

JUDICIARY TIMES

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Administrative Office of the Courts | Trenton, NJ



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COVID-19: The work of the courts continues

By Judge Glenn A. Grant
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts



Judge
Glenn A. Grant

The COVID-19 coronavirus public health crisis demands that our focus is on both maintaining the safety of our workforce while ensuring that our critical functions continue. Our court system responded to this unprecedented health crisis because of our outstanding workforce. Under the leadership of Chief Justice Stuart Rabner, and the other members of the Court, the New Jersey Judiciary has taken numerous steps to slow the spread of the virus while also ensuring the critical functions we provide to society are continued even in this crisis.

While the governor has recently announced plans to reopen parts of society, there is a continuing need to drastically limit the size of public gatherings. This dynamic has changed the way we socialize and the way the Judiciary will work for the foreseeable future.

Chief Justice Rabner and the Supreme Court recently approved a plan for the gradual resumption of certain in-person court events, as recommended by the New Jersey Courts Post-Pandemic Planning committees. The plan outlines the precautions being implemented before court buildings are opened for any in-person proceedings in any court. The precautions also include requirements for the public and Judiciary employees to wear masks in non-private areas and to maintain social distancing.

The plan, which takes effect on June 22, includes the gradual and limited return of 10 to 15 percent of judges and staff to our courthouses. We hope to gradually increase the number of judges and staff onsite and on staggered schedules until a vaccine is available and/or herd immunity is established. The plan can be read in its entirety [here](#).

While criminal jury trials will remain suspended, the following criminal matters can, consistent with Supreme Court guidance, be handled in person:

- Completion of suspended jury trials with the consent of all attorneys and parties and approval of the Chief Justice

Subject to social distancing and other requirements and in the absence of consent to proceed remotely, the following criminal proceedings can be conducted in person:

- Bench trials
- Testimonial motions
- Pretrial hearings
- Guilty pleas
- Sentencings
- Final Extreme Risk Protective Order (ERPO) hearings
- Violation of monitoring and violation of probation for defendants not custody

Most matters in the family, civil and municipal courts and in the Tax Court, Appellate Division and Supreme Court will continue to be heard remotely. Municipal court users can continue to make payments through the [municipal court online payment system](#).

Court filings can be submitted electronically via eCourts and the Judiciary Electronic Document System (JEDS) <https://njcourts.gov/selfhelp/jeds.html>, by mail, or dropped off at a designated drop-box. Court-ordered payments can be sent by mail or made electronically. Court users can contact their local courthouse with questions about filing emergent applications or about a scheduled hearing, motion, conference, or other matter. A list of local courthouses can be found [here](#). On Pages 3 through 7, you can learn more about how court staff continue to do their work during this health crisis.

We will continue to proceed in a way that promotes public health and safety and allows attorneys and litigants who rely on our services to access the courts. Proudly I note, I remain confident in our ability to successfully navigate these uncharted waters because of the dedication and talents of all of you. Please visit www.njcourts.gov often for updated information on court operations.

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Adoption during a pandemic

A Flemington couple says their virtual adoption ceremony was “a thousand times better” than anticipated

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

When schools began to close their doors in response to the COVID-19 health crisis, Amy Liszt’s mind immediately flew to the upcoming adoption scheduled for the spunky little 3-year-old boy she and her husband Eric had fostered since he was an infant.

After such a long wait for him to become a permanent part of their family, would this pandemic further delay the day the Flemington couple could legally call him their son, Amy Liszt repeatedly asked her resource worker from the Somerset/ Hunterdon/ Warren Vicinage’s family division.

It wouldn’t.

The Liszt family adopted their son Will on March 27 during a virtual proceeding before Warren County Superior Court Judge Haekyoung Suh. The adoption was one of thousands of court proceedings that have been conducted before hundreds of judges through Zoom, video conference and telephone conference since the Judiciary first suspended in-person court proceedings on March 15 to stem the spread of COVID-19.

Adoptions, weddings, Supreme Court hearings, civil trials and a host of other court proceedings are all continuing from the safe confines of home. For Amy Liszt, the virtual proceeding was not the ceremony she had pictured for Will’s adoption day. “But it was a thousand times better than what I would have anticipated,” she said.

Before the pandemic, the Liszts had planned on being surrounded by family in a courtroom in Belvidere in Warren County. But the lockdowns meant no family traveling from Florida and Texas to witness the special occasion, and no party with relatives and neighbors, who quickly came to love Will and his “very large personality.” No one would see the special black T-shirts they had designed for the big occasion

But Eric Liszt, who works for a software company, had a plan. He set up a large video monitor on the wrap-around porch of the family home, and the Liszts invited neighbors and relatives to watch from a safe distance. Some stayed in their cars, some set up their viewing spot on the front lawn. Their 17-year-old foster daughter live-streamed it over Facebook to the out-of-state relatives. Dressed in their special black T-shirts, the family interacted directly with Judge Suh as if they had been in her courtroom. Watching were many more people than the Liszts had imagined



The Liszt family stands outside their Flemington house after a judge in Warren County finalized the adoption of 3-year-old Will via video conference. (Photo courtesy of David Norton).

would have gone to the courthouse. Judge Suh asked both parents separately a series of questions relating to their intentions in adopting Will, ending with “Are you asking that the court grant this petition today?”

