



THE CIRCUIT TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Fall 2012

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Dependency Court Judge Retires After 27 Years of Service

The Twentieth Judicial Circuit judges and employees, Department of Children and Families (DCF) staff, family and friends gathered on August 24, 2012 at a retirement ceremony in honor of Judge James H. Seals. Judge Seals served the Twentieth Circuit for 27 years, as both a county and circuit judge. During that tenure he had various division assignments, but none he favored more than the Family Division's Dependency Court.

Judge Seals presided over dependency cases for fifteen years. In that time every person who came before him was treated with respect and dignity and every situation was handled with fairness and an optimism that lives could be changed for the better. He once said that he had a passion for helping these families and that being part of the equation was something for which he was destined.



Hon. James H. Seals



Judge James H. Seals receives award for his many years of service from Chief Judge Rosman.

Off the bench Judge Seals put in countless hours working to improve the dependency system through his professional affiliations and board memberships. He, along with Judges Krier and Schreiber and at the direction of the Florida Supreme Court, established the Twentieth Circuit's Model Court Steering Committee for Dependency Court. This committee is charged with identifying best practices for Dependency Courts to ensure children's physical safety, stability and permanency. Additionally, he co-founded the Florida Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the PACE Center for Girls in Lee County.

"...His goal was to engage the media to facilitate an understanding of the law as-it-relates to dependency cases."

Ever eager to de-mystify the dependency court system, Judge Seals developed a media handbook for dependency court and contributed to many articles on dependency and the law. His goal was to engage the media to facilitate an understanding of the law as-it-relates to dependency cases.

Judge Seals received many awards in recognition of his efforts, to include: DCF *William E. Gladstone Award*; Lee County Bar Association's *Liberty Bell Award*; Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office *Community Advocate of the Year Award*; the *Lee County Association of Women Lawyers Appreciation Award* and the PACE Center for Girls *Honoring the Female Spirit Award*.

Judge Lee Schreiber now presides over the dependency docket in Lee County.



Judge Elizabeth Krier was a guest speaker at Judge Seals' retirement ceremony.

International Translator Day

by Julio C. Fernandez, Court Interpreter

The International Translation Day, as it is officially called and celebrated the world over, is recognized on September 30th. The day was first set aside in 1953 to acknowledge the importance of translators and interpreters in our increasingly global society. People of varying nationalities come to the United States for a visit or establish residency and they need help understanding the English language in everything from road signs to emergency room nurses to yes, judges and attorneys in a courtroom.

Each year thousands of court cases across the country, at County, State and Federal levels, require language interpreters or assistance for individuals with hearing loss. The ability to communicate effectively in court is a basic right of all persons in our country; thus the goal of court interpreting is to place those who use interpreter services on equal footing with those that speak the English language.

"Translation is not a matter of words alone, it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture"

~Anthony Burgess

In Florida, a survey by the American Community Survey in 2007, revealed that four million Floridians speak a language other than English at home. Thus the role of skilled court interpreters is crucial. The fact of the matter is that not everyone that speaks another language can serve as an interpreter. Interpretation is a skill, possessed by some men and women who speak or sign in more than one language, who take the time to learn glossaries, legal terminology, familiarize themselves with other cultures, and pass language and ethics tests in order to come to court and listen, quickly translate in their minds, and then articulate that translated word or phrase out loud within seconds after hearing it. They must speak it accurately, "without distortion of meaning; without omissions; without additions; without any changes in style or register (*language level*); and with minimal delay or interference in the routine pace of court proceedings." (Florida Benchguide, 2012)

The question is, should this not-so-well-known international day be celebrated in our country? The answer is: Yes, of course!

It is important to draw attention to those language practitioners who often remain invisible yet whose work makes a huge contribution to communications, and interactions, and the administration of justice in our society.

Encourage everyone involved in the Florida Court System, and especially in the 20th Judicial Circuit, to thank interpreters and colleagues for the impact of their work.

Court Staff on Course to Certification

In August 2012, ten staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts, participated in the first of eight training levels of the Florida Certified Public Manager program (CPM). CPM is a nationally recognized program designed to develop leadership and management skills, improve operational efficiency; and, improve a manager's understanding of large systems, complex organizations and policy development.

The course, which consists of 32 days of classroom study, extends over a two year period. The eight levels are divided into 4 days of instruction every 2-3 months, with testing and homework during the non-class periods. Upon successful completion participants will become Certified Public Managers.

