

# CIRCUIT TIMES

## Newsletter



Vol. 3 2025

NEWSLETTER OF THE 20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



**TIS' THE SEASON FOR JUDGES  
HONORING THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF  
THE 20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BENCH**



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# INVESTITURE OF JUDGE MICHAEL POWELL

Judge Michael Powell was formally invested as a Charlotte County Judge during a ceremony held on Friday, August 8, 2025 at the Charlotte County Courthouse. The event brought together members of the judiciary, local bar leaders, elected officials, colleagues, family, and friends to mark this significant milestone in Judge Powell's judicial career.

Chief Judge J. Frank Porter presided over the ceremony, which opened with the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office Color Guard and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Judge Powell's children, Jacob and Ainsley.

The ceremony featured remarks from guest speakers who shared professional and personal reflections on Judge Powell's career. Attorney Drew Fritsch and retired attorney Mark Desisto offered insight into his dedication to the practice of law.

Charlotte County Judge John Burns, a longtime colleague and friend, spoke about Judge Powell's character and the values he brings to the bench. "He's a good husband. A good father. A good friend. He's a good person. That's why I know he'll be a good judge," Judge Burns said. "It's an honor that I get to be here today to give a glimpse into our personal relationship that demonstrates who Mike is."



Judge Powell speaks at his Investiture

Judge Burns also administered the oath of office, a role Judge Powell chose in recognition of their long professional and personal relationship. Judge Powell's wife, Jennifer, held the Bible while their children assisted with the robing.

Following the oath and enrobing, Judge Powell addressed those in attendance and reflected on his approach to judicial service. "I plan to simply render impartial justice with a strong amount of common sense and humility mixed in," Judge Powell said.

Chief Judge Porter then formally presented Judge Powell as the newest member of the Charlotte County bench. The Twentieth Judicial Circuit proudly welcomes Judge Michael Powell and looks forward to his service to the people of Charlotte County.



Judge John Burns administers the Oath of Office to Judge Powell



Judge Powell's children help with the enrobing

# INVESTITURE OF JUDGE JAMES STEWART



Judge Cunningham performs the Oath of Office



Judge Stewart's daughter leads everyone in the pledge of allegiance

*"I was always impressed with his interaction with victims. He listened to their concerns & frustrations so they felt like they had a voice and their voice was being heard."*

*- Judge Cunningham*

On September 19, 2025 we proudly celebrated the Investiture of Circuit Judge James Stewart at the Collier County Courthouse. The ceremony was presided over by Chief Judge J. Frank Porter and began with a presentation of the Colors by the Collier County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard. Judge Stewart's daughter, Katie, led the Pledge of Allegiance, and his son, Nicholas, assisted Nancy Van Fleet in delivering the invocation.

Guest speakers included State Attorney Amira Fox and Chief Assistant State Attorney Richard Montecalvo, who shared reflections on Judge Stewart's career and character. Speaking about her years working alongside Judge Stewart at the State Attorney's Office, Judge Cunningham highlighted his professionalism and compassion.

"James always handled each situation with stride, and I was always impressed with his interaction with victims," said Judge Cunningham. "He listened to their concerns and frustrations so they felt like they had a voice and that their voice was being heard, much like he does on the bench."

Judge Stewart took the Oath of Office administered by Judge Cunningham, joined by his wife, Ashli, and their children, Nicholas and Katie, who held the Bible. His parents, Dr. Jim and Carmen Stewart, assisted with the enrobing.

In his remarks, Judge Stewart reflected on the responsibilities of judicial service and his commitment to the rule of law.

"I think now more than ever Judges need to lead by example by supporting, protecting and defending the Constitution," said Judge Stewart. "By modeling professionalism and civility and defending the rule of law. I don't promise to be perfect, but I do promise to take those values I just mentioned seriously."

We are proud to welcome Judge Stewart to the bench and look forward to his continued service to Southwest Florida.