“Yes, I am,” Amy Liszt said, her voice cracking.

When it was over, a caravan of cars – including police and fire vehicles – paraded past the house blaring their horns. It was a different way – one necessitated by the circumstances – of celebrating Will’s permanent placement with a couple who, in addition to having two biological children, have taken in 30 children during their 10 years of fostering.

“It wound up being quite the spectacle. It was neat because everyone could participate,” Amy Liszt said. “It was really community oriented, which was cool, because who gets to see an adoption like that? In spite of everything going on, it was just something cool for people to be a part of.”

About the cover

This front window in the neighborhood of Vanessa Cardwell, ombudsman in the Cumberland/Gloucester/ Salem Vicinage, is one of several decorated with rainbows and teddy bears for children, accompanied by their parents, on an rainbow and bear hunt. The hunts have become a common activity as families seek activities to entertain young children who have been homebound because of the pandemic. Cardwell’s 13-year-old daughter decorated the front window at her home.

A monumental task

How New Jersey Courts balanced public safety and access to justice during a worldwide pandemic

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

As the coronavirus started to take a firm grip on the state in early March, the New Jersey Judiciary immediately started planning its new mission of keeping the business of the courts running while protecting the health of its employees and the public. That meant transforming an entire branch of government into a virtual operation.

"We needed to protect the safety of judges and court staff, as well as the safety of court users, in the face of an unprecedented health emergency," said Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts. "At the same time, we had to assure access to justice and continue to provide critical services to the public." To accomplish that goal, the Judiciary had two major challenges: switching all court functions handled by the Judiciary's nearly 10,000 employees in 600 facilities to remote operations and expanding the number of virtual courtrooms to continue as many court matters and proceedings as possible.

Before the pandemic, about 3,200 Judiciary employees had the ability to work remotely. In just two weeks, ITO staff expanded the Judiciary's infrastructure to push that number up to 7,700.

In one week, the Judiciary went from having 21 pre-COVID virtual courtrooms, which supported weekend first appearance hearings under Criminal Justice Reform, to 230 virtual courtrooms for routine court matters that can be streamed live to the public simultaneously. That could expand to 300.

Justices, judges and staff now handle all types of motions, conferences, and hearings by telephone and with Zoom, Scopia, and Teams virtual platforms.

"It was a monumental task to accomplish within such a short amount of time," said Jack McCarthy III, chief information officer for the Judiciary's Information Technology Office (ITO). "We had to suddenly expand our technological infrastructure to support triple the number of people working remotely and 'build' nearly 10 times the number of existing virtual courtrooms – all within two weeks." IT staff also trained hundreds of judges across the state on how to operate their new virtual courtrooms. From the start of virtual hearings on March 16 to April 12, New Jersey courts held nearly 7,300 virtual proceedings involving more than 38,000 participants. Adoptions,



Superior Court Judge Stephen Taylor presides over a motion to reopen detention in Morris County on April 13, 2020

weddings, drug court hearings and a host of other proceedings are all continuing from the safe confines of home during the COVID-19 health crisis.

In the Supreme Court, the seven justices 'convene' from their separate chambers as attorneys argue their cases remotely. Just as before the pandemic, the events are streamed live over the Judiciary's website, www.njcourts.gov.

Attorneys argue appellate matters telephonically before judges who, instead of sitting on the bench, are also working remotely. While jury trials remain suspended, Superior Court judges in the criminal and law divisions still handle full calendars.

Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Jablonski, presiding judge of chancery in the Hudson Vicinage, has already held three trials virtually in addition to a host of other matters. While the proceedings have taken on a different feeling outside of the courtroom, they still have the common thread of continuing the court's business and protecting the litigants' constitutional rights and entitlements to having their matters heard quickly, Judge Jablonski said.

Jablonski said parties appearing before the court were skeptical at first but have now come to see the virtual hearings as "another chapter in the evolving technological vanguard" championed by the Judiciary. "Their apprehension evolved into confidence that this is not going to be bad, that this is going to be something that is actually good and will allow the business of the judiciary to go on uninterrupted," he said.

Community service meets public safety

Group supervised by probation services pitches in during the COVID-19 health crisis

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Call it community service meets public service.

With the implementation of a statewide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19, ISP Officer Donnie DeStefano wasn't sure how her clients in the Judiciary's Intensive Supervision Program would be able to continue performing their required community service.

