

JUDICIARY TIMES

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Laughter, Smiles Fill Courts on Adoption Day



Honora O'Brien Kilgallen, presiding family division judge in Monmouth Vicinage, addresses the audience during the Adoption Day celebration in Freehold. A total of 17 children were adopted by 16 families.

Editors Note: The following stories detail various Adoption Day events across New Jersey. The events brought judges, attorneys, adoption professionals and child advocates together to create families.

Atlantic/Cape May

Judge Kyran Connor, who sits in Cape May County, usually schedules adoption proceedings as they become ready so that the wait for children to be placed in a permanent home is minimal.

On Dec. 17, Connor finalized six adoptions involving 11 children at the Cape May County Courthouse.

Of the six adoptions, three involved siblings who were being adopted by the same family. One child remembered the first time he was removed from his biological family, exactly seven years to the day earlier.

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Connor presided over 42 adoptions in 2009, 35 of which involved children who had been in foster care.

Burlington

There were smiles, giggles and much laughter inside courtrooms during the Burlington Vicinage's celebration of National Adoption Day on Nov. 20.

A total of 18 adoptions were finalized by Assignment Judge Ronald E. Bookbinder, Judge Susan L. Claypoole, who presides over Children-in-Court cases, and John L. Call Jr., presiding family division judge, during Burlington's third annual event.

New parents delighted over their new families as they began a new chapter in their lives.

"Today we recognize adoptive and foster parents who have shown us the depth and kindness of the human heart," Bookbinder said. "You have chosen one of life's highest callings, that of parenthood."

Many individuals and agencies were involved in finding homes for the children, bringing together judges, attorneys, agencies, court and adoption specialists and child advocates who are dedicated to creating permanent homes for foster children.

The celebration highlighted a partnership between the Judiciary, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, and the Burlington County Surrogate's Office.

The celebration continued at a luncheon in honor of the new families at Burlington County College. Many activi-

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Judiciary to Host Conference on Racial and Ethnic Fairness

By Yolande P. Marlow and Lisa R. Burke

Minority Concerns Unit
Administrative Office of the Courts

The New Jersey Judiciary will host the 22nd conference and annual meeting of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness from April 28 to May 1 in New Brunswick.

The conference, "Transformative Tools for Delivering Justice in the 21st Century," is expected to draw participants

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New Families and New Hope Mark Adoption Day Ceremonies

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ties were arranged for the children, including a Dr. Seuss reading corner, face painting, craft projects, and family photographs for their life books.

Each adoptee was presented with a special gift basket at the conclusion of the day's events.

Monmouth

The fourth annual Monmouth Vicinage Adoption Day program on Nov. 19 was a joyous celebration that concluded with the adoption of 17 children by 16 families.

Judge Honora O'Brien Kilgallen, presiding judge of the family division, led the celebration. She informed more than 100 family members, well-wishers and volunteers that there were 206 adoptions in the Monmouth County courts last year, with 76 of them made through the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services.

Denise Gratzel, whose 16-year-old daughter sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," told the audience that the personalities of each of her seven children deepen the affection shared by their extended family and faith community.

The children range in age from 11 to 19, and some have special needs.

Margaret Gannon, an adoptive mother of seven children who is a resource family advocate with Foster and Adoptive Family Services, spoke about the memorable firsts that parents experience, such as the first school day, the first field trip, and the first call from a teacher.

"This is just the beginning of a wonderful journey that will last a lifetime," Gannon said.

After the program, parents and children eagerly anticipated their turns for the official adoption proceedings. Families were photographed by three previously adopted volunteers and were presented with framed photographs as mementos of the special day.

With each passing year, this event grows more meaningful to our vicinage," Assignment Judge Lawrence M. Lawson said. "It signifies our role in transforming the lives of children and families, while giving us the privilege of sharing their joy. As a result, our

commitment to promoting and heightening awareness of adoption grows even stronger."

Passaic

Passaic Vicinage celebrated National Adoption Day on Nov. 20, with an event for adoptive families that included a magician, a balloon maker, gifts and refreshments.

