the child is less than 30 days old.

The highlight of the event was keynote speaker Peterson Bellinger, who was introduced by retired Assignment Judge Lawrence M. Lawson. Bellinger, now 17 and a senior at Freehold High School, was adopted when he was eight years old. He addressed the audience standing beside a newspaper photo that was taken nine years ago, when he spoke at his own adoption ceremony. Bellinger gave a powerful and heartwarming speech about his struggles as a child in an abusive home.

He conveyed a message of hope, stating, "If it wasn't for all the things I went through, I wouldn't be here today." Bellinger is a musician and equestrian and is preparing to attend college.

Assignment Judge Lisa P. Thornton and Trial Court Administrator Gurpreet M. Singh also spoke. Family Division Manager Rosemarie Marinan-Gabriel acknowledged the efforts of retired Court Services Supervisor Fern Varasano, who coordinated past Adoption Day programs at the vicinage.

The youngest adoptees received a teddy bear and a pin that read, "I'm Special, I am Adopted." Older adoptees received gift cards provided by the Office of the Monmouth County Surrogate.

Framed photos taken at the event were presented to each new family. Refreshments, flowers, and corsages were graciously donated by the Office of the Monmouth County Surrogate, DCP&P, CASA for Children of Monmouth County, and the Monmouth Bar Association. Books were also given to adopted children and their siblings through the Bridge of Books Foundation.

Information about the adoption process was available. Representatives from DCP&P and the Office of the Monmouth County Surrogate were available to assist families and answer questions. Monmouth Vicinage and DCP&P staff dressed as cartoon characters to create a light-hearted atmosphere for the children.

"Families are a treasure" declares a plaque set on a table at Adoption Day ceremonies in the Burlington Vicinage.

Ocean

Judges Madelin F. Einbinder and Melanie Appleby finalized the adoptions of 35 children during the ninth annual Adoption Day celebration at the Ocean County Library in Toms River on Nov. 20. At the end of the adoptions, each child was presented with a back pack filled with books, goody bags, coloring books and crayons, stuffed animals, and gift cards.

Each adoptive mother was presented with a bouquet of flowers. The celebration included balloons, candy, stuffed animals, tattoos, an activity in which the children created a family tree and a guest appearance by Buster, the Lakewood Blue Claws mascot, and Sparks, the mascot of the Ocean County Library.

Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren

The Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage held its annual National Adoption Day celebration in the Jury Assembly Room at the Somerset County Courthouse in Somerville on Nov. 18. Sixteen children were placed with forever families during an afternoon of fun, love and celebration.

This year's event resulted in the largest number of adoptions since the vicinage began participating in National Adoption Day in 2010. One forever family adopted its fourth child in three years, which made this year's celebration that much more special.

The adoption proceedings were officiated by Family Division Presiding Judge Hany Mawla and General Equity Presiding Judge Margaret Goodzeit. Assignment Judge Yolanda Ciccone gave the opening remarks.

The ceremony was followed by a luncheon for the adoptive families and guests. Vicinage staff assisted the children in a variety of arts and crafts. Each family received a gift with a framed photograph commemorating the day.

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Judges Formalize Hundreds of Adoptions Throughout N.J.

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The celebration was co-hosted by vicinage staff, DCP&P, CASA and the Somerset and Hunterdon County Bar Association family practice sections.

Union

Union Vicinage held its eighth annual celebration of National Adoption Day on Nov. 20. Twelve children were adopted into eight families.
The formal program included remarks from Assignment Judge Karen M. Cassidy, Family Presiding Judge Lisa F. Chrystal, and the Union County Surrogate James S. LaCorte. There was a special musical performance by Zara Phillips, author, musician, and filmmaker, who received a Congressional Angel in Adoption Award in October 2015 for her tireless work to bring awareness to adoption issues and to assist adoptees coping with an unresolved past. There was a special presentation given by Gianni Raimundo, a Girl Scout from Elizabeth, who wrote a book about her experience as an adopted child in fulfillment of her Girl Scout Silver Award project. Copies of her book were distributed to the children

Following the proceedings, the adoptive families and other families who adopted earlier in the year were treated to a festive breakfast reception at the Union County Courthouse hosted by LaCorte. The courthouse was decorated with paper doll chains created by Elizabeth public school children. The families and children received gift bags from CASA of Union County, Inc., flowers from DCP&P and books from the Bridges of Books Foundation.