So she was pleasantly surprised when she learned during one of her visits to a Cape May County sober house that her clients were continuing their community service by helping to make face masks for those on the front lines of the pandemic.

Despite the lockdown, DeStefano and the Judiciary's 1,900 ISP and probation officers across New Jersey continue to perform their duties supervising clients, conducting inspections and overseeing community service.

But life after the lockdown has altered how the officers and clients interact with each other and with the community.

"This is a time when they didn't have to do community service but they took it upon themselves to do whatever they can," DeStefano said. "They're working on their recovery and they've never griped or complained to say, 'We're stuck in this house 24 hours a day.'"

Several of the housemates had performed community service locally, but some of them lost those opportunities when many businesses were ordered shut during the lockdown.

They found a new opportunity when a housemate told them about a pitch a guest made at a Narcotics Anonymous meeting about making facemasks for Cape Regional Hospital.

Now the men are cutting more than 100 pieces of cloth a week that Doreen Verity and her friend Joe Fiedler are turning into facemasks and turning over to the hospital.

Their church, The Lighthouse Church in Cape May Court House, runs Christians United for Recovery (CURE), a program that has helped get probation clients into treatment and sober living facilities.



An ISP client cuts cloth that will be made into facemasks that will be donated to Cape Regional Hospital.

"The true measure of success of a supervision program is when clients start taking positive steps on their own initiative," said Rashad Shabaka-Burns, director of Probation Services.

"We are very pleased that the individuals we supervise through ISP are making a contribution toward the larger effort of keeping the public safe."

Verity said that because it takes nine stages to make one mask, she's grateful for the help so that she can concentrate on the sewing stage.

"It's a big help. They can be very happy that they were a part of it. It helped me," she said. "It's been a very unorganized team effort but it's really coming through. It's exciting to see the good things coming out of it."

Structure during a time of stress

Virtual drug court hearings in New Jersey provide encouragement and accountability during pandemic

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

One drug court participant checked in from his parked car. Another signed in from his office. Another checked in while waiting for an oil change.

In all, 24 of the 25 drug court participants scheduled to appear before a Superior Court judge for April 14's noontime recovery court session in the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage showed up for their required visit, just not in person.

This was a virtual session.

Drug court participants throughout New Jersey are now appearing by videoconference as the Judiciary reshapes the way it helps guide individuals through recovery during the COVID-19 health crisis.

"We are rightly focused on a pandemic that has changed our lives, but it is important to remember at the same time that the opioid crisis continues," said Chief Justice Stuart Rabner. "Individuals who deal with addiction issues are particularly vulnerable to relapsing in stressful times like these, when routines have been disrupted and many find themselves out of work. Virtual drug court provides continued structure and accountability at a time when it is needed most."

New Jersey's drug court program, which has more than 6,600 participants and graduated more than 26,000 participants since 2002, has proven effective in helping participants reclaim their lives. Within three years of graduation, 2.3 percent of drug court graduates are

sentenced to state prison for new offenses compared to 40 percent of those released from prison in that same period. In the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage, the 45-minute virtual gatherings started on April 7.

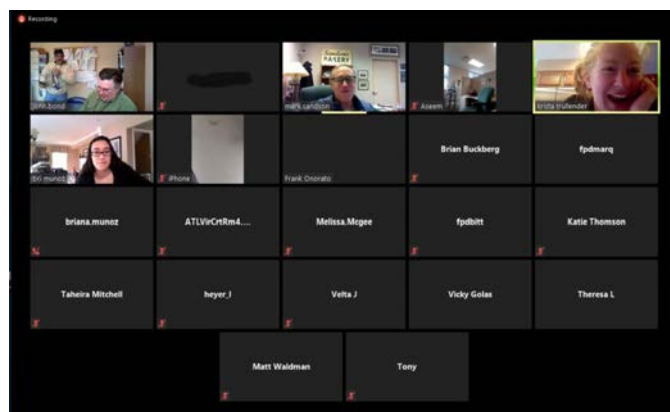
They will be held on Tuesdays until it is safe for in-person court matters to resume. Current sessions are focused on those in the earlier phases of the program who are considered to be at the greatest risk for relapse.

Superior Court Judge Mark Sandson, who presides over the vicinage's recovery court, made a special point of asking how well the participants are coping during this unprecedented public health crisis. "You're making tremendous progress," Sandson told the group. "I want you to do well. I want you to stay connected to your probation officers. I want you to stay connected to your recovery support system."

Sandson knows drug court participants are particularly vulnerable right now. Attending substance abuse meetings is difficult. Some don't have access to a computer or have trouble using one.

The lone woman who missed the April 14 session doesn't have a phone. Sandson asked each participant to either describe a positive personal attribute, name a person who influenced them greatly, or recall the best advice they've been given.