Assignment Judge Donald J. Volkert Jr., Michael K. Diamond, presiding judge of the family division, and Trial Court Administrator Kirk Nixon spoke to the adoptive families. A proclamation in honor of National Adoption Day also was read.

"Adoptions are filled with joy for everyone in the courtroom. This will be a great day to celebrate with the families, their loved ones and all those who helped make the adoptions possible," Volkert said.

A National Adoption Day fair was open all day. Representatives from the family division, the local office of the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), the state office of DYFS Adoption Recruiters, Family Intervention Services and the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

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Claudia Astore; Sharon Astorino; Lisa R. Burke; Frank Carr; Thomas Dibble; Terry Grabert; Sharon Kinney; Yolande P. Marlow; Donna L. Mazzanti; Bernadette Myers; Sandee Nole; Janet Slocum; June Zieder and the AOC Print Shop.



Melinda Pennacchi, an employee of the state Division of Youth and Family Services, dons a Cat in the Hat costume as she reads a Dr. Seuss book to Aniyah Marrero, one of 18 children who was adopted during Burlington Vicinage's Adoption Day festivities.

Judiciary Training Staff Play Major Role in Regional Conference

New Jersey's strong presence helped MAACM gathering in Baltimore successful

By Frank Carr

Training Coordinator
Burlington Vicinage

The Judiciary was instrumental in the success of the Mid-Atlantic Association for Court Management (MAACM) annual conference held in Baltimore in October.

New Jersey had the second largest contingent of managers in attendance, behind the host state. Judiciary managers from Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York and Virginia and Washington, D.C. also attended the conference.

On the first day of the conference, Guiseppe "Joe" Fazari and Tom Dibble of Essex Vicinage presented a session on "The Greening of the Court." Caroline Ilogienboh of Essex Vicinage spoke about "Trends in Probation Supervision."

Each of these workshops was accepted for credit hours in the Michigan State University Judicial Education Certification program.

Michael King of Ocean Vicinage prepared court leaders in his program, "Managing the Training and Development of Your Staff," a topic that is a necessary process in these difficult times.

On the second day, Howard Berchtold and Ellen Procida of Atlantic/Cape May vicinage provided an engaging program on "Organizational Alignment: Doing it Right!" Larry Haines of the Administrative Office of the Courts' Organizational Development and Training Unit facilitated an experiential workshop on "Team Dynamics."

"Difficult Conversations" and "A Complaint Free Workplace" were topics of sessions taught by Frank Carr of Burlington Vicinage.

Many of the presenters are Judiciary Education and Training Council (JETCO) members who work at providing the best in professional development opportunities throughout New Jersey.

Paul Kuntz, co-chair of the PDC, recognized the contribution of New Jersey trainers for the success of MAACM



Members of the Judiciary's contingent to the MAACM conference in Baltimore relax after training court managers. They are (from left) Kim Casamassina, Passaic; Sonia Valentin, Passaic; Andrey Rigsbee, Camden; Frank Carr, Burlington; Sandee Nole, Passaic; and Ed Ruiz and Larry Haines of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

educational programs.

Conference Committee Chair Donna Mazzanti of Burlington Vicinage worked closely with the host hotel to ensure that all facility-related logistics ran smoothly. She also led the committee's planning and delivery of all the social events.

Carr, co-chair of the Professional

Development Committee (PDC), was instrumental in the development of the conference educational program. Many New Jersey trainers gave their time to help educate and train court staff from around the Mid-Atlantic region.

New Jersey Judiciary Will Host National Conference on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts

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from more than 30 states, the District of Columbia, and the tribal courts.

The program will highlight innovative court programs and practices from across the country. Breakout sessions will emphasize how court systems chart progress as efforts to advance access to justice continue to take place through the revision of existing practices and the development of new models, methods, and means of service delivery in this technologically-defined era.

The conference theme will be addressed through a broad range of topics across eight interrelated tracks: minority participation in the judicial process; minority access to the courts; juvenile justice, child welfare, and the family; criminal justice and the minority defendant; education, outreach, and court-community partnerships;

administration and programming; theory, research, and policymaking; and the use of technology as a vehicle for advancing access to justice.

