

JUDICIARY TIMES

A Publication of the  New Jersey Courts

Spring 2011

Chief Justice: State of The Judiciary is Strong *Innovative Programs and Services Continue Despite Loss of Funding and Staff*

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

The Judiciary continues to administer justice for New Jersey citizens and is introducing new programs and services despite the loss of millions of dollars in funding and hundreds of employees, Chief Justice Stuart Rabner told the New Jersey State Bar Association in Atlantic City on May 20.

The Judiciary's budget has been cut by a total of \$110 million over the past three years, and staff has been reduced by 475 employees through attrition, the chief justice said. An additional \$25 million shortfall is anticipated this year, and another 60 employees are expected to leave the organization, he said.

Despite the reductions in funding and staff, however, Rabner said the Judiciary is determined to continue to meet its constitutional obligation to serve the public.

"To be clear, we remain committed to doing our best to meet the needs of lawyers and litigants as we work through this crisis," the chief justice said. "It's because of the dedication of staff and judges -- their exemplary handling of cases and careful stewardship of our budget -- that we have been able to serve the public so well in the face of growing demands and fewer resources."

Rabner discussed several projects the Judiciary has worked on over the last year, including the expansion of the use of technology to include the extension of the JEFIS electronic filing system to foreclosure filings and enabling prospective jurors to answer summonses online.

The Judiciary's website, njcourts.com, also has been redesigned to make it more user-friendly, he said.

But there's more work to accomplish, the chief justice said.

"We need to use e-filing and electronic case management for more case types and more filings," he said. "The rewards are obvious: greater convenience for attorneys in filing papers; no need for courier services and the costs associated with them for last minute filings, which can be accomplished by the click of a mouse; and any number of greater efficiencies for the court system."

The chief justice said New Jersey has become a national model on the problem of legal orphans, children who age out of foster care.

The number of legal orphans in the state has dropped dramatically, led by Essex County, where the number plunged by 75 percent since 2005, he said.



Chief Justice Stuart Rabner delivers his annual State of the Judiciary address to the New Jersey State Bar Association convention in Atlantic City on May 20. (Photo courtesy New Jersey State Bar Association)

Rabner also discussed the success of the Veterans Assistance Project, which connects service members who come in contact with the courts with existing community services and mentors.

The Judiciary has joined with the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health Services for the program, which began in Atlantic County in the municipal courts and in the criminal division of Superior Court

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Middlesex Employee Marks 50 Years of Service with Judiciary

By Betty Agin
Operations Division
Middlesex Vicinage

When Carol Dooley began working in the Middlesex County Courthouse, John F. Kennedy was in the White House, the cost of a stamp was 4 cents and "Tossin' and Turnin'" topped the charts.

Fifty years later, a different president -- the 10th since 1961 -- is leading the nation, it now costs 44 cents to mail a letter, and Wiz Khalifa and Lady Gaga top the Billboard music chart.

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Carol Dooley Celebrates 50 Years of Service to the Judiciary

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But one thing has remained constant: Dooley's still on the job, although it's not the same one she had when she began in 1961.

"I never felt I was on a 'dead-end' job," Dooley said. "Every advancement has been a challenge to solve issues that would serve the clients that came to the courthouse for help and resolving their cases."

A luncheon commemorating the 50th anniversary of Dooley's employment with the Judiciary was held April 1 in New Brunswick.

Dooley, the assistant family division manager, has seen many changes in the courts during her half century of service.

Dooley began her Judiciary career as a file clerk in the civil division of the old Middlesex County Courthouse, which opened in 1960. There were no security doors or security screening, and employees were not required to wear



Carol Dooley recently marked a half century of service to the Judiciary. She began working for the courts in 1961.

identification badges.

Court testimony was recorded by hand. The work day was shorter, and the attire was more relaxed. There were typewriters and a telephone switchboard. Docketing and bookkeeping were done by hand.

The civil records office consisted of six people who occupied one third of an office that is now a courtroom. Active cases fit into just five file cabinets. Today, the civil records division takes up two floors of the administration building.

Through the years, Dooley advanced in her career through a variety of jobs, including clerk typist, docket clerk and principal clerk. In 1968, she was the only woman to pass the court clerk test.

She was then assigned to Chancery Judge David D. Furman. She recalled many interesting cases, including those involving affordable housing, the right to use the peace symbol, labor strikes at National Lead and the Middlesex County Welfare Department in New Brunswick.

Dooley also was active in the statewide federation of court clerks and CWA Local 1082, the union that represented the court clerks.