One by one they responded, some opening up more than others. "Through all the chaos, I can remain optimistic through it all," one woman said. "It's not going to last forever."



Judge Mark Sandson uses technology to conduct virtual drug court.

Editor's Note

The deadline for the Fall 2020 edition of the Judiciary Times is Friday, July 31, 2020.

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

Submissions can be sent to Mike.Mathis@njcourts.gov.

Judge Theodore Z. Davis passes

By Mike Mathis and Lisa Burke
Communications and Community Relations
Administrative Office of the Courts

Retired Judge Theodore Z. Davis, a legal and civic fixture in his native Camden for decades and the first chair of a groundbreaking committee dedicated to ensuring justice for all, died on April 12. He was 86.

Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz in 1986 named Judge Davis chair of the New Jersey Supreme Court Task Force on Minority Concerns, the first task force of its kind in the

nation. The task force became what is known today as the Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement.

Under Judge Davis' leadership, the task force completed an examination of racial and ethnic biases in the New Jersey Judiciary over a six-year period. The final report of the task force, which included 63 recommendations, was submitted to the Supreme Court in 1992. The court approved 53 of the recommendations.

Continued on page 15

Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage employees organize face mask drive for co-workers

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

In a show of support for their colleagues on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic, employees in the New Jersey Judiciary's Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage sewed more than 250 face masks within a matter of days before distributing them on April 19.

Karen Michael, an administrative specialist in the court user resource center, had been sewing masks for frontline workers at a local hospital when she proposed the idea of a vicinage-wide face mask drive for Judiciary employees who continue to interact directly with members of the public.

Judges, staff, and their friends and family volunteered materials and their sewing skills to produce washable cloth masks for probation officers supervising clients in the community and employees reporting to the courthouses to facilitate case processing.

"The creative, altruistic idea of one person has resulted in good will and safety for many," said Trial Court Administrator Howard Berchtold Jr. "This mask-making drive, inspired by a desire to assist the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage family, yielded more than 250 cloth masks to enable employees to continue to leave their homes to serve the public."

The initiative began with a material donation drop-off at the three courthouses in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Michael put the call out for cloth, elastic, thread, large rubber bands, blue shop paper towels and zip-up plastic bags. Within four days, she received enough material to cut out the 250 masks by hand and assembled the kits that were distributed to the 15 sewing volunteers. The kits also contained "Made by" cards, which contained personal

messages from the sewing volunteers, to build a connection between the maker and the recipient.

Sharnett Clark, vicinage chief probation officer, said the masks will help the officers maintain contact with their clients while staying safe. "As essential employees in probation, we are forever grateful for such acts of kindness," Clark said.



Probation Officer Andrew Harrigan and his son Logan made face masks for Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage employees working on the frontline during the pandemic

Office of Probation Services to employ Ohio risk assessment tool for adult, juvenile clients

By Maurice Hart, Ombudsman
Office of Probation Services
Administrative Office of the Courts

Representatives from the University of Cincinnati visited probation services in January to introduce and provide an overview of the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) and the Ohio Youth Assessment System (OYAS) that probation will begin to use to guide its work.

The ORAS and OYAS tools are dynamic risk/needs assessment systems for use with adult and juvenile probation clients. They will help probation identify factors that compel someone to commit a crime and determine their risk of reoffending as well as help assign resources.

The assessment tools are two of the many new initiatives being implemented in probation offices across the state to promote positive behavior changes for probation clients and to discourage them from committing another crime. Training is being scheduled for probation officers. The tools will be rolled out as vicinages complete the training.



Representatives from the University of Cincinnati visited probation services to provide an overview of a new risk assessment system that will be used in New Jersey.

Legal community joins to protect children in Sussex County

By Michael Lasko
Chief Probation Officer
Morris/Sussex Vicinage

Megan's Law was adopted in 1994 to punish those who sexually preyed on children. New Jersey was the first state in the country to apply such laws in an effort to notify and protect communities from dangerous child sex offenders.

About a decade later, statutory authority empowered the courts, through probation, to allow enhanced monitoring of Megan's Law registrants. The statute governing probation supervision was expanded to include remote monitoring of internet activity of certain offenders.

It was the most robust monitoring policy in the nation. It contains the nation's first statewide, zero tolerance policy on monitoring violations, failure to disclose devices or to pay monitoring fees. The monitoring allows probation officers to see what their clients are viewing and sharing online.

If the probation officer notices child pornography being exchanged, for example, a referral is made to law enforcement to investigate. This work requires partnerships with judicial and non-judicial entities.

The sex offender team in Sussex County recently hosted a training with prosecutors, public defenders, judges and court staff. With the assistance of Candice Alfonso of the Office of Probation Services, Interstate Compact Unit, attendees reviewed statutes, requirements, duty to report, willful non-compliance and appropriate application of the policy. The key to New Jersey's success with the monitoring program is the collaboration with partners. The training was so well received that a model has been generated for other vicinages to emulate.