The audience is expected to include representatives from the Conference of Chief Justices; the Conference of State Court Administrators; the American Judges Association; the New Jersey State Bar Association; the American Bar Association and the New Jersey chapters of specialty bar associations such as the Garden State and Hispanic Bar Associations.

Federal judges, state justices and judges; court administrators, court managers and judiciary staff, education and social service professionals, and college, university, and law school students also are expected to be in attendance.

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Judiciary Saves Money, Paper By Moving Check Inserts to Web

By **Mike Mathis**

Judiciary Times Editor

The Judiciary is saving green by going green...and those outside the Judiciary are taking notice.

The Judiciary's cost saving initiative to eliminate the distribution of biweekly check inserts and place the information on its intranet site has resulted in a 10 percent decrease in the number of check inserts needed for distribution with state paychecks.

Information disseminated through inserts that is now posted online includes announcements about benefits and other employment-related information.

"It is our hope that other departments will introduce this initiative into their own departments, resulting in

further costs savings in printing and distribution costs for the state," Eileen F. Gittins, a payroll manager for the state Treasury Department, said in a Nov. 6, 2009 letter to Stephanie Zepka, chief of the Payroll and Benefits Unit at the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The Treasury Department was scheduled to implement the initiative on Jan. 1, saving another 9,000 inserts. A similar initiative was under consideration in the state Department of Children and Families, according to the letter.

Moving payroll inserts from hardcopy to electronic form is another example of the Judiciary's efforts to reduce its environmental footprint and save money.

"Pay Stub on the Web" enables judges and employees who have direct deposit

to access their paystub information via a secure Internet connection.

More than 2,000 of the Judiciary's 9,530 employees use "Pay Stub on the Web," while more than 8,300 Judiciary employees have direct deposit.

"It's great to be recognized as a leader in the state's effort to go green," said Shelley Webster, director of the Office of Management and Administrative Services at the Administrative Office of the Courts.

"The Judiciary has always been enthusiastic about adopting cost-saving initiatives, and this idea saves money and conserves natural resources," Webster said. "We appreciate Judge (Glenn A.) Grant's vision and Stephanie Zepka's persistent efforts in this endeavor."

Expungement Seminar Held in Passaic Vicinage

By **June Zieder**

Ombudsman
Passaic Vicinage

The Passaic Vicinage Minority Concerns Committee presented an expungement seminar on Dec. 1 at the Canaan Baptist Church in Paterson.

Presenters offered information on the expungement process, including who is eligible for expungements, the time requirement, what happens at an expungement hearing and where to obtain the paperwork necessary to expunge a record.

Among the participants were Judge Miguel de la Carrera, who also serves as chair of the Minority Concerns Committee; Marie Faber, criminal division manager, Kathryn Pierce, assistant criminal division manager; Maira Barriero, a Judiciary clerk in the criminal division and William Marotta, a member of the Passaic County Bar Association.

Questions and comments from the audience ranged from how long it takes for a case to be expunged to the frustration faced when certain offenses cannot be expunged.

The Passaic Vicinage Minority Con-

cerns Committee is comprised of Superior Court employees, members of local businesses, schools, community leaders and residents of Passaic County.

Its primary concern is to inform the public on the judicial system and to develop educational programs to better serve Passaic County residents.



The family division case processing team in Ocean Vicinage carved this pumpkin to mark the "death" of the old Automated Child Support Enforcement System (ACSES) as part of the vicinage's first harvest festival and pumpkin contest. Ocean was the first county in the state to pilot the new NJKiDS (New Jersey Kids Deserve Support) system.

New Jersey Courthouses Host Adoption Day

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program were among the participants.

National Adoption Day was coordinated with the Passaic County Freeholders Office, the Passaic County Surrogates Office, DYFS and CASA. There are more than 70 children waiting to be adopted in Passaic County.

Claudia Astore, Donna L. Mazzanti, Bernadette Myers and June Zieder contributed to this story.

Editor's Note

The deadline for the spring 2010 edition of the *Judiciary Times* is Friday, March 19.

I am interested in feature stories about court programs and newsworthy profiles about judges and court staff.