Judge Stewart gives his official remarks at his Investiture

# INVESTITURE OF JUDGE AMANDA LEVY-REIS

A packed courtroom gathered to celebrate the Investiture of Circuit Judge Amanda Levy-Reis at the Collier County Courthouse on November 7, 2025.

The ceremony was presided over by Deputy Chief Judge Joseph Foster and opened with a presentation of the Colors by the Collier County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard. The Naples Performing Arts Center All Stars led the Pledge of Allegiance and performed God Bless America, setting a respectful and celebratory tone for the proceedings. Pastor Jeremiah Taylor delivered the invocation, followed by introductions of judges, magistrates, judicial staff, and distinguished guests in attendance.

Guest speakers reflected on her professionalism, integrity, and deep connection to the community she now serves from the bench.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Helena Barch-Kuchta, who worked closely with Judge Levy-Reis earlier in her legal career, spoke to both her qualifications and character.

"You've done this the right way, for the right reasons and in the right place... your own hometown," said Judge Barch-Kuchta. "Your community is lucky to have you. I am proud to call you a colleague and a Judge."



Judge Levy-Reis addresses the crowd at her Investiture



Judge Amanda Levy-Reis speaks to the courtroom while Judge Polster Chappell, Judge Barch-Kuchta, and Judge Brodie look on.

Judge Levy-Reis then took the Oath of Office, administered by Judge Sheri Polster Chappell, a longtime mentor and friend who has known Judge Levy-Reis for more than two decades. Following the enrobing, Judge Levy-Reis addressed those in attendance, emphasizing the responsibility and trust placed in the judiciary.

"As a Circuit Judge I will strive to maintain public trust and dignity worthy of the courts as a judicial officer while treating all people, no matter their plight who appear in court, equally and with respect," said Judge Levy-Reis.

Judge Levy-Reis' investiture reflected both her professional journey and her ties to Southwest Florida as she begins this next chapter of service to the people of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit.



Attorney Preston Scheiner shares his reflections on Judge Levy-Reis' career

# INVESTITURE OF JUDGE TRENT REICHLING



Judge Reichling listens to a speech at his Investiture



Judge Barber gives his speech at Judge Reichling's Investiture

The Investiture of Circuit Judge Trent Reichling was held on December 5, 2025 at the Lee County Justice Center. The courtroom was filled with judges from across the circuit and beyond, members of the legal community, family, and friends who gathered to recognize him.

Chief Judge J. Frank Porter presided over the ceremony, which included an Honor Guard presentation, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the introduction of judges, magistrates, judicial assistants, and dignitaries in attendance.

Before taking the bench, Judge Reichling dedicated a combined 14 years to public service as both a state and federal prosecutor. His career included service as an Assistant State Attorney at the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office, a Special Assistant United States Attorney with the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, and most recently as an Assistant United States Attorney with the Middle District of Florida in the Fort Myers Division.

Several speakers shared remarks highlighting Judge Reichling's professionalism, work ethic, and commitment to justice. Among them was the Honorable Thomas P. Barber, United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, who told us multiple reasons why he believes Judge Reichling will be a great judge. "Trent will be a judicial colleague that looks out for his fellow judges and elevates everyone, not just himself," said Judge Barber.

Judge Sheri Polster Chappell administered the oath of office while Judge Reichling's mother held the Bible. His wife then assisted with the enrobing.

In his remarks, Judge Reichling expressed gratitude to his family, mentors, and colleagues, and also shared his commitment to those who will appear before him. "As I embark upon my career as a judge I can promise you all this, whenever you are in my courtroom you will always be treated with respect, the law will be followed, fairness will be guaranteed, and humor will be sprinkled in to add levity," Judge Reichling said.