Have an interesting story idea?

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

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Michael A. Toto named assignment judge in Middlesex Vicinage

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts



Judge Michael A. Toto

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner has appointed Superior Court Judge Michael Toto, criminal presiding judge in the Middlesex Vicinage, to serve as assignment judge.

Judge Toto, 62, has served as a Superior Court judge in Middlesex County for 14 years. He was named presiding judge of the criminal division in 2017 and also served in the civil and family divisions. Prior to that, Toto served as a municipal judge for 17 years. He was the presiding judge of the Jamesburg Municipal Court and also served in the East Brunswick and Manalapan municipal courts.

Judge Toto is a graduate of Rutgers University Law School.

Career Snapshot

Presiding criminal judge

Former municipal court judge

Ravenelle honored



Vannessa Ravenelle, ombudsman for the Camden Vicinage, was honored in December as 2019 Business Partner of the Year by the Camden County Technical School District. Ravenelle was cited for her close work with the district and planning meaningful activities for the students to learn about court operations.

Sussex recognized



The Sussex County Child Support Team of the Morris/Sussex Vicinage received the New Jersey Child Support Council's Probation Agency of the Year award at this year's New Jersey Child Support Conference in Atlantic City. Pictured left to right: Cory DiBiase, vicinage assistant chief probation officer in Sussex County; Carol Cohen, court services supervisor 2; Alexandria Cottrell, investigator and Michael Lasko, chief probation officer, Morris/Sussex Vicinage.

Chief Justice assigns two judges to appellate division

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner has temporarily assigned Superior Court Judges Morris G. Smith and Katie A. Gummer to the Appellate Division, effective Sept. 1.

Judge Gummer sat in the civil division and has been presiding judge of the general equity part of the chancery division in the Monmouth Vicinage since 2018. A graduate of Bryn Mawr College and Yale Law School, Judge Gummer was appointed to the Superior Court by Gov. Chris Christie in 2013. She received tenure earlier this year.

Before joining the Judiciary, Judge Gummer was in private practice. She is a member of the Supreme Court Committee on Women in the Courts. "It has been my great privilege to serve my community as a Superior Court judge for the past seven years," Judge Gummer said. "I am honored to continue that service in the Appellate Division and am grateful to Chief Justice Rabner for this opportunity."

Judge Smith sat in the family part and the criminal and civil divisions in the Camden Vicinage prior to his Appellate Division assignment. A graduate of Washington University at St. Louis School of Law, Judge Smith was appointed to the Superior Court by Gov. Chris Christie in 2014. He is eligible for tenure in 2021.

Before joining the Judiciary, Judge Smith was a general counsel with the Philadelphia Board of Education and a solicitor for the city of Camden before going into private practice where he specialized in economic development, land use, and real estate matters. He is a member of the Supreme Court Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (DICE); chair of Statewide Committee of Vicinage DICE Chairs; and chair of the vicinage Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement Committee. He previously served on the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative Statewide Pilot Program Committee and on the Supreme Court Working Group on the Indiscriminate Shackling of Juveniles in Court.

"It has been a great privilege to work with the talented judges and staff of the Camden Vicinage," Judge Smith said. "I am excited to take on this new challenge in the Appellate Division and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Chief Justice Rabner for his confidence in my ability to continue to serve the citizens of this state in this role."

The Appellate Division of the Superior Court is New Jersey's intermediate court. The 33 Appellate Division judges hear appeals from decisions of the trial courts, the Tax Court and state administrative agencies. The Appellate Division generally decides between 6,000 and 6,600 appeals and about 9,500 motions annually. Ordinarily, temporary assignments to the Appellate Division commence in the spring. Because of the ongoing health emergency, Judge Smith's assignment will not start until later in the year.



Judge Katie A. Gummer



Judge Morris G. Smith

Supreme Court committee to focus on justice system mental health issues

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

A new advisory committee formed by the Supreme Court will seek to identify ways to better serve those with mental illness in their interaction with the justice system, Chief Justice Stuart Rabner announced.

The Mental Health Advisory Committee includes representatives from all three branches of government as well as health providers, mental health advocacy groups, the New Jersey Department of Human Services, local law enforcement, the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Public Defender.

The committee, which held its first meeting in November, is taking a system-wide look at the issues surrounding the criminal justice system's handling of matters involving individuals with mental illness. It also will look for ways to improve access to mental health services.

Essex Vicinage Assignment Judge Sallyanne Floria and Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson serve as co-chairs of the committee.



Judiciary completes statewide juror summons process implementation

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

The New Jersey Judiciary has completed statewide implementation of a new jury duty summons system in which prospective jurors can interact with the court in real time. Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth and Sussex counties in January and Essex County in February joined 16 counties where the new system has been rolled out since the beginning of last year.

