

Accurate, Faster Service Thanks to New E-Writ System

Patience Doe and her twin five-year-olds desperately needed money for rent and food. A court hearing was scheduled to collect child support payments from Robin, her “ex.” But there was one problem: Robin was in prison on drug charges.

Patience’s attorney warned her it could take additional days, even weeks, to get a writ to release Robin from prison and have him transported to the hearing.

There were so many “ifs”:
What if someone didn’t give

the judge the paperwork?

What if the paperwork was lost in a huge pile of documents?

What if the clerk typed in the wrong name or ID number?

What if Robin had another appointment at the drug rehab center the same day as the hearing?

What if the wrong inmate showed up?

How would the Doe family manage if the hearing couldn’t be scheduled for weeks or months?

Situations like this fictitious scenario are less likely to occur

thanks to E-Writ, a computer-based partnership between the New Jersey Judiciary and the Department of Corrections (DOC).

The new system has “no downside,” according to Mary Ann Byrne, assistant manager of automated trial court systems in the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

Jointly developed and implemented by the Judiciary and DOC, the E-Writ system is revolutionizing customer service and helping

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Judiciary Times

Fall 2003

The newsletter of the New Jersey Judiciary



Workers on scaffolding at the Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton created a dramatic silhouette this summer. (Photo by L. Holt)

Camden Vicinage Puts Customers and Staff First During Legionnaire’s Disease Scare This Summer

Quick action by a judge and Judiciary staff resulted in the timely closing of the Judiciary offices that house 250 employees at Parkade Building in Camden this summer after a prosecutor’s office employee came down with Legionnaire’s Disease (LD).

At press time, no court employees or customers were known to have contracted the disease, and no additional cases associated with the building had been reported.

Shortly before midnight, Thursday, July 31, Assignment Judge Francis J. Orlando, Jr. ordered the Judiciary offices at the Parkade Building closed following a rapid-fire series of telephone conversations between Judiciary and county officials that began at 8:30 p.m. when Mike O’Brien,

Camden Vicinage’s trial court administrator, got a call about the suspected case of LD. The vicinage’s co-op (continuity of operations) plan—part of the Judiciary’s statewide emergency preparedness program—was put into effect.

O’Brien contacted Steve Yang, the Judiciary’s health and safety officer, to confirm that Judiciary

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Backlog Drops to Lowest Point since 1980

by Tamara Kendig
Communications Specialist
Administrative Office of the Courts

The New Jersey Judiciary continued its success of the past several years in dramatically

Judiciary Times is prepared by Communication Services, Office of Communications, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) for employees of the Judiciary and volunteers who work with the court system.

The Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court is Deborah T. Poritz. The Administrative Director of the Courts is Richard J. Williams.

Please e-mail short news articles saved as Word documents, photos and/or suggestions to: Linda.Holt@judiciary.state.nj.us or send disk, photos and paper copy to: Editor, *Judiciary Times*, Office of Communications, PO Box 037, Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex, Trenton NJ 08625-0037. Submissions are subject to editing, and not all can be published.

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reducing the number of cases characterized as backlogged, according to a report released in August by Administrative Director of the Courts Judge Richard J. Williams.

The New Jersey Judiciary Court Management Report, June 2003, shows the lowest backlog totals since 1980, the first year for which comparable data are available.

The report also indicates that 87 percent of all pending New Jersey court cases are now within expected time goals for resolution assigned by the Judiciary.

This figure includes 94 percent of all Family Division cases, 82 percent of civil cases, 96 percent of special civil cases and 61 percent of criminal cases.

Cases that are not resolved within expected time frames are termed "backlogged."

The number of backlogged cases dropped from 31,270 on June 30, 2002, to 28,952 on June 30, 2003.

Fair and Timely

"We are pleased that our ongoing efforts to improve the timeliness of our calendars has been successful," said Judge Williams.

He added, "We know that resolving disputes in a fair and timely manner is important in earning the trust and confidence of our citizens."

The reduction in backlog was led by the Family Division, which achieved a 24 percent overall reduction in backlogged cases, including a 25 percent reduction in divorce cases, a 29 percent

reduction in domestic violence cases, a 24 percent reduction in delinquency cases, and a 45 percent reduction in backlog for non-dissolution cases.

The Civil Division, which began a best practices initiative in September 2000, continued its significant backlog reduction of past years with a 7 percent decline in backlogged cases this year.

The Special Civil Part of the Civil Division, which deals with cases seeking damages below \$15,000, as well as landlord-tenant and small claims matters, saw changes in the Rules of Court which led to a 10 percent increase in filings.

As a result, that part of the Civil Division was unable to cut its backlog any further during the year.

The Criminal Division continued its reduction in backlog for indictable cases by another 5 percent, for the lowest backlog in 20 years.

Strong Leadership

Judge Williams attributed the ongoing reduction of backlogged court cases to strong leadership and commitment at the county level.

"Our judges, administrators, and staff have made backlog reduction a priority," he said. "They work hard every day to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of the litigation process in New Jersey."

The full text of the report is available on the Judiciary's Web site at www.njcourtsonline.com.

The report includes terms and definitions, data on each county and statewide numbers.