**“Really great Judges aren’t afraid to make decisions and Trent is that type of person.”**

**- Judge Thomas P. Barber**



Judge Sheri Polster Chappell administers the oath of office

# Investiture Ceremony

## SAVE THE DATE



Judge Rachael  
Loukonen



Judge Robert  
Ostrov



Judge Javier  
Pacheco

JANUARY 16, 2026

Lee County Justice Center  
Courtroom 1A  
3:00pm

FEBRUARY 13, 2026

Hendry County Courthouse  
3:00pm

MARCH 27, 2026

Lee County Justice Center  
Courtroom 1A  
3:00pm

# JUDGE BRODIE HONORED FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Circuit Judge Lauren Brodie was honored by Legal Aid Service of Collier County with the 2025 Cathy Lucrezi Excellence in Public Service Award at the organization's Impact Awards Luncheon on November 20, 2025.

Named in memory of the late Cathy Lucrezi, the award recognizes individuals who demonstrate a lifelong commitment to public service and whose work has made a lasting impact on the local community. Judge Brodie's decades of service to the judiciary and the citizens of Southwest Florida reflect these values wholeheartedly.

Throughout her distinguished career, Judge Brodie has served in numerous judicial roles across Florida, contributed extensively to judicial education, mentored new judges, and been recognized with multiple statewide honors, including:

- 2022 William M. Hoeveler Judicial Professionalism Award
- 2007 Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice's Distinguished Service Award
- 2015 Woman Lawyer of the Year by the Collier County Women's Bar Association

Judge Brodie's outstanding contributions to the legal profession, judicial excellence and community make this recognition well deserved.



## JUDGE MANALICH NAMED JURIST OF THE YEAR



The Southwest Florida American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) hosted its Annual Judicial Appreciation Dinner and Award Ceremony, honoring the hard work and dedication of our local judges.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of the Jurist of the Year Award to the Honorable Ramiro Manalich. This distinction recognizes a judge who exemplifies fairness, professionalism, and dedication to the administration of justice. Judge Manalich was honored for his continued commitment to the highest standards of the judiciary and his positive impact on the legal community.

The annual Judicial Appreciation Dinner serves as an opportunity for ABOTA to strengthen the relationship between the bench and the bar while celebrating excellence within the courts. Through recognition of judges who demonstrate outstanding leadership and integrity, ABOTA seeks to foster the improvement of ethical and technical standards in advocacy to better serve litigants.

# CHARLOTTE COUNTY LAUNCHES VETERANS COURT

In October 2025, the Charlotte County Veterans Treatment Court officially welcomed its first participants.

Presided over by Judge Sean Lux, Veterans Treatment Court supports veterans and service members facing mental health or substance use challenges as they navigate the justice system. The program focuses on accountability paired with treatment, which connects participants to individualized treatment plans and resources that support employment, education, housing, and long-term stability while strengthening public safety.

Veterans Day week was an especially meaningful moment for the program, as six veterans appeared in Veterans Treatment Court to continue their journey of growth and recovery.

As participants progress through the program, Judge Lux presents them with dog tags representing a stage of achievement and advancement.

Judge Lux's commitment to veterans extends beyond the courtroom. He is also the founder and director of the Collier-Lee Honor Flight, an organization that brings veterans to Washington, D.C. to visit the memorials dedicated to honoring their service.

Veterans Treatment Court is supported by a dedicated team with strong ties to military service. Treatment Courts Coordinator Paul Martineau and Mentor Coordinator Nikki DiPaola are both veterans of the United States Marine Corps, bringing firsthand experience and empathy to the veterans they serve.

Special thanks are extended to Steven Woodberry from the Public Defender's Office, Assistant State Attorney Cindy Rebholz-Rubin, Assistant Public Defender Cameron Rhoad, and the potential mentors whose efforts helped bring the Veterans Treatment Court to Charlotte County.



One of the first participants accepted into Charlotte County's VTC



Staffing for Veterans Treatment Court



Treatment Courts Coordinator Paul Martineau



Judge Lux presents a dog tag to one of the participants

# HONORING SERVICE AND SECOND CHANCES

Lee County Veterans Treatment Court celebrated Veterans Day with three inspiring graduations!