As part of the changes, a single postcard will replace the letter-sized paper summons mailed to prospective jurors advising them of the date and location of jury duty and providing instructions to complete an online qualification questionnaire. Prospective jurors who do not complete online qualification within three weeks will receive a letter-sized questionnaire to be completed and mailed back to the local jury management office.

In addition to the new summons forms, a new juror portal will allow prospective jurors to ask questions or request deferrals or postponements online for quicker responses. The portal also will enhance email and text message communications between jurors and the jury management

office. The new system reflects the Judiciary's commitment to best meet the needs of the public and engage with jurors in a clear and concise manner.

"This new jury system provides enhanced ways for individuals called to jury service to interact with our court system," said Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts.

Atlantic County piloted the program on Jan. 18, 2019. Mercer County began using the summons system on July 30, followed by Cape May County on Aug. 22 and Burlington County on Aug. 29. Hunterdon, Somerset and Salem counties started using the system on Sept. 19 and Camden, Cumberland, Ocean and Warren counties moved to the system on Oct. 3. Gloucester, Morris and Union counties started using the system on Nov. 7. Bergen and Passaic counties implemented the system on Dec. 5.

Frequently asked questions about jury service in New Jersey can be found at www.njcourts.gov by searching for jurors.

Construction corner

Editors Note: This is the first in what will be a regular feature on selected Judiciary-related construction projects around the state.

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

Bergen Courthouse Renovation

This project involves the overhaul of the building's electrical and heating and air conditioning systems, ADA-related improvements and the installation of new elevators to transport prisoners.

Essex/New Space for General Equity and Tax Court

Ceremonial groundbreaking took place on Jan. 22 for the new Essex County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Building. The 150,000-square-foot building will include space for seven tax courtrooms, four general equity courtrooms and office space. A pedestrian bridge will connect the new building to the Hall of Records. Completion is slated for August 2020.

Passaic/Renovation of Annex Building

Work continues on this project, which includes rehabilitation and installation of elevators, a new ADA-compliant entrance and installation of HVAC equipment.

Union/Rotunda Building upgrades

This project, which began after the family courthouse was completed in 2018, included making courtrooms into civil courtrooms with jury boxes, an elevator expansion to make them ADA compliant and asbestos abatement. The project is finished, and staff moved back in February.

Union/Tower Building stairwell



Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, speaks at Essex County groundbreaking.

Work on this project, which is scheduled to begin this summer, will include installation of a secondary stairwell from the 16th to the first floor to comply with current building codes requiring a second means of egress.

Union/New Annex Building

Construction of a new jury assembly room on the first floor was completed in September 2019.

Ocean County Justice Complex

The project involves the renovation of existing courtrooms at the Ocean County Justice Complex into use for criminal courtrooms.

Passaic Vicinage sponsors Cancer Awareness Day

By Dawn Moody
Vicinage Chief Probation Officer
Passaic Vicinage

To support, honor and remember those affected by the devastating effects of cancer, Passaic Vicinage on Oct. 25, 2019 held its third annual Cancer Awareness Day.

Assignment Judge Ernest M. Caposela developed the idea for the fair to educate the public about the effects of cancer while considering the many vicinage employees and their families who are affected by the disease. His vision has developed into a program that has engaged several notable cancer treatment providers, and community programs that specialize in treating all aspects of a cancer diagnosis.

In the first year, survivors spoke about how cancer impacted them mentally, physically and socially. Year two caregivers were invited to share their experiences transporting family members to treatment and how watching a loved one struggle with an adjusted lifestyle takes its toll on those who provide comfort and support. This year, the fair, which was held in the rotunda of the historic courthouse, centered on

activities that reflected the theme "Hope in Motion."

Vendors, community agencies and departments dedicated to cancer support and services provided information and resources on topics such as life after cancer, exercise, early detection and support groups.

Derick J. Christian, a physician at St. Joseph's Medical Center, gave a presentation on liver cancer and health maintenance and how healthy eating habits improve life expectancy and overall health and alleviates stress. The vivid, powerful images of diseased organs and clogged arteries and other conditions related to cancer intrigued and mystified the audience. Employees throughout the vicinage decorated shoes that adorned the rotunda and the perimeter of the courthouse. At the end of the day, staff and the public walked around the courthouse together, many wearing their Cancer Awareness Day t-shirts. Among the organizations that participated in the event were Hackensack Meridian Health, St. Joseph's Medical Center, Passaic County Board of Social Services, Adrian Allotey, doula, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Cancer Support Community Center, Fighting Children's Cancer, Englewood Hospital, Pink Breast Center, CURE Magazine, Threads for Heads and Xtreme Hip Hop.

