



# THE CIRCUIT TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Spring 2013

## COVER:

Judge Hawthorne  
Investiture

Judicial  
Appointment from  
Charlotte County

A Message From The  
TCA pg. 2

Collier County PO  
Honored pg. 2

Lee Drug Court's  
Alumni Gather pg.3

Swamp Cabbage  
Festival pg.3

"Moving On"  
Ceremony pg. 4

Counties Participate  
In National Adoption  
Day pg. 4

Judge Baker Retires  
After 18 years pg. 5

Criminal Division  
Director Appointed to  
Commission pg. 5

Looking Ahead pg. 5

## Twentieth Welcomes Circuit Judge Amy R. Hawthorne

On November 16, 2012 the Twentieth Judicial Circuit formally welcomed Judge Amy R. Hawthorne to the circuit bench. Judge Hawthorne, who took the bench in April 2012, held her investiture in courtroom 1A of the Lee County Justice Center Tower. The traditional investiture ceremony had an unusual twist added to the opening procession: The Lee County Sheriff's Honor Guard was preceded by a bagpiper dressed in customary regalia, traditional in the music he played and in the manner he marched.



The investiture was attended by family, friends, judges and other constitutional officers, to include the Public Defender Kathy Smith,

who was a guest speaker as well. Ms. Smith and Judge Hawthorne have been close friends for twenty years since early in their careers when they worked together in the Office of the Public Defender.



Senior Judge Jack Schoonover, administered the oath; her husband, Joe Cerino, and daughter, Cassandra Cerino assisted with the enrobing.

Judge Hawthorne was appointed to the bench by Governor Rick Scott in February 2012 to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge John W. Dommerich. Prior to her appointment she had been in private practice since 1998. Additionally, Judge Hawthorne served as a part-time general magistrate for the Twentieth Judicial Circuit in 2010-2011. She presides over criminal cases in Charlotte County.

## Charlotte County Attorney Appointed To The Circuit Bench



Former Assistant State Attorney (ASA), Donald H. Mason, a resident of Punta Gorda, was appointed to the circuit bench by Governor Rick Scott on June 1, 2012. Judge Mason took the bench on September 1, 2012. He fills a vacancy created from the resignation of Judge James H. Seals in August the same year.

The investiture ceremony was held on February 22, 2013, in the Charlotte County Courthouse, courtroom 4A; the former courtroom in which Judge Mason prosecuted cases. The Honorable Christine Greider administered the oath of office (above). His wife, Jane, and grandchildren assisted with the enrobing.

There was "standing room only" in the courtroom. It was a dignified ceremony, but laughter wriggled its way into program. The Honorable John Burns was the first guest speaker and set the tone as he relayed the anecdote-filled-friendship the two men have shared. Likewise, the second guest speaker, ASA Shannon Doolity had humorous stories about the former prosecutor. Ultimately each noted the intelligence, integrity and compassion Judge Mason possesses and that they value.



Cont'd pg. 2

## ***A Message from the Trial Court Administrator***



First, I want to extend my gratitude to the judges, judicial assistants, managers and staff who have given me so much support and encouragement during these first six months in my position as Court Administrator. I value and respect the advice and insight provided by so many friends and colleagues who have assisted me in acclimating to my new role. It is an honor, as well as a privilege to be your Court Administrator. Together, we will work on a daily basis to uphold the mission of the Administrative Office of the Courts, whereby the highest level of professional service is provided to the citizens of our community with integrity, equality and respect.

*“The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.”*

*William Arthur Wade, Motivational Writer and American Scholar, 1924-1994*

For the last several years, I have seen the Twentieth Judicial Circuit go through many changes: some borne from our desire to become better; others because they have been forced upon us by influences outside of our control. The motivations for change have not been the determining factors in our successes, but rather, it is our response to change that has propelled us forward. William Arthur Wade said: “The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.” Here, in the Twentieth Circuit, we have always adjusted our sails; it is a practice that has served us, and the citizens we serve, quite well.

Courts are accountable to provide quality service on time and within budget. Moreover, the administration of courts should satisfy customers by being accessible, timely, fair and efficient with the delivery of services. I am committed to these high performance standards as we continue to pursue excellence through sustainable improvements to our workflow processes. Additionally, equality, fairness and integrity will continue to be the steadfast characteristics demonstrated by all of us as we support the judiciary, stake-holders and the community; this is what we have always done and what we will continue to do.

Over the past thirteen years, I have seen the Twentieth Circuit evolve through creative case management, technological advancements and staff ingenuity. We lead the state in initiative and program innovation, and we

will continue in this role. The Administrative Office of the Courts is committed to working efficiently and effectively with our justice system partners, which will encompass utilization of a consensus building approach to reach mutually agreed upon productive outcomes. I am asking the AOC staff to stand by me ready to serve and support the adjudicatory process. Together, we will continue to strengthen the level of public trust and confidence and ensure that citizens feel that the courts have treated them fairly. Constantly striving to excel, we have remained true to our principles and our purpose. I do not know what lies ahead, but I know we will face it together, boldly and resolutely.