Led by Judge Josephine Gagliardi, Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) is a specialized program that supports those who have served, including U.S. military veterans, Department of Defense contractors, and allied service members by diverting cases from the traditional court system.

Following speeches from our Graduates, participants and guests also heard from Lee County Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass and former Congressman Madison Cawthorn about the positive impact of veterans programs in our community.

"I've seen the other side, I've seen the people in the community who have suffered with drug abuse," said Commissioner Pendergrass, who was a Ft. Myers Police Officer for 25 years. "I'm so happy to see after all these years that our system has evolved to having results."

Also in attendance were our Veterans' Court Mentors, other recent graduates, and our community partners.



In honor of Recovery Month, we celebrated a graduation in the Lee County Veterans Treatment Court with Judge Josephine Gagliardi. The moment served as a powerful reminder of the hope and healing that recovery makes possible for individuals and families. In 2025, 17 participants graduated Veterans Court in Lee County.

***"IF IT WASN'T FOR THIS PROGRAM BEING SET UP, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO. IT SAVED MY LIFE."***

Recovery Month, observed each September, highlights the importance of treatment, celebrates recovery, and recognizes the providers and partners who support this life-changing work. In our Treatment Courts across our Circuit, these courts are proud to play a part in that effort by connecting people with the resources they need to build healthier, brighter futures.



# National Adoption Month



Southwest Florida celebrated an unforgettable National Adoption Month in November 2025.

The Children's Network of Southwest Florida hosted two mass adoption hearings during National Adoption Month, where more than two dozen children officially joined their forever families.

On Friday, November 21, Judge Elizabeth Krier finalized 12 adoptions at the Collier County Courthouse. The celebration continued the next morning in Lee County, where Judge Tracey Redd finalized 13 more adoptions.

These events honor National Adoption Month and National Adoption Day, which shines a light on the children in our local foster care system and the dedicated teams who support them.

CNSWFL CEO Nadereh Salim shared her excitement, noting the teamwork and heart that make these moments possible.

*"Every adoption is a joyous occasion and represents the hard work of numerous people behind the scenes, including child welfare professionals, the judiciary, guardians ad litem, and the adoptive parents themselves. We thank everyone who has worked together to give these young people a brighter future!"*





## Collier County Teen Court Community Outreach Event

Written by: Rita Echevarria-Fuego

In July the Collier County Teen Court partnered with the Naples Police Department to simulate court-related scenarios for the Soaring Eagles Youth Leadership Academy.

The Teen Court Team for this event consisted of Administrative Office of the Courts Intern and Teen Court Volunteer, Rita Echevarria-Fuego, Andrew McGann Esq. Acting as Judge, Program Specialist Jorge Velarde and Volunteer Prosecutor, Dasha Voit.

Teen Court Volunteers worked with the directors of the Soaring Eagles Program for over a year preparing for the event. There were two staged crimes and a mock trial. The day started off with two crimes being reenacted, a grand theft auto, and an auto burglary.

The Leadership Academy students were separated into two groups, witnessed the crimes being committed, then they were asked to give statements on what they saw. One group saw a picture lineup and was tasked with choosing the person who they felt committed the crime. The other group viewed a line-up of possible suspects. The students walked up to each suspect and gave a percentage of how certain they were of the identity of the criminal.

Teen Court attorneys for the prosecution and defense then interviewed witnesses, Police Officers, and the defendants. The attorneys then used their testimony in the Mock Trial.

The cases were handled as they would be for an actual court proceeding. The Teen Court Team prepared the witnesses and their questions, opening statements and closing arguments. Then came the demonstration; there were objections, redirects, and passionate rebuttals. The Leadership Academy students were shown video footage, and the picture lineup. The students were very engaged and had many pertinent questions.

Collier's Teen Court Program wishes to thank the Naples Police Department and will continue to partner with local agencies to promote awareness and responsible behavior for the citizens of Collier County.