Probation marks Black History Month

By Linda Taylor
Office of Probation Services
Administrative Office of the Courts

The theme of this year's Central Office Probation Services Black History Month celebration was "Hidden Facts, Hidden Figures." The focus was on unknown and little-known people and facts that reflect the rich diversity of the African American experience.

Staff attended sessions and learned a wealth of little-known history and facts on a range of topics, including a local Underground Railroad stop, veterans serving veterans, mental health and wellness. Staff also attended sessions about human trafficking, sit-ins and boycotts, trial strategy that chipped away at segregation, and quilting.

Throughout the month, staff visited the Black History Museum, a converted conference room in which displaying art and memorabilia was displayed.

The month's events concluded with the 16th annual Black History Month program and luncheon. The keynote speaker was William Davis Jr., a retired professor of Africana Studies at Rutgers University. His thought-provoking topic was "Learning from Our Past to be Victorious in the Present."

This year's activities were spearheaded by Yolanda Frink and Traci Stephen.



Berchtold honored for exceptional service in the commitment to serving justice

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts



Howard H. Berchtold Jr.

Howard H. Berchtold Jr., trial court administrator for the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage, has been inducted into the National Center for State Courts' Warren E. Burger Society.

Berchtold, who has worked in the New Jersey Judiciary for 38 years, was honored in November in a ceremony in Washington, D.C. for his commitment to improving the administration of justice.

Named for the former U.S. chief justice who helped found the NCSC in 1971, the Burger Society honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional use of their time, talent and support to benefit NCSC.

Berchtold has served on many regional and national organizations, including the National Association for Court Management, NCSC's Institute for Court Management (ICM) Advisory Committee, and the Mid-Atlantic Association for Court Management, which he led. He became an ICM Fellow in 1986 and has received the ICM Fellow Star Award, which recognizes the Fellow who demonstrates excellence in the advancement of court administration through leadership and education.

"Howard's induction into the Warren E. Burger Society is a well-deserved recognition for an individual who has served New Jersey with great distinction for many years," said Julio L. Mendez, assignment judge for the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage. "He has done an extraordinary job in advancing the courts' goal of ensuring the fair administration of justice for all New Jersey citizens." Berchtold was one of five people to receive the honor.

Burlington Vicinage holds municipal warrants outreach program

By Amy E. Chack
Municipal Division Manager
Burlington Vicinage

The Burlington Vicinage Municipal Division and the Burlington County Sheriff's Department on Jan. 24 held an outreach program to help people resolve their outstanding municipal court warrants.

The division and department also partnered with several agencies to provide useful information and connections to community service providers.

The agencies included Hope One Project of the Burlington County Sheriff's Department, Burlington County Workforce Development, Servicios Latinos de Burlington County, Virtua Health Community Outreach, America Works of New Jersey, Burlington County Human Services - which provided affordable housing information - Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The partners completed 71 individual contacts, conducted 23 municipal warrant searches, two people were placed into inpatient substance abuse treatment, 13 Narcan trainings were completed and free Narcan kits provided, six Burlington County photo identification cards were issued and three toiletry kits were distributed.

The municipal division plans to hold similar events in the future and hopes to expand its list of partners so that it can continue outreach efforts to municipal court users and Burlington County residents.



Camden receives statewide child support award



The staff of the Camden Vicinage's family division received the "Agency of the Year" award from the New Jersey Child Support Council on Feb. 27.



Judge Davis passes

Continued from page 7



Judge Theodore Z. Davis

The work that Judge Davis shepherded laid the foundation and blueprint for a national model of racial and ethnic justice through the courts initiative.

In 1987, Judge Davis and the late Washington State Supreme Court Justice Charles Z. Smith, with whom Judge Davis

attended law school, joined with Ambassador Franklin H. Williams of New York and Judge Harold Hood of Michigan to form the organization now known as the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts.

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that Judge Davis “had a profound impact on the New Jersey judiciary” and praised his advocacy on behalf of communities of color. “His legacy will endure for generations.”

Yolande Marlow, manager of the Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Program, said the vision of Judge Davis and retired Supreme Court Justice James H. Coleman Jr. to make equal justice a reality was supported strongly by the organization’s leadership then, as it is now.

Born and raised in Camden, Judge Davis earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting from Temple University and a law degree from Temple University’s School of Law. Before he practiced law, Judge Davis served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War and worked for the Internal Revenue Service.

In 1964, he joined the law firm of Bennett, Wingate and Pascoe, where he specialized in corporate tax law. He also served as an assistant city attorney for the City of Camden and as an assistant Camden County prosecutor. Judge Davis was appointed municipal judge for the City of Camden in 1973.

Then-Chief Justice Richard J. Hughes appointed Judge Davis to the Board of Bar Examiners in 1974. Judge Davis later became board chair, serving in that role until he was appointed to the Superior Court in 1981.

Judge Davis was named presiding judge of the general equity part in 1991 and retired from the bench in 2003.