There was a digital photo station set up for the families to take portrait photos to commemorate the occasion. Personalized cupcakes baked by Probation Supervisor Sue Limone were presented to each child. Representatives from Family and Children's Counseling Services and Catholic Charities were on hand to provide information to families about post-adoption resources and counseling services. The New Jersey Adoption Resource Clearinghouse distributed post-adoption resource information.

An adoption information fair was held at the Union County Courthouse as part of the vicinage's Adoption Day events. Representatives from 12 adoption agencies answered questions and provided information about adoption.

The following vicinage staff contributed to this report: Sheri Bacchetta; Joseph Bolles; Sarah J. Chavez; Shavonne M. Jones; Michael Mazza; Diana Moskal; Jane Phillips; Kathleen Wardlow and Kerri Lynn Walsh-Wood.

Dawn Brevard-Waters Named Middlesex Vicinage Trial Court Administrator

By Tamara Kendig
Chief, Outreach and Online Services
Administrative Office of the Courts

Dawn Brevard-Waters is the new trial court administrator in Middlesex Vicinage. She succeeds Gregory Edwards, who retired in October after 45 years with the Judiciary, 29 as trial court administrator.

The trial court administrator is the highest ranking staff executive in the vicinage in charge of all court operations, including financial management, human resources, information systems, case coordination, case flow management, probation services, jury utilization, facilities, equipment, maintenance, records management and statistical analysis.

Brevard-Waters works closely with Assignment Judge Travis L. Francis and vicinage leadership to manage a court operation that includes 28 judges and 527 staff members.

Under New Jersey court rules, the administrative director of the courts appoints the trial court administrator in each vicinage. Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, said he named Brevard-Waters after conferring with, and with the recommendation of Judge Francis.

"Greg Edwards' record of service to the Judiciary is unparalleled," said Judge Francis. "We are grateful to him for his extensive knowledge of the judicial system, his incredible work ethic, and his dedication to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and service.

"Dawn has spent her entire career with the Judiciary, building her credentials and her leadership skills in a number of roles across many divisions. She brings to our vicinage not only her knowledge and expertise, but a commitment to public service and the respect of the staff and judges with whom she has worked. I look forward to working with her," Francis said.

Brevard-Waters graduated from the University of North Carolina with a bachelor's degree in communications and joined the Passaic Vicinage as a criminal investigator in 1989. The following year, she became a probation officer in the criminal division, a position she held until she was named a court services supervisor in the civil division in 1997.

In 1999 she moved to the civil division in the Camden Vicinage, working in the same title until being named the assistant civil division manager in 2005. She was named family division manager in the Camden Vicinage in 2008.

In addition to her bachelor's degree, Brevard-Waters holds a master's degree in human resources from

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Family

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Jayden clung to his dad while his mom spoke. Both father and son appeared content to never let go.

Karen Suter, Francis Vernoia Named to Appellate Division

By Pete McAleer
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Superior Court Judges Karen L. Suter and Francis J. Vernoia joined the appellate division on Dec. 28.

The Appellate Division of the Superior Court is New Jersey's intermediate appellate court. The 32 Appellate. Division judges hear appeals from decisions of the trial courts, the Tax Court and state administrative agencies.

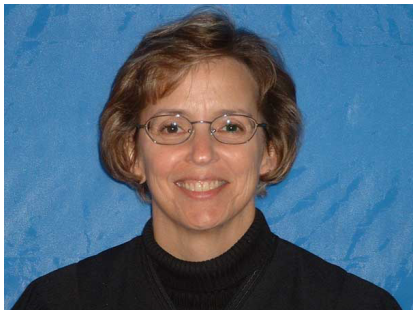
The Appellate Division generally decides between 6,000 and 6,500 appeals and about 8,500 motions each year.

Suter served as a Superior Court judge in the Burlington Vicinage's civil and family divisions since October 2001. She has served on temporary assignment to the Appellate Division since October.

In August 2015, Judge Suter completed a term as chair of the Conference of General Equity Presiding Judges.

Prior to joining the Burlington Vicinage, Judge Suter was the commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance.

She also worked for 17 years as a deputy attorney general at the Department of Law and Public Safety, where she provided legal services to the Department of Banking and Insurance and other departments and agencies.


Karen L. Suter

Francis J. Vernoia

Suter holds a bachelor's degree from Rutgers-Camden and a law degree from Rutgers School of Law-Camden.

"It has been a privilege to have served the people of Burlington County for the past 15 years," said Suter. "I thank Chief Justice Rabner for this wonderful opportunity. My thanks as well to the fine bench, bar and staff here in Burlington County. I am honored to accept this new role and look forward to the challenges that await."