# SPECIAL RECOGNITION DATES

## Across Our Justice System

### Pretrial and Probation Week

July 20-26 we celebrated Pretrial, Probation, and Parole Supervision Week by recognizing the dedicated team members who support public safety and guide individuals toward positive change. In Lee County, we marked the week with a team luncheon, a sweet treat bar, and a small gift of appreciation while Collier County celebrated with Cake!

Thank you to our Pretrial and Probation professionals for your hard work and commitment to the courts... and to our community!



### Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day serves as a global reminder to prioritize and support mental health for all. Our Lee County Criminal Division joined in by wearing green to show support for mental health awareness and for our Mental Health Courts. In addition to improving public safety, mental health courts offer treatment-focused alternatives that reduce costs and promote recovery.





## Alternative Dispute Resolution Week

Chief Justice Carlos G. Muñiz proclaimed October 12–18, 2025, as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Week in Florida.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) utilizes the services of volunteer mediators supplemented by staff for Small Claims disputes and contract certified mediators for Circuit Civil, County Civil, Family and Dependency mediations and Court Approved arbitrators for non-binding arbitrations ordered through the Courts ADR program.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all our mediators and mediation staff who play a vital role in helping our community resolve disputes efficiently and respectfully. Their commitment to effective and innovative solutions highlights the importance of ADR within our trial court system and strengthens access to justice for all.

## Digital Court Reporting Week

The week of October 13–17, 2025 we recognized our 20th Circuit Electronic Court Reporting (ECR) team for their essential role in maintaining an accurate record of court proceedings in each of our five counties.

From monitoring courtroom audio to managing recordings and playback requests, their work supports transparency and due process.

Lee, Collier, and Charlotte has a networked system that is monitored by DCRs from a control room in that county. Glades and Hendry are remotely monitored by DCRs in the Lee County office.

# CONGRATULATIONS TO...



## **MAGISTRATE NICOLE CAMERON**

Attorney Nicole Cameron was welcomed as our newest part-time General Magistrate in Hendry County in September.

She brings nearly two decades of legal experience to her new role. Her background includes work in family law both as a law clerk and through bankruptcy litigation. In Hendry County, she will hear Family Law matters and also serve as a Child Support Enforcement Hearing Officer as needed. Ms. Cameron received a B.S. degree from University of South Florida in 2004, and has been licensed for 18 years.

## **ELISA AVELLANA**

Congratulations to Elisa Avellana who was promoted to Court Interpreter Supervisor.

Elisa brings a strong background as a certified interpreter with the Administrative Office of the Courts and a proven record of service to our circuit. She also holds a Public Manager Certification and has a solid understanding of leadership principles that will support her success in this new role.



## **JOHN DOOLING**

Congratulations to John Dooling on his retirement! John retired January 5, 2026 after more than 11 years in the AOC's Finance and Accounting Department. Following a 34-year career in finance, he brought decades of experience to the AOC in what he described as a natural transition. He will miss his colleagues most and looks forward to traveling and spending quality time with his grandchildren in retirement.



## **JON EMBRY, AMY KINSEY, AND CHUCK RICE**

Congratulations to Charlotte County's Administrative Services Director Jon Embry for 25 years of service, to Lee County Criminal Division Director Amy Kinsey her 20 years of Service, and to Collier County's Administrative Services Director Chuck Rice for his 30 years of service to the Administrative Office of the Courts!

# CONGRATULATIONS TO...

Florida's newest attorney's sworn in by our Judges



## **SOPHIE MC FEE**

Circuit Judge Shannon McFee had the honor of swearing in his daughter, Sophie, as one of Florida's newest attorneys!

Sophie earned her Bachelor of Science in Public Health from the University of South Florida and graduated with her Juris Doctor from Stetson Law School.

Congratulations Sophie! What a proud day for both father and daughter!