Camden Vicinage Assignment Judge Deborah Silverman Katz called Judge Davis one of the most beloved judges who has ever come from the Camden Vicinage. He was

smart, dedicated and a great mentor to many young lawyers, she said.

“Judge Davis was a wonderful man, a true gentleman, and a good friend to all of us,” she said, “He always had a smile, a word of advice, and an encouraging word for the attorneys and his colleagues. He was respected, revered, and well loved by the members of the bar- and bench.”

Judge Silverman Katz recalled her second day on the job as an assistant Camden County counsel in 1997, when her boss handed her a file that was venued in the chancery division, where Judge Davis presided. Her boss told her to go into court and enter her appearance, since it was nothing more than a return on an Order to Show Cause, and to bring back the briefing schedule.

When Judge Silverman Katz hadn’t returned to the office four hours later, her boss went to look for her. He found her arguing the case, she said.

“Thank goodness that I knew enough to at least glance at the file before I walked on over to the judge’s courtroom,” Judge Silverman Katz remembered. “Judge Davis, not one to waste time, or to put off for tomorrow what could be done today, had all the attorney’s in the matter try the case then and there, and boy, was I surprised, scared, and ultimately, successful.”

“I learned to never underestimate the judge’s understanding of the law, his ability to quickly analyze the issues, and to move matters along as quickly as possible,” she said.

Judge Morris Smith clerked for Judge Davis when he graduated from law school and remembers the judge as a renaissance man who took pride in his many interests, including sports, music and carpentry. Judge Davis was a huge fan of the sports teams at his alma maters, Camden High School and Temple University.

Judge Charles Dortch remembered Judge Davis as a man who changed his life, who mentored him, counseled him, and who pushed him into finishing law school, and who told him one day he would see the title judge in front of Judge Dortch’s name.

In retirement, Judge Davis lived life to the fullest, continuing to give to the community that mattered so much to him. Among his numerous undertakings following retirement from the Superior Court bench, Gov. Jon Corzine appointed him chief operating officer of the City of Camden.

Judge Davis was predeceased by his wife, Joan, and is survived by his son, Theodore (Ted). The family anticipates holding a memorial celebration of Judge Davis’ life and legacy in the future.

Spotlight: Atlantic County Courthouse

This story is the 14th in a series detailing the rich histories of New Jersey's courthouses.

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

When many think of Atlantic County, what likely first comes to mind is Atlantic City, its casinos and its long history as a vacation destination and interesting political figures of the past.

What they likely don't know is that Atlantic City isn't the seat of county government. That distinction goes to Mays Landing, a village that officially is part of Hamilton Township. So why is a county seat – usually designated to a larger city – located in one of the state's smaller municipalities? Mays Landing was designated the county seat a few months after Atlantic County was created from Gloucester County on Feb. 7, 1837.

Atlantic City was not incorporated until May 1, 1854, and Mays Landing – the largest community at the time – was located on a navigable stream, an important consideration in an era when there were few roads and no railway, according to the Atlantic County Historical Society.

Mays Landing also was centrally located. It had about 30 houses, four stores, three taverns and a Methodist church. Samuel Richards, proprietor of the Weymouth Iron Works, and his wife gave the Atlantic County Board of Freeholders a six-acre property on Main Street for the construction of county buildings in May 1838. A courthouse was built soon afterward.

The first courthouse was 40 feet square and included courtrooms, a law library, judges' chambers and prosecutors' offices. Grand jury and witness rooms were added in 1906. The building was renovated in 1930. The county complex also included a jail and clerk's and surrogates' offices. Over the next century and a half, many

changes occurred, including the replacement of the original jail.

In 1980, the courthouse was expanded to join the separate buildings into a single complex to accommodate a growing Judiciary. The building today includes the offices of the Atlantic County surrogate, Atlantic County clerk and The Atlantic County Board of Freeholders. Meanwhile, the growing population of Atlantic County prompted the need for new court buildings.

The Atlantic County Civil Courts Building was built in Atlantic City in 1976 and was expanded, renovated and rededicated in 1985. Before 1976, civil cases were heard in several buildings in Atlantic City: the Guarantee Trust Building, the Segal Building, the Schwinn Building, Carpenters Hall, the old Atlantic City City Hall and the Electric Company Building. The latter two buildings have been demolished.

A modern, 180,000-square-foot criminal courts facility was built on 20 acres in the Hamilton Township Industrial Park on Unami Drive in Mays Landing. It was completed in 2004.



The courtroom of the Atlantic County Courthouse in 1917. (Photos courtesy of Hamilton Historical Society)



The Atlantic County Courthouse Annex was a post office when the county bought it for court use in 1936.

Built: 1838

First courthouse was 40 square feet.

Grand jury and witness rooms were added in 1906.

Renovated in 1930