Vernoia served as a Superior Court judge in the Monmouth Vicinage's criminal and family divisions since February 2010. He also has served on temporary assignment to the Appellate Division since October.

Prior to joining the Monmouth Vicinage, Vernoia worked as a partner in the Newark law firm of Genova, Burns & Vernoia, where he managed the firm's complex commercial litigation group and handled civil litigation dealing with commercial, construction, employment and civil rights matters. He previously served as an assistant prosecutor in the Essex County Prosecutor's Office and began his legal career in 1979 as an associate in the firm Zazzali, Zazzali & Whipple.

Vernoia holds a bachelor's degree from LaSalle College and a law degree from Seton Hall University School of Law.

"I've been fortunate to work with so many great people and great minds throughout my legal career," said Vernoia. "I want to thank Chief Justice Rabner for this new challenge and new opportunity to serve the public."

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Middlesex TCA

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Seton Hall University. She became a certified public manager through a joint program between the state and Fairleigh Dickinson University, and she is a graduate of the Institute for Court Management program run by the National Center for State Courts in Williamsburg, Virginia.

"I am honored and excited to join the Middlesex Vicinage as the trial court administrator," said Brevard-Waters. "The New Jersey Judiciary is without a doubt the best court system in the country, and it is a privilege to serve the public in this role."

Hudson AJ Bariso Honored With Award

Peter F. Bariso Jr.

Hudson Vicinage Assignment Judge Peter F. Bariso Jr. has been selected for the Alfred C. Clapp Award for Excellence in Legal Education by the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education in association with the New Jersey State Bar Association.

The award is presented annually to a judge or attorney in New Jersey for excellence in legal education. Judge Bariso received the award Dec. 7 at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick.

Farkas Retires as TCA in Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage

By Meredith Novkovic
Human Resources Division
Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage

Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage Trial Court Administrator Eugene L. Farkas retired in September after 42 years of service with the Judiciary, 32 as the vicinage's highest-ranking administrator.

His legacy and leadership were celebrated with family, friends and colleagues at his retirement dinner at the Beaver Brook Country Club in Annandale.

The master of ceremonies, Assignment Judge Yolanda Ciccone, highlighted the many accomplishments and milestones Farkas achieved during his time with the vicinage. She presented to him a proclamation from the Somerset County and Hunterdon County Board of Freeholders recognizing his service to the community, the counties and the state.

Eugene Farkas cuts the cake at his retirement dinner. Farkas retired in September, capping a 42-year Judiciary career.

Adriana Calderon, Farkas' successor, and Sue Regan, trial court administrator for the Mercer Vicinage, spoke about Farkas' accomplishments, including leading the vicinage through challenges of courthouse construction and renovation, organizational changes, and the unification of the county and state courts.

They spoke of his commitment to the development of his management team and his deep understanding of the importance of family, camaraderie, and friendship. His daughter, Lauren, spoke on behalf of the family.

Assistant Trial Court Administrator Angela Pardo, Finance Division Manager Carolyn Shefsky and Human Resources Division Manager Rachel Morejon presented Farkas with a crystal plaque and state Sen. Christopher "Kip" Bateman presented him with a Certificate of Recognition from the New Jersey Senate.

After the presentations and recognition, Farkas thanked those in attendance and those vicinage employees who wished him well in the weeks leading up to his retirement.

Essex Vicinage Hosts Active Shooter Drill to Test Preparedness

By Paulyn Holandez
Assistant Trial Court Administrator
Essex Vicinage

At 9:31 a.m. on Oct. 30, shots were fired in the west stairwell of the Essex County Veterans Courthouse in Newark.

Judges and employees took action, finding cover where available. Recalling their recent training, some ran for safety, while others hunkered down behind locked doors.

The scene continued to unfold as an armed individual entered the 11th floor courtroom of Judge Michael Ravin. The gunman was immediately neutralized by a sheriff's officer and another armed individual was apprehended on an upper floor.

This was only a portion of what occurred the day before Halloween in the Essex Vicinage.

Fortunately, it was only a drill.

It was an event that involved more than 1,000 people, noted Essex County Sheriff Armando Fontoura. They included Judiciary staff, county employees and law enforcement.

Assignment Judge Sallyanne Floria asked Fontoura to help arrange the drill. Emphasizing the need to ensure the safety of everyone entering the courthouse, Floria said she was impressed with the exercise.

"The security of our judges, staff, and the public is our top priority," said Trial Court Administrator Amy K. DePaul. Exercises such as this, she said, aid the court in its efforts to build a culture of security.

Sheriff's officers, Judiciary staff, and other county personnel trained for months to prepare for the exercise, which tested the court's ability to respond to an active threat.