In 1978, Dooley was scheduling matrimonial cases for Judge George Nicola, who was known for the three-day "scared settled" blitz. More than

80 percent of cases were settled in this manner. In those days however, matrimonial default and uncontested cases were heard in the civil division to make the family docket more manageable.

On one summer morning, Judge Furman heard 50 divorce cases.

"It was only one morning and it went very smoothly," Dooley recalled. "Attorneys and clients waited their turn in the courtroom and approached the (bench) when called. The client was sworn, testimony given and judge gave the ruling.

On one case he denied a request for annulment but granted a divorce."

In 1979, Dooley became a part-time assignment clerk in the family part. The Early Settlement Program was started with 40 cases assigned to two panels of two attorneys who would attempt to settle divorce cases before trial.

By 1983, Dooley was working as an assistant assignment clerk for assignment clerk John Chacko, who later became clerk of the appellate division, during the merging of the matrimonial and the juvenile and domestic relations court into the family court.

Three years later, Middlesex Assignment Judge Herman L. Breitkopf appointed her acting assignment clerk for family and reassigned Chacko to the criminal division.

Judge Robert Fiagrotta appointed Dooley assistant family division manager in 1999.

During the last 10 years, she has facilitated many changes in the procedures of family court, including creation of the Early Settlement Program

Dooley also recalled the creation of the domestic violence hearing officer program, when family court moved to its own courthouse on New Street and the big flood of 2008, when the family records stored in the basement were damaged.

Dooley is involved with implementing the NJKiDS child support collection program in Middlesex Vicinage.

Dooley recalled some of the notori-

Judiciary Times is published by the Office of Communications and Community Relations, the Administrative Office of the Courts, for employees of the Judiciary, volunteers who work with the court system and the public.

The chief justice is Stuart Rabner. The acting administrative director of the courts is Judge Glenn A. Grant.

Please send short news articles, photos and suggestions to Mike Mathis, Editor, *Judiciary Times*, Office of Communications and Community Relations, PO Box 037, Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex, Trenton NJ 08625-0037 or via e-mail at Mike.Mathis@judiciary.state.nj.us. Submissions are subject to editing, and not all can be published.

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Emergency Management Focus of Drill in Monmouth Vicinage

By Dawn Materia

Operations Division Manager
Monmouth Vicinage

Monmouth Vicinage continues to work with Monmouth County agencies to implement innovative emergency management techniques.

The vicinage conducted another tabletop exercise on March 23 to reinforce its disaster response process and to measure the effectiveness of the vicinage's Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) and courthouse evacuation plan.

An emergency scenario was staged based on a threatening phone call to the Monmouth County Sheriff's Department.

As the exercise unfolded, participants faced the risk of potential danger to those in the courthouse. They demonstrated communication and notification procedures, implemented safety measures and evacuation plans and carried out critical functions based on the COOP plan.

Observers provided feedback and commended the participants for their quick and thorough communication and response.

Participants discussed the use of resources from other vicinages and determined that the Monmouth Vicinage COOP and evacuation plans adequately addressed the scenario. They also gave recommendations that will be

implemented in future demonstrations.

The exercise was facilitated by Arlene Bonville from the court access services unit at the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Participants included Assignment Judge Lawrence M. Lawson, Judge Paul A. Kapalko, chair of the court security committee, Trial Court Administrator Marsi L. Perkins, several presiding judges and division managers and assistants.

Representatives from the Monmouth County Office of Emergency Management and Fire Marshall's Office and Sheriff Shaun Golden, Capt. John Cerato and other members of the sheriff's office participated.

A Half Century of Service to the New Jersey Courts

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ous trials that were held in Middlesex County during her career, including Joanne Chesimard, who was convicted of the 1973 murder of a state trooper on the New Jersey Turnpike but escaped prison and fled to Cuba, and Melanie McGuire, who was convicted in 2007 of killing her husband before dismembering his body, placing it in three suitcases and throwing it into the Chesapeake Bay.

But Dooley said she felt more involved being the court clerk in chancery cases such as the environmental cases, the National Lead strike, the Mount Laurel affordable housing case, and other cases Furman tried.

"To me, the decisions in the cases were going to affect society and people's lives for a very long time," she said. "It was very interesting to see how facts and testimony and research can become a page of history."

Dooley graduated from University College, a part of Rutgers University, in 1972. She took paralegal courses at Middlesex County College and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa National Honor Society.

Dooley's interests outside of work include fencing, square dancing, theater

and music.