Participants in the program are: Nichoel Forrett, Dawn Whittington, Doug Jaye, Lisa Harder, Nancy Aloia, Sheila Mann, Craig McLean, Paul Ackerman, Rebecca Lade and Elizabeth Khin.



Probation Officer Receives Statewide Recognition

by Jeff Nichols, Deputy Criminal Division Director, Lee County



Each year the Florida Association of Community Corrections (FACC) selects one probation officer from around the state to receive its "Line Officer of the Year" award and once again the 20th had one of its own honored.

Maria Elena Wendel, a Lee County Probation Officer, became the second officer in the 20th Circuit in three years to be recognized by the FACC for excelling in the field. She was presented with her award at the Annual Training Institute on August 8, 2012. Nominees do not have to be a member of FACC and anyone can make a nomination. Ultimately, it is the FACC's Past Presidents who select the recipient.

Officer Wendel began her career in the Collier County Probation Department as a part-time secretary. A mother of two young children she was trying to work her way into a professional career. Maria's attention to detail resulted in a quick transition to full-time employment, followed by a promotion two years later to Clerical Supervisor.

After proving herself as a dedicated employee, Maria was promoted to the position of Probation Officer in the spring of 1998. It was evident to everyone around her that Maria had truly found her calling. She quickly became skilled in defendant interview techniques and had no hesitation when it came to visiting her clients in the field, unarmed and unaccompanied, as was the practice at the time. This is quite impressive considering she would eventually go on to supervise a mostly male domestic violence caseload; most of whom clearly resisted being reeled in by a female Probation Officer.

Over the next few years, Officer Wendel set the standard at Collier County Probation. She gained the respect of co-workers and the judiciary. Outside the courthouse, Maria again showed initiative by being the first and primary Officer in the department to coordinate her field visits with the Collier County Sheriff's Office. CCSO's Selective Enforcement Team grabbed many headlines at the time by skillfully combining intelligence gathering, confidential informants and utilization of Probation Officers. Maria was at her happiest when she was assisting her brethren in Law Enforcement.

Early in 2008, Maria took a huge leap of faith by transferring out of Collier County to become the first of three Officers to be hired for Lee County Probation's newly formed Drug Offender Unit. She immediately assumed the lead role by bringing an aggressive

approach to field work and eagerness to forge relationships with not only Law Enforcement, but the treatment and shelter community as well.

The Twentieth is fortunate to have a dedicated officer like Ms. Wendel.

Mock Trial Enhances Civics Education for Area Students

Seventh grade students from Fort Myers Middle Academy took the school bus to the Lee County Justice Center on the morning of September 20, 2012 to attend the trial of an 18 year old thief who skipped school to wander the mall and ultimately steal an iPod.

As the 135 students gathered in courtroom 5A they drew numbers; once settled, the clerk called numbers randomly to seat a 20 member jury. In addition, one volunteer was selected to act as the court clerk. Other members of the trial cast were: Marie Doerr, Assistant State Attorney; Jay Brizel, private attorney for the defendant; Cameron Siggs, also an Assistant State Attorney, played the defendant. The bailiff Phil Robilotto played himself; bailiff Tyrone Wade played the arresting officer; and Henrique Rosario (Pretrial Services), was the "Loss Prevention Officer" who apprehended the thief.

The trial was set to begin at 9am. However, the defendant was not present. Judge Hayes was in the process of issuing a bench warrant when the defendant rambled into the courtroom. Mr. Siggs (*at right with counsel*) was admonished for arriving late and his inappropriate dress, that included bedroom slippers.



The State put on a solid case. The Defense worked hard to make the State prove its case. In the end it didn't matter how hard the defense worked, the defendant hurt himself the most when he decided to

testify on his own behalf. Bad move. It gave ASA Doerr the opportunity to skillfully obtain a confession from the teen: He admitted that he took the iPod because he wanted it, and that he had no money to pay for it.

The jury didn't take much time to deliver a

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ASA Marie Doerr addresses the "jury" of twenty students.

Senator Rubio Staffer Observes Drug Court *by Sherry Munroe, Criminal Division Director,*

Regional Director from Senator Marco Rubio's office, Zack Zampella, visited the Charlotte County Drug Court on October 12, 2012, as part of the National Association of Drug Court professionals Take Action initiative.



From left to right: Angela Jones, Specialty Court Coordinator; Sherry Munroe, Criminal Division Mgr; Zack Zampella, Regional Director for Senator Rubio; Judge John Burns; Kerry Fichthorn, Court Svcs Clinical Screener, Charlotte Behavioral Health Care; and, Dave Thompson, Court Svcs. Mgr, Charlotte Behavioral Health Care.