## **JULIAN BURY**

Circuit Judge Trent Reichling had the privilege of swearing in Julian Bury as a new member of the Florida Bar. This milestone was especially meaningful since Julian was Judge Reichling's intern at the United States Attorney's Office in Fort Myers during the Summer of 2023.

After graduating from FIU College of Law, Julian is now beginning his legal career as an associate attorney at Hall Booth Smith, P.C.

Congratulations, Julian!



## **VANESSA MCNAIR**

Congratulations to Attorney Vanessa McNair! She was recently sworn into the Florida Bar by Circuit Judge Gil Perez!

This is a proud moment that reflects her hard work and passion for serving the community. We are excited to see the impact she will make as she begins her career in law.

## **CONNOR ALBINUS**

Judge Blake Adams had the privilege of administering the oath of admission to the Florida Bar to his former law student intern.

Connor Albinus. Connor graduated from Ave Maria School of Law in May and successfully passed the bar exam this summer. Also pictured is Judge Adams' Judicial Assistant, Julianne Romanelli, who joined in celebrating Connor's accomplishment.

We wish you all the best as you begin your career in law!



# In the Community



***Building understanding.  
Supporting our community.***



The Collier Coalition for Healthy Minds held another session of its Behavioral Health Primer for the Justice Professional at the Collier County Courthouse, a twice-a-year training helping justice professionals recognize and respond to behavioral health challenges.

This session brought together judges, a judicial assistant, a prosecutor, clerks, a private attorney, dependency professionals, and case managers for a full day of learning and connection. Together, they explored topics such as mental health disorders, trauma, resiliency, substance use disorders, and verbal de-escalation.



## ***Judge Stewart speaks to Rotary***

Circuit Judge James Stewart spoke at the Rotary Club of Naples, where he shared insights on the courts and the important role they play in our community.

Judges Deborah Cunningham and Amanda Levy-Reis were also in attendance to show their support and engage with community members.

## ***Connecting with the legal community***

Circuit Judges Amanda Levy-Reis and Kyle Cohen attended a Southwest Florida Federal Court Bar Association event in Naples.

The gathering brought together both current and former federal law clerks, lawyers, and members of the legal community to connect and share ideas. Both judges have connections to the Middle District of Florida through their prior service before taking the bench.



## ***Inn Season Kick-Off Event in Naples***

The Michael RN McDonnell Inn of Court kicked off its new season in Naples. Judges from across the Twentieth Circuit and County courts attended, including Judges Joe Foster, Chris Brown, Mike Brown, Amanda Levy-Reis, Rachael Loukonen, Deborah Cunningham, Shannon McFee, Javier Pacheco, and James Stewart. This year's board was officially sworn in by Judge Joe Foster, signaling the start of the 2025-2026 season.



## Celebrating agriculture in Collier County's community



Judges' Cunningham, Reichling, Levy-Reis, Adams, and McFee had a great time at the 68th Annual Farm City BBQ of Collier County, which celebrates the agricultural community in Collier County!

This annual pre-Thanksgiving tradition brings together farm families, local leaders, and the community to highlight agricultural innovation and the vital link between rural and urban partners.

Held during National Farm-City Week, it's a perfect reminder to appreciate the hands that grow our food and the land that sustains it.



### Judges hit the green

Judges Blake Adams, Amanda Levy Reis, Janeice Martin, and Tamara Nicola participated in the Collier County Bar Association's annual golf tournament at Bear's Paw Country Club in Naples.

This event included raffles, games and friendly competition in support of Fostering Success, a local organization that helps vulnerable children in our community.



### Honoring Judges and Leaders

Justice and appreciation took center stage at the Collier County Women's Bar Association Judicial Appreciation Luncheon on Friday, October 17, where the event honored our dedicated judges, magistrates and judicial assistants for their vital role in serving our community.

Attendees also heard from keynote speaker Melanie S. Griffin, Secretary of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, who shared insights on leadership, public service, and collaboration within the justice system.