*Respectfully,*  
Scott Wilsker

## **Collier County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) Honors Probation Officer**

On February 4, 2013, Probation Officer, Nicole Shivak, was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by Collier County Sheriff, Kevin Rambosk, for her service to CCSO.



Ms. Shivak, whose job it is to conduct field visits with her probationers, partnered with deputies to go to the home of a defendant at night. This evening field visit resulted in the probationer’s arrest for violation of probation as drugs, paraphernalia and firearms, were discovered in the home.

County probation and law enforcement began partnering several years ago to enhance the probation officers’ ability to make field visits by expanding the time of day in which they could be conducted, while still ensuring officer safety. Without law enforcement, probation officers are limited to day time visits only. Other benefits to this partnership include increased communication between officers and law enforcement, and immediate arrest of defendants violating probation.



*Mason, cont. from pg 1*

The hour long ceremony was followed by a reception attended by family, friends, colleagues and court staff.

Judge Mason is a resident of Punta Gorda and is the first judge from Charlotte County to be appointed to the circuit bench in recent memory.

## Lee County Drug Court Launches Alumni Group

*by Ismael Herrera, Pretrial Services/Drug Court*

On December 13, 2012, the Lee County Felony Drug Court Program had its first Alumni Gathering that included recent graduates to graduates from the program as far back as 2008. Those currently in the program on their last phase or “pre-graduates” were also invited to attend the alumni gathering.

This event was planned for the graduates and pre-graduates of Drug Court, and as such, it was designed to be an open table of conversation that allowed the graduates to talk about “life after drug court” in a very sincere and realistic way. With this in mind, all cards were thrown on the table that evening as the graduates spoke from their hearts, several shedding tears, about “life after drug court.” Most spoke of the vast improvement to the quality of their lives because of what they gained through the program. Others spoke of the very real demons of addiction that awaited them post graduation, despite all the confidence in the world they may have had prior to graduating. All agreed that what they learned in Drug Court was invaluable for achieving long-term sobriety.

There appeared to be one underlying truth at this meeting: addiction continues in full force after graduation and that tools learned in the Drug Court program need to be utilized every day if long-term sobriety is to be achieved. This was the truth spoken straight from the graduates who have stepped into the real world and heard by the pre-graduates about to take that next step. In this way, the message was passed along in the most efficient and effective manner possible. It was a solid reminder of “what works” for those doing well, and a healthy “reset” point for those doing not so well. Also, it afforded the pre-graduates a unique opportunity to look beyond graduation to what awaits them, along with what steps need to be taken to maintain true long-term sobriety.

The Alumni Gathering was a total success according to everyone in attendance - graduates, pre-graduates, Drug Court staff and Judges alike. This event has been on the radar of the Lee Drug Court Staff for quite some time as it clearly provides unique benefits to the participants during a crucial period in their post Drug Court recovery. In listening to the collective voice of Drug Court graduates, the need for this event was confirmed. It is the Drug Court Team’s continued commitment to serve its participants and the citizens of Lee County, that the Drug Court Judges and staff came together to make this event a reality.

A special thanks to Judge Hayes, Judge Gagliardi, Southwest Florida Addiction Services and all of the Drug Court Team who work to make this program and this events like this possible. A very heart-felt thanks to all the Graduates and Pre-graduates for delivering themselves in such an elegant manner and for the bravery that allowed them to “walk the path” on that night. The Alumni Gathering had such a positive impact, that quarterly Alumni Gatherings have been scheduled for the participants of the Lee County Felony Drug Court program.

## Judges Ride in Swamp Cabbage Festival Parade

The citizens of Hendry County gathered once again for their annual Swamp Cabbage Festival on February 23rd and 24th. The festival kicked off with a “Southern Hospitality-Cracker Style” themed Parade. Locals lined the street to watch the parade.



*Judge Sloan riding his 1930 Model A Ford.*

The 20th Judicial Circuit was represented in the parade by both County Judge James D. Sloan and Circuit Judge Donald H. Mason. Judge Sloan waved to the crowd as he cruised by in his 1930 Model A Ford. Judge Mason, along with his wife and grandchildren, had a higher calling - they were perched atop a swamp buggy as they rambled down S. Bridge St. in Labelle. Following the parade the day continued with armadillo races, clogging, rodeo, and a South Central Florida Car Club car show.



*Judge Mason and family riding in swamp buggy style*



## “Moving On” Ceremony Important Step In Drug Court

THE MOST EFFECTIVE JUSTICE STRATEGY ADDRESSING THE DRUG-ADDICTED ...