She has served as president of her local history club and as a docent for the Monroe Township historic site, the Dey farm, a 40-acre farm that includes a late 1800's farmhouse and a house that was built in the 1700's. Dooley grew up in a toy store that her parents owned and later moved to a farm in Monroe.

Although she no longer farms, Dooley enjoys the peace and tranquility of the rural setting she calls home.

She also still enjoys working in Middlesex Vicinage because she likes the role she plays in helping people resolve their disputes.

"There is always a solution that can help all people involved in the situation," she said.

Chief Justice Delivers State of Judiciary Speech

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in December 2008.

"The project's success is a fitting tribute to our veterans," Rabner said. "It is also an impressive accomplishment of many individuals and groups who have made it a reality."

Rabner concluded his remarks with a tribute to Supreme Court Associate Justice Roberto Rivera-Soto, who is leaving the court in September.

"We will miss his powerful intellect, his prodigious work ethic, his personal warmth, and the exemplary commitment to serve the bar and attorneys throughout the state that he's demonstrated time and again throughout his career," Rabner said.

Judiciary Times Honored with Statewide Journalism Award

Judiciary Times, the quarterly newsletter of the New Jersey Judiciary, has received a second place ranking in newsletter writing from the New Jersey Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

The publication, edited by Judiciary Publications Manager Mike Mathis under the direction of Winnie Comfort, the Judiciary's Director of Communications and Community Relations, was one of only three

newsletters honored in the Newsletters and Online Publications category of the chapter's annual contest.

"*Judiciary Times* is a critical part of our communication efforts, both internally and externally," said Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts. "It offers substantive information to educate our workforce and the public about our ongoing efforts to continuously improve our services."

Bergen Judges Step Down From the Bench, Into the Classroom

By Cheryl Cohen

Human Resources Division

Bergen Vicinage

Four judges from the Bergen Vicinage shared their knowledge with high school students during a panel discussion for students in the law program at The Academies at Englewood on May 13.

Judges John A. Conte, Gerald C. Escala, and Elijah L. Miller, all of whom are retired, and Roy F. McGeady, presiding Bergen Vicinage municipal court judge, spoke about their careers and then fielded questions. Among the topics they addressed were cyberbullying, technology and the law, the media's impact on judges' decisions; how judges are able to remain unbiased; and the legalization of medicinal marijuana in New Jersey.

One student asked if the panel members had always wanted to become judges, to which the answer was a unanimous "no."

Miller said he wanted to be an astronaut, but at 6 feet 2 inches tall, he was too large to fit in the cockpit.

He went on to become Bergen County's first African-American judge in 1996, working in the civil, criminal and family divisions before retiring in February as presiding judge of the civil division.

He offered sound advice to students who might become judges.

"It's important to consciously make an effort to balance time for your family and dedication to your profession," said Miller, who currently does mediation and arbitration. Conte, whose family ran a funeral home, said he was told he could be anything he wanted, as long as he became a licensed funeral director first, which he did.

In 1991, he became a Superior Court judge, sitting in the family and the criminal divisions.

"Many criminals are not geniuses," Judge Conte told the students, detailing the mishaps of two bumbling criminals attempting to dispose of a body. Conte retired in 2006 and is now a recall judge in the family division.

Escala became a newspaper reporter after college, learning valuable communication skills that benefited him throughout his career.

He became a Superior Court judge in 1991.

While emphasizing the value of communication skills,

Escala said judges need to remain low key.

"Judge Judy *does not* represent judicial temperament," he said

The judge also told the students, "You need to be ready to take detours which will benefit you wherever you ultimately wind up." Escala retired in 2006 and now volunteers at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

McGeady, who has been presiding judge of the municipal courts since 1999, said he didn't want to become a trial lawyer at first. He told the students he has tried 4,000 cases, sparking applause.

"I'd be scared to death to try a case," he recalled.

McGeady cautioned the students to think twice before using drugs or alcohol. He told them about the stiff fines, possible jail time and loss of license imposed on offenders.

Closing advice from Miller included the importance of education and networking.

"Never stop learning and never let anyone tell you 'no' when it comes to achieving your dream," he said.

The panel discussion was requested and organized by teacher Roslyn Powell, who manages the school's law and public safety program. She made the arrangements through Nola Steele, the vicinage training coordinator.



Retired Superior Court Judge Elijah L. Miller speaks to students at The Academies at Englewood in Bergen County. Miller was joined by retired Superior Court Judges Gerald J. Escala and John A. Conte and Judge Roy F. McGeady, presiding municipal court judge in Bergen Vicinage.



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.