### Judge Paluck speaks to Moot Court Board

Lee County Judge Tara Paluck recently visited Ave Maria School of Law to speak with the Moot Court Board offering students practical insight into preparation and the realities of courtroom practice.

This is a great opportunity for students to learn directly from members of the judiciary. Thank you to Judge Paluck for sharing her insight with these future lawyers!

### Annual 6<sup>th</sup> DCA Dinner held in Naples

Our judges traded their robes for tropical attire and joined the Collier County Bar Association for a festive evening in Naples! The annual 6th DCA Dinner was a night of recognition and a few island vibes.



A special highlight of the evening was welcoming the judicial panel from the 6th District Court of Appeal: The Honorable Roger Gannam, The Honorable Joshua Mize, and The Honorable Carrie Ann Wozniak. Judges from across the 20th Circuit (including Charlotte, Lee, and Collier Counties) came together to enjoy a fun night of connection and community!



### Judges saddle up for fun

Collier County Judge Blake Adams and 12th Judicial Circuit Judge Danielle Brewer enjoyed an evening of western-style fun at the Annual Collier County Bar Association Fall Rodeo at Mosaic Arena in Arcadia!

Judge Brewer, who previously served as a DeSoto County Judge before her appointment to the circuit bench, joined Judge Adams in the festivities that included a thrilling rodeo show!

# BUILDING SKILLS. STRENGTHENING SERVICE.



## Judicial Assistants attend Conference

Two of our Judicial Assistants, Julie Griner and Malisa Stineman, attended the Judicial Assistants Association of Florida Conference at the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando. The conference covered a wide range of topics, including ethics, legislative reforms, security issues, new laws, and more.

Judicial Assistants play a vital role in the court system, keeping operations running smoothly and supporting the judges who serve our communities.



## Treatment Court Team Building

Our Treatment Court teams from Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, and Lee recently took part in the 4th Annual Behavioral Health and Public Safety Summit in Tampa. The summit brought together statewide partners committed to improving responses to mental health and substance use challenges.

The event included meetings with fellow Treatment Court Teams, the Office of the Statewide Courts Administrator, and Judge Steve Leifman, who gave the keynote address.



## From Bar to Bench : Lessons Learned

Judge Loukonen, Judge Stewart, and Judge Levy-Reis joined the Collier County Bar Association for a lunchtime Trial Law panel at the Collier courthouse training room. The judges shared their insights on the "transition from bar to bench" and the lessons they wish they had known before taking the bench. The discussion, moderated by attorney Kelsey Hazzard, offered an inside look at the judicial journey and thoughtful reflections for members of the local bar.



## Meet the "Class of 67!"

Crisis Intervention Training equips first responders with tools to improve outcomes for people experiencing mental health crises. By completing 40 hours of Crisis Response and Intervention Training, these graduates are helping keep people with mental illness out of jail and connected to treatment and recovery.

Big congratulations to our Lee County Criminal Division graduates: Kathryn Long, Armelle Joseph, Sarah Debes, Frank Kanaski, Ivy Silva and Ronzell Evans.



## Judges advance Judicial Studies

Some of our judges attended the Florida College of Advanced Judicial Studies in Orlando. This annual program brings together judges from across the state to collaborate and explore prominent legal issues.

Lee County Judge Kimberly Boccelli was part of a team that taught sessions on Probate, Guardianship, the Baker Act and the Marchman Act.

The College offers continuing judicial education to Florida's trial and appellate judges, magistrates, and hearing officers in order to improve their skills and gain a better understanding of specialized areas of law.



## Celebrate Crisis Intervention Team 70!

We are proud to recognize the latest graduates of the Lee County Crisis Intervention Training program.

Congratulations to our Lee County Criminal Division graduates: Amy Kinsey, Ashlee Whitewood, Samuel "Andy" Abbott, Kate Martinez Grimaldo, Ana Eversull and Cayden Shelton.