National Association of Drug Court Professionals

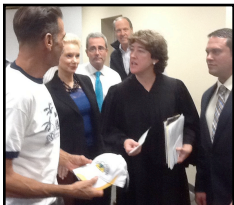


Judge Martin with graduate.

Collier County held a “Moving On” ceremony on January 22, 2013 to celebrate three defendants who had successfully completed Felony Drug Court. Judge Martin refers to these events as “moving on ceremonies” ( a phrase coined by her mentor and former Drug Court Judge, Christine Greider) rather than graduation, because no one really “graduates” from drug addiction; recovery is a journey that has no end. After committing to a 24 month program (usually completed at 18 months) the participants move on from Drug Court, having learned the skills to overcome addiction and having learned how to persevere and succeed in life after drug court.

The “Moving On” ceremony is an opportunity for the individuals, their families and the community to celebrate their successes and recognize the hard work necessary to complete the program. The three honorees shared their experiences and stories of hope, reinvigorating and exciting group members.

Following the ceremony was a fellowship meal to congratulate the graduates and allow the community and participants to interact. It was during the fellowship time that Judge Martin was presented with a \$500 check for the Drug Court Program, from the Gulf Coast Runners Club - a Drug Court community partner. The running club “embraced” the Collier Drug Court after court participants began volunteering at running events.



To mark the occasion, Judge Martin invited community leaders to the ceremony. Dignitaries ranging from local commissioners to a state legislative aid, to department heads of state probation, and the local drug treatment facility, attended the event. Also, in attendance were members of the local recovery community, active drug court participants, staff and members of the Gulf Coast Runners Club. Overall, 100 people attended the ceremony that lasted an hour.

## National Adoption Day Celebrated in Collier and Lee Counties

Judges in Collier and Lee Counties held “mass adoptions” in November as part of National Adoption Day/National Adoption Month celebrations that took place across the country. Each year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving thousands of children in foster care are adopted by “forever families.”



Boy looks on as Judge Schreiber signs adoption paperwork for his little sister.

First launched in 2000, National Adoption Day began in a few cities and has since spread to almost 400 cities in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico. National Adoption Day was created to bring awareness of the 100,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted. It is a day to celebrate the adoptive families and to encourage other families to adopt children in foster care. During the 2012 National Adoption Day ceremonies nearly 4,500 of the 52,000 children were adopted into permanent families nationwide. In Collier and Lee Counties, there were ten and nine respectively.

Collier Dependency Court Judge, Elizabeth Krier, presided over an afternoon adoption ceremony on Friday November 16, 2012. In attendance were family, friends, caseworkers, attorneys, adoption advocates and staff of the Children’s Network of Florida which helped organize the event. Similarly, Judge Lee Schreiber (Lee County) presided over her first adoption ceremony on Saturday, November 17. The audience for this ceremony had one special guest: retired Judge James H. Seals, who had been the Lee County Dependency Court judge until August of 2012. Judge Schreiber noted his attendance and commented that the ceremony belonged to Judge Seals as well, because he too presided over these children’s cases.

Following the ceremonies there were receptions with treats and gifts for children; this allowed for the new forever families to visit and share in the excitement of the day.



## Judge Franklin G. Baker Retires From Collier Bench

On November 29, 2012, the Collier County Bar Association honored retiring Judge Franklin G. Baker. The reception, which was held at the Grey Oaks Country Club, was well attended by both attorneys and judges.



*Judge Franklin G. Baker finished career in the criminal division.*

Chief Judge Jay B. Rosman, presented Judge Baker with a award on behalf of the judiciary and Administrative Office of the Court staff, acknowledging his years of service and leadership as a distinguished member of the judiciary.

Judge Baker was appointed to the bench in 1994 by then Governor Lawton Chiles, Jr. The appointment was to fill a newly created Circuit Court Judge position.

Judge Baker completed his last six year term in December 2012. His circuit seat has been filled by a new judge, elected on November 6, 2012.

## Looking Ahead...

The Twentieth will be celebrating two more investitures:

Judge McGarity	April 5th
Judge Porter	April 26th

Mediation/Arbitration Dinner                      April 11th

Law Week April 29 - May 3

2nd DCA Oral Arguments May 3rd  
8:30am Courtroom 7A  
Lee County Courthouse Tower

## Criminal Division Director Appointed To Accreditation Commission

Liza Maldonado, Lee County Criminal Division Director, has been appointed to the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission (FCAC) for a six-year term. The commission reviews and approves qualified Pretrial Services agencies and Correctional Institutions that seek accreditation and adhere to established policy standards.

Ms. Maldonado was nominated to represent Pretrial Services agencies by the Board of Directors for the Association of Pretrial Services Professionals.

Lee County Pretrial Services received accreditation from the FCAC in 2009. It was re-accredited in 2012.

### *Circuit Times Newsletter*

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“If we do not maintain justice, justice will not maintain us.”

*Sir Francis Bacon  
(1561-1626)*