I am also interested in current stories and information about court staff and events and submissions of awards, honors, promotions and appointments for JT Briefing, the Judiciary's monthly e-newsletter.

Camden Vicinage Drug Court Gives Back to the Community

By Terry Grabert
Court Services Supervisor
Probation Division
Camden Vicinage

The Camden County adult Drug Court team is keeping its clients busy with new initiatives to aid in their recovery. Drug Court requires that participants attend the 12-step program throughout their probation.

The foundation of this program is to practice the 12 guiding principals outlining a course of action for recovery, including helping others who suffer from addiction.

Drug Court participants have begun to satisfy these principals by helping others in several special ways.

The men and women in Drug Court have been asked to write essays about their recovery and the devastating effects of their long-term drug use that led to their arrest and subsequent sentence to Drug Court supervision. These essays are heart-wrenching narratives detailing homelessness, family break-ups, job loss, physical abuse and physical decline.

The essays are forwarded to a local high school where a parent group, Save A Friend, uses them with students to reinforce the devastating dangers of drug use.

The Drug Court staff also has started a book drive with its clientele, seeking paperback books and magazines that will be given to the Camden County Correctional Facility to help build its library. Probation division and other Judiciary staff have made contributions as well.

In an effort to assist juveniles on probation complete their community service, probationers from the adult Drug Court unit have been asked to speak to the juveniles about their painful and life-damaging drug use experiences. The session includes their stories about where drugs led them in their lives, their struggles and what they lost as a result of their addiction.

The question and answer period following the presentations has been surprisingly interactive and sometimes emotional. Probation officers are on hand to monitor the sessions. The juveniles are required to submit an

essay about the presentations and what they learned.

For those on probation who are enrolled in Drug Court, giving back to the community is an important part of their recovery. Selfless service to others is an essential component in the process.

A commitment to community restoration and a promise to “give back” are the building blocks of a new life.

Passaic Vicinage Holds Customer Service Week

Passaic Vicinage celebrated Customer Service Week during the week of Oct. 19.

The celebration included a several events to inform the public about Passaic Vicinage’s commitment to quality customer service.

The theme for this year’s Customer Service Week was “Come Help Us Celebrate You.” Events included court tours, seminars on how to locate information on the Judiciary’s Web site, njcourts.com, and where to find information in the court complex.

An information table was set up at the Willowbrook Mall in Wayne on Oct. 23.

Seminars on navigating njcourts.com and the New Jersey Child Support Web sites will be presented at local libraries.

Customer Service Week was sponsored by the vicinage’s Customer Service Committee. The committee was developed to ensure quality customer service in Passaic Vicinage courthouse complex and in the municipal courts.



Chris Tete, Nephtali Rodriguez and Joseph Gresko of the Administrative Office of the Courts Print Shop stand behind food that was donated by Judiciary and Law and Public Safety staff at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton during the holiday season. Tete, Rodriguez and Gresko collected the food and prepared it for delivery to the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank in Trenton.

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 njcourts.com and look for the icons under “Here’s the Latest” on the right side.

Passaic Honors Staff for Service to the Judiciary, Community

By Sharon Kinney
EEO/AA Officer
Passaic Vicinage

Passaic Vicinage held its annual awards ceremony on Nov. 13. For the second time, the PASSAIC Award ceremony was combined with achievement awards presented to the divisions.

Special recognition awards also were presented to those outside of the Judiciary who are critical to the operations of Judiciary programs and activities. PASSAIC Award winners are nominated by their supervisors, managers or co-workers for customer service excellence, meritorious performance, outstanding professional achievement, and/or exceptional service to the courts.

Recipients this year were Administrative Specialist 4 Diana Bodeen and Judiciary Clerk 3 Greis Tadeo from the family division; Investigator Helene Atkinson from the probation division; Court Services Supervisor 2 Denice McNamee from the operations division

and the interdivisional Remand Court Team consisting of Administrative Specialist 4 Nicole Greten and Administrative Specialist 2 Maria La Micela from the municipal division.

Also honored were Court Director Manny Quiles and Court Administrator Gloria Schweitzer from Paterson Municipal Court and Court Services Supervisor 2 Donna Hoffman and Judiciary Clerk 4 Delia De Pasquale from the criminal division.