# SHARED on *Socials*

## #SWFLCOURTS



Circuit Judge Trent Reichling was named Big Brother of the Year by Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Sun Coast! The Big Brother and Big Sister of the Year awards honor volunteers who go above and beyond to inspire and empower their Littles.

Judge Reichling has been involved in the organization since 2021.



36 2 1 2

Liked by nycourts and others  
swflcourts Circuit Judge Gil Perez received a touching surprise during a recent adoption hearing. The family presented him with a painting that captured their special moment together. It... more

Circuit Judge Gil Perez received a touching surprise during a recent adoption hearing. The family presented him with a painting that captured their special moment together.



Students from Bishop Verot Catholic High School spent the day at the courthouse for

an inside look at how the justice system works. Their visit began in Judge Bruce Kyle's courtroom with a mini mock trial and a thoughtful Q&A session. Judge Nick

Thompson also stopped by, giving students the chance to learn from two of our felony judges in Lee County! They then observed closing arguments in Judge Robert Branning's courtroom before touring the clerk's office to see how court operations all come together.

# Welcome **NEW HIRES**



**JOIN OUR  
TEAM**

Interested in working with us?

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/cjis20fl>

**JOSE ABELLA**  
Security  
Representative

**JENNIFER  
BANISTER**  
Pretrial Secretary

**KYLA BARRY**  
Accounts Payable

**KASI BEAUCHAMP**  
Probation  
Secretary

**JENNIFER BURNS**  
Security  
Representative

**CATHERINE  
COTHRAN**  
Judicial Assistant

**ANA PIMENTA**  
Security  
Representative

**SANDRA POSEY**  
Court Interpreter

**KATHERINE SHARP**  
Judicial Assistant

**CHARLES  
VERSCHAEVE**  
Security  
Representative

**FELICIA WATTS**  
Senior Probation  
Officer

**LAURA YUMAR**  
Digital Court  
Reporter

**CATHLEEN  
COURTER**  
CJIS Project  
Manager

**YOLANDA  
GONZALEZ REYES**  
Program Specialist

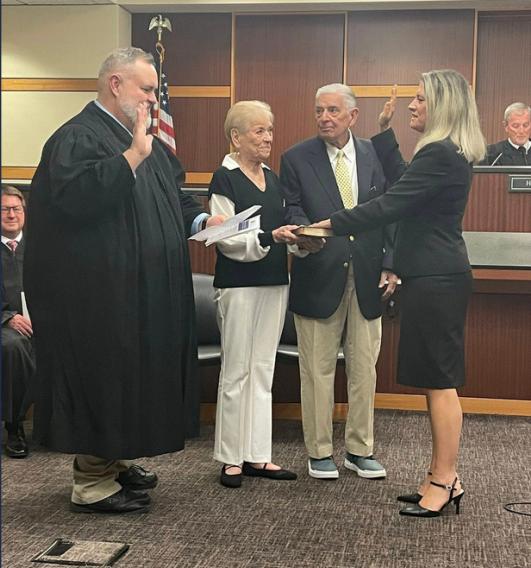
**ALEXANDRA  
GUNNARD**  
Digital Court  
Reporter

**LINDSAY HALL**  
Court Program  
Specialist

**THOMAS HUMANN**  
Probation Officer

**REBECCA HUTTON**  
Court Program  
Specialist

# 2025 Recap



# THE CIRCUIT TIMES



Official Newsletter of the 20th Judicial Circuit of Florida



**Have a great photo or a  
story you'd like to share?**

We would love to feature it in  
our newsletter or on social  
media. Please email Sara  
Miles at [smiles@ca.cjis20.org](mailto:smiles@ca.cjis20.org)



**TWENTIETH  
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
OF FLORIDA**

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**Chief Judge**  
J. Frank Porter

**Trial Court  
Administrator**  
Scott Wilsker

**Chief Deputy Court  
Administrator**  
Liza King

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Judge Gil Perez  
Judge Deb Cunningham  
Judge Blake Adams  
Alexandra Grover  
Julianne Romanelli