Robin Morante, chief of the Court and Judiciary Security Unit at the Administrative Office of the Courts, conducted several training classes for vicinage judges and staff members to prepare for the drill.

One of the exercise's organizers, Garey Chin, director of Homeland Security and Preparedness from the Essex County Sheriff's Office, noted the many scenarios that played out during the court closure.

Chin and exercise coordinator Lt. Edward Esposito of the sheriff's office coordinated previous training exercises in the vicinage. This however, was the first exercise in which court staff participated.

"It was critical to take advantage of this time," Chin said. "The recent active shooter incidents in Paris and San Bernardino should prove to all that these mass shootings can occur at any time and any location.

"Because of the spontaneity of these incidents, law enforcement and the civilian population will never be totally prepared to respond to an active shooter event. That is why consistent and ongoing training is essential."

DePaul thanked everyone for their participation and said she looked forward to additional training exercises in the future.

Ombudsman Programs Marks Decade of Service to Court Users

By Pauline D. Daniels
Ombudsman
Hudson Vicinage

September marked the 10-year anniversary of the Judiciary's Ombudsman Program. Launched as a pilot program in the Camden Vicinage in June 1996 on a recommendation of the Supreme Court Committee on Minority Concerns, the program was rolled out statewide in September 2005, with each vicinage designating a court executive to function in the role of ombudsman.

As the point person in the vicinage for customer service-related issues, the role of the ombudsman has evolved over the last decade to become a critical component of the court's access and fairness initiative.

The ombudsman provides a variety of services to meet the needs of court users The majority of the people the ombudsman helps are self-represented litigants.

"The Ombudsman Program is a critical service to court users. It helps them to better understand and navigate the judicial system," said Mercer Vicinage Trial Court Administrator Sue Regan, who serves as the Administrative Council liaison to the ombudsman committee and offers guidance and organizational insight to the group.

"In the past 10 years, the program has seen a significant increase in the number of pro se litigants as well as the development of community outreach initiatives. The success of this program is due in large part to the dedication and commitment of our Judiciary ombudsmen," Regan said. The number of people who appear in court without an attorney has increased dramatically in the last decade, and the number of such self-represented litigants using the services of the ombudsman has increased exponentially during the period.

For the eight-year period in which statistics are available, the Judiciary witnessed a staggering 598 percent increase in the number of individuals assisted through the ombudsman program, 9,068 in 2006 to 63,305 in 2014. About 87 percent of those court users were self-represented litigants.

National studies indicate that this rise in self-represented litigants is due to several factors.

The rising cost of legal representation relative to the cost of inflation brings the price of an attorney beyond the financial means of many low and moderate income people. This trend has been accompanied by decreases in funding of free legal services for low-income court users.

A growing "do-it-yourself" culture also contributes to a desire among savvy and educated court consumers to understand and actively participate in their own cases.

The ombudsman provides an invaluable service to this segment of the public by explaining procedural rules, defining legal language in more accessible terms for non-attorneys, guiding self-represented litigants through court processes and acting as an organizational troubleshooter, particularly in cross-divisional matters. The ombudsman also receives, investigates, and resolves court user complaints about court services. They do not give legal advice.

The ombudsman is the face of the courts in the community, often serving as a referral source for community services and a conduit for directing litigants to resources to obtain legitimate legal representation when necessary.

Through community outreach and education, the ombudsman provides information to members of the public who might lack awareness of court resources or, because of cultural or language barriers, might not know how to access court services.

Many ombudsmen also manage a self-help or resource center where court users can receive one-on-one services by Judiciary staff specifically trained to provide assistance across divisions and in multiple docket types.

Ombudsmen and resource center staff respond to questions on issues ranging from initial filings through final disposition and post-dispositional matters. The centers have made great strides to demystify the court system for attorneys and laypeople attempting to navigate a court process that is often complex.

Through resource centers, ombudsmen and their staff are uniquely situated to serve the court by alleviating the burden on judges and other court staff in preparing self-represented litigants to more effectively participate in their cases.

The program has gained significant support among judges, managers, and vicinage staff who view the services provided through by ombudsman as critical to court efficiency. Janie Rodriguez, litigant services manager, serves as the Administrative Office of the Courts' liaison to the committee.

Most importantly, self-represented litigants assisted through the ombudsman's office are often better prepared and report more positive opinions about the court process even when the outcome of a case is not in their favor.

The Judiciary ombudsman program performs a key role in enhancing public confidence in the courts while continuing to grow as a vital court resource.

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