The PASSAIC Award employee recognition program has been in existence since 2006. A total of 24 individuals and three groups have been recognized to date.

Members of the vicinage Labor/Management Committee select the recipients from nomination it receives. It recommends top candidates to the trial court administrator and assignment judge for approval.

Achievement awards were handed out for the third year to court and administrative divisions by Assignment Judge

Donald J. Volkert Jr. and Trial Court Administrator Kirk L. Nixon. The divisions received awards for exemplary performance in support of yearly established goals.

The family division was recognized for its NJKiDS implementation project. The probation division was honored for the creation of central reporting stations for probationers.

The civil division and jury management in the operations division were cited for attaining the rank of first in the state in various categories measured in their area of responsibility.

For the first time, special recognition awards were given this year to Passaic County Sheriff's Officer Brian Tricoli and Paterson Museum Director Giacomo "Jack" De Stefano for their efforts in the Great Falls juror visitation program. Ombudsman June Zieder presented the awards.

A coffee and dessert reception followed the ceremony.

Educational Opportunities for Monmouth Vicinage Staff Discussed

By Sharon Astorino
Administrative Specialist 4
Monmouth Vicinage

Over the next few months, the Monmouth Vicinage EEO / AA Advisory Committee will broaden the vicinage training initiative by hosting a number of "brown bag" events.

Committee chair Thomas F. Scully, presiding judge of the criminal division, describes these sessions as "a valuable tool to promote fairness in the workplace and maintain focus on employees' key issues of concern."

The most recent event was the college/continuing education program, which was held Nov. 13. It gave employees a chance to discover educational opportunities offered by more than 11 area colleges and universities.

School representatives presented information about online and conven-



Several members of the Monmouth Vicinage EEO/AA Committee gathered with school representatives after the College/Continuing Education Program in November.

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Korean Judges Visit Essex, Tour Courthouse and View Proceedings

By Thomas Dibble
Operations Division
Essex Vicinage

The National Center for State Courts, International Visitors Education Program organized study tours for 25 Republic of South Korea court delegations this fall.

Each delegation visited two courts, so 50 locations nationwide hosted the delegations.

The Korean court officials traveled to courts in the north, east, west and south, including the Essex and Atlantic/Cape May vicinages in New Jersey.

The Supreme Court of the Republic of South Korea is in the midst of vigorous judicial reforms to promote greater

use of oral arguments during trials and other techniques. Korea recently adopted a jury system. As of now, trial procedures rely heavily on written affidavits.

The delegation that visited Essex for 1 1/2 days at the end of October consisted of five judges and three court managers from the Busan District Court and the Jangheung Branch Court. The program was organized and hosted by Brenda Carmichael, team leader, civil division.

A freelance Korean interpreter was lined up by Harvey Martinez, supervisor of interpreters. Several staff, managers and judges participated in the programs in the criminal division, jury management and the civil division.

The visit was capped off with an orientation to the office of the ombudsman and a court tour conducted by Judge John C. Kennedy and Judge Donald S. Goldman.

The tour concluded with lunch in the cafeteria. Goldman used that opportunity to answer questions. He later said that it was a special honor to give a tour of the Essex County Courthouse to distinguished visitors from the Republic of South Korea on his last day as a judge.

Feedback from the group conveyed by the National Center for State Courts was totally positive.

They felt very welcome in our court and reported that they gained some valuable insights to take back to Korea.

Monmouth Vicinage Hosts Colleges and Universities

Continued from page 6

tional degree programs and reviewed financial aid resources. They also met with participants to discuss options tailored to their individual needs.

Employees were encouraged to recognize that it is never too late to continue one's education and that learning is a lifelong adventure.

Feedback from employees was extremely positive. One individual submitted a written statement thanking the committee for organizing the program.

"The information provided by the

speakers was very helpful," one participant wrote. "I have already spoken to one of them and I am on my way to advancing my education!"

The mission of the EEO/AA committee is to promote fairness, harmony and cultural awareness through information and education.

The committee is planning additional training sessions to include topics such as promoting a healthy lifestyle, eliminating stress during difficult economic times and ongoing career development.