Before Drug Court proceedings began, Mr. Zampella sat with the team and listened as team members explained their roles.



Zack Zampella with Drug Court Judge, John Burns.

Charlotte County Drug Court Judge John Burns explained the program to Mr. Zampella who asked the judge several questions about the inner workings of the court.

The team then moved to the Court Hearings. At the end, Judge Burns asked if any of the participants had anything they wanted to say to the Court's visitor and a few shared their heartfelt stories of what the

process has meant to them and their families. One family member also spoke about how he had "lost his daughter and now had her back". It was hard to find a dry eye in the courtroom. In return, Mr. Zampella addressed the participants and praised them for their accomplishments. Drug Courts do have a powerful impact on our communities.



Trial Court Administrator Moves On To Federal Court System

On July 20, 2012 judges and court staff gathered to say good-bye to Rick Callanan, Trial Court Administrator (TCA) for the 20th Judicial Circuit. Mr. Callanan began his career with the 20th in 2004 as the Chief Deputy Trial Court Administrator and later in 2007 as the TCA.

Mr. Callanan brought many "cutting edge" ideas to the circuit, including Differentiated Case Management for the criminal, civil and family divisions; along with Judge Cary, he introduced the Circuit Budget Committee (CBC); facilitated the Master Technology Plan with the National Center for State Courts to evaluate CJIS within the court system to eliminate redundancies; and collaborated with the Lee County Sheriff's Department to implement the Active Warrant Alert Calendaring System, to name a few.

Scott Wilsker, Lee County Criminal Division Director has been hired to fill this position.

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guilty verdict and the Judge sentenced Mr. Siggs to 60 days in jail.

Following the trial students talked about what they learned and walked away with an understanding of how the court system works.

Judge Hayes, who orchestrated the mock trial commented "It's important that students learn about our system of justice; perhaps be inspired by it, giving them the desire to become attorneys, judges or bailiffs; perhaps to establish a healthy fear so-as-to encourage wise choices as they get older. The students really enjoyed the trial and took away some very important points. It's a great way to drive home a civics lesson!"



"Loss Prevention Officer" Rosario testifies before Judge Hayes.

The Human Resource FYI

OPEN ENROLLMENT

- **State Employees** 2013 open enrollment ends November 2, 2012. Please make sure that if you have changes that need to be made you do so before the enrollment period ends.
- **Lee County Employees** 2013 open enrollment begins on November 5, 2012 and ends on November 19, 2012. The Human Resources department will be sending out notifications via email.
- **Lee County** is now able to provide W-2 statements in two formats, electronic or paper. Emails went out that provided a link that enabled staff to make their selection. If you did not receive it or deleted it accidentally please contact HR immediately.

Electronic W-2 forms will be available for printing immediately after the final payroll calculations are completed, 1/9/13.

or

Paper W-2 forms will be mailed to your current home address. Once payroll calculations are completed the forms will be prepared for postal delivery and will be mailed to you on 1/31/13.

As always, if you have any questions please contact Shannon Redden in HR at 533-1708.

EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR SERIES

A free Educational Webcast Series is being offered by Lee County Training and Development in conjunction with Compysch, an EAP Guidance Resource that provides information for work-life and personal issues. This is a series of 7 webinars. They are as follows:

October 30	<i>Effective Communication</i>
November 8	<i>Letting Go of the Things That Hold You Back</i>
November 13	<i>Five Pillars of Personal Finance</i>
November 15	<i>Building Trust</i>
November 29	<i>Initiating Difficult Conversation</i>
December 4	<i>Using Reason to Resolve Conflict</i>
December 6	<i>How to Deal with a Difficult Person</i>

If you have questions regarding these webinars, please contact Marion Osborne at 533-2004 or mosborne@leegov.com

Looking Ahead...

Investiture of Judge Amy Hawthorne on November 16, 2012. Remember to *Save the Date!*

Judges Baker and Simpson will be leaving us in December.

A message from our new Trial Court Administrator.

Circuit Times Newsletter

*Chief Judge
Jay B. Rosman*

*Trial Court Administrator
Scott A. Wilsker*

*Chief Deputy Court Administrator
Lisa Kiesel*

*Editor
Sheila Mann*

*Photographer
Carrie Chalker-Smith*

Contributors

*Jeff Nichols, Dep. Criminal Division Director,
Lee County*

Julio Fernandez, Staff Court Interpreter

*Sherry Munroe, Criminal Division Director,
Charlotte County*