Judiciary to Host National Conference on Race

Continued from page 3

The New Jersey Judiciary, one of the four founding members of the consortium, hosted the conference in 1990 and 2000. Hosting this important national event provides the New Jersey Judiciary with a valuable opportunity to participate in the professional development and networking opportunities that the conference offers.

The conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency. For more information, visit www.consortiumonline.net/annualmeeting.html or contact the Minority Concerns Unit at the Administrative Office of the Courts at (609) 292-8967.



Supreme Associate Justice Roberto Rivera-Soto (second from left) was the keynote speaker at Bergen Vicinage's Hispanic Heritage Month Educational Symposium in October. Pictured with Rivera-Soto are (from left) Bergen Trial Court Administrator Jon Goodman, Judge Lisa Perez Friscia, who sits in the family division, and Bergen Assignment Judge Peter E. Doyne.

Did You Know?

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

"The Trial of the Century" generated massive media attention. Among the notable participants were H. Norman Schwarzkopf, organizer and first commander of the New Jersey State Police and the father of H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., commander of coalition forces in the first Gulf War, and Attorney General David T. Wilentz, father of Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz.

Judiciary Staff Members Graduate from Management Program

By Sandee Nole

Training Coordinator
Passaic Vicinage

It has been almost two years since the start of the Institute of Court Management's (ICM) Court Management Program through the National Center for State Courts in the northern region.

Nearly 50 employees from throughout New Jersey participated in Phase I of the certification course, which consisted of five core courses, and the concluding seminar, which was built on the foundation of Phase I and incorporated leadership skills, management techniques and teambuilding exercises.

A different facilitator with specific expertise was provided for each of the 3-day courses and for the 5-day concluding seminar. Each of the instructors enhanced the course by adding their own insights and ideas, which provided a different vantage for the participants.

The course provided gave staff an opportunity to network with other Judiciary employees from across the state. The professional experiences that each participant brought to the course provided invaluable as a learning tool.

As a result, many professional and personal relationships developed.

The ICM graduates are:

James Agro, Administrative Office of the Courts; Carl Biscaldi, Hudson; Isaac Boykin, – Burlington; Ed Butler, Hunterdon; Naomi Byank, Somerset; Adriana Calderon, Somerset; Deidra Carvin, Essex; Andrea Caviness, Hudson; Glenn DeBlasio, Passaic and Mary Demmer, Bergen.

Also, Sheila Devereaux, Essex; Jennifer Edwards, Union; Robert Eppenstein, Union; Lloyd Garner, Union; Jon Goodman, Bergen; Sabrina Habibulla, Essex; Yosimary Hernandez, Hudson; Matthew Izzo, Essex; Karen June, AOC and John Kafader, Bergen.

Also, Joe Lagormarsino, Somerset; Michelle LaPread, Essex; Tina Matos, Essex; Donna Mazzanti, Burlington; Naomi Miranda, Union; Brendis Montijo-Wrigley, Bergen; Nancy Mooney, Hudson; Oretha Oniyama, Essex; Sandee

Nole, Passaic and Angela Pardo, Somerset.

Also, Mary Patterson, Passaic; Jacqueline Powell, Passaic; Maria Previte, Bergen; Linda Revelle, AOC; Raymond Reynolds, Union; Jennifer Shultis, Bergen; Laura Simoldoni, Bergen; Alex Sousa, Passaic; Susan Statile, Hudson; John Thomas, Cape May; Teresa Ungaro, Atlantic; Lynda Villareal, Bergen and Patrick White, Passaic

The ICM educates, informs and supports the management and leadership of the state courts.

The National Center for State Courts is an independent, nonprofit court improvement organization founded at the urging of Warren E. Burger, a chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Berger envisioned NCSC as a clearinghouse for research information and comparative data to support improvement in judicial administration in state courts.

More than 20 years ago, the Institute for Court Management merged with NCSC and added a curriculum designed for court managers. An international division was formed in the 1990s.



Judiciary staff participate in teambuilding exercises as part of the Institute for Court Management's (ICM) Court Management Program.



Mission Statement of the New Jersey Courts

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