Shelley R. Webster Brings Varied Background To New Role as Management Services Leader

by Linda Brown Holt

The career of Shelley R. Webster, the Judiciary's new assistant director of management services, might be summed up in the title of the 1950s' TV series, *I Led Three Lives*.

As successor to Christina P. Higgins, now director of management and administrative services, Webster is responsible for the Judiciary's financial and support services which include everything from accounting, purchasing, grants and budget, to facilities management, health and safety, office services and the print shop.

"Shelley Webster brings a tremendous mix of energy, experience and skill to this position, and her personal values align directly with those of the Judiciary," said Higgins. "Therefore, I see this as a very good fit for her and for the Judiciary.

"During her three-year year tenure with the management services division in financial services, she worked hard to develop a solid team," Higgins continued. "I look forward to working with her and Brooks Durbin (assistant director of human resources) to develop a strong Office of Management and Administrative Services team."

Smith Named Ass't Director Municipal Court Services

John P. McCarthy Jr., director of trial court services, has announced the appointment of Bob Smith as assistant director, municipal court services. He succeeds Dennis Bliss who retired this year.

Smith has been employed with municipal court services for nearly 20 years and served as chief, automated traffic system/automated complaint system (ATS/ACS) support, since 1999.

"He has been a key figure in the development of the highly successful ATS/ACS systems for municipal courts," McCarthy said.

An interview with the new assistant director will be included in an upcoming edition of *Judiciary Times*.



Assistant Director of Management Services Shelley R. Webster goes over a report with her secretary, Diane Cobbs. (Photo by L. Holt)

Webster's new position is the culmination of a dozen years in state government, starting in 1991 at the Department of Labor, continuing in a variety of management positions with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and leading to the Judiciary where she was hired as a chief in 2000.

That in itself would be an impressive enough career for any professional. But there is more!

"I actually had two other professional lives before I came to work for the state," said the energetic administrator from her office in the Hughes Justice Complex recently.

From 1987 to 1991, Webster owned and, with a partner, operated her own home-inspection business in central New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. "I was certified as a residential building, pest control and asbestos inspector," she reflected. "We did structural, systems and environmental testing and were quite successful at it. But I really missed the team environment."

That team environment had characterized her first career: 17 years in management with a national restaurant chain where she was responsible for

Three-Day Conference Trains Staff To Help Drug Court Participants Succeed

by Carol Venditto
Drug Court Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

More than 350 staff attended classes offered as part of a three-day drug court training program held this summer by the Drug Court Unit of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in partnership with the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI). The first two days of the training were held in Trenton and the last day in Somerville.

Funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the program featured presentations by professional trainers, drug court practitioners from Florida and Washington DC as well as New Jersey drug court professionals.

Drug court staff, Kathryn Dixon and Jeanne Kondash, did a phenomenal job in putting together this event. Each day targeted a different audience:

Day One, titled “Drug Court Basics,” provided basic information for those planning drug court programs as well as those already involved in operations.



Scenes from drug court training.



John P. McCarthy Jr., director of trial court services, discussed the Judiciary’s commitment to the statewide implementation of adult drug courts in New Jersey.

Program topics included “Court as Theatre,” “Team Building” and “Drug Testing Basics.” Attendees included judges, Treatment Assessment Services for the Courts (TASC) evaluators, probation officers

and Judiciary managers as well as prosecutors and public defenders in counties or vicinages planning to implement drug courts next year.

Wanda Moore, drug court coordinator/ISP director for the Office of the Public Defender, highlighted the benefits of drug courts for the criminal justice system and described ways in which the program is a departure from the traditional court process.

Day Two, “Treatment Issues in Drug Court,” was directed entirely toward clinically trained staff working in drug courts.

Attendees were practitioners from the myriad of treatment provider agencies utilized by New Jersey’s drug courts, substance abuse (TASC) evaluators from throughout the state and other clinicians working with drug courts.

One of the speakers was nationally renowned trainer, Guy Wheeler. Wheeler works in one of the country’s first drug court programs in Broward County, Fla., and has established himself as an authority on effective treatment interventions in drug courts.

He has created numerous presentations on “Working with African-American Males in Drug Court” for the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

His workshop on this subject, on the third day of training, was the most highly rated presentation of this event.

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Guide to Courts Now Available in Spanish

The popular booklet, *New Jersey Courts: A Guide to the Judicial Process*, is now available in a Spanish translation.

Titled, *Los Tribunales de Nueva Jersey: Una Guía al Proceso Judicial*, the booklet was translated by a team of professional translators and interpreters working under the auspices of Court Interpreting, Legal Translating and Bilingual Services in the

Administrative Office of the Courts with input from the Office of Minority Concerns.

The form for ordering Judiciary publications may be obtained online. On the InfoNet, select "Publications" on the drop-down menu. On the next screen, select "Brochures," then click on "Judiciary Guide to Brochures." The form may be completed online and e-mailed, mailed or faxed to the

Office of Communications in Trenton.

The mailing address is:
Office of Communications
PO Box 037
25 Market St.
Trenton NJ 08625-0037

The fax number is
(609) 394-1082.
Telephone:
(609) 292-9580.

What is Spanish?

What is Spanish?

The answer is not a simple one. Languages develop regional variations as they leave their place of origin and move throughout the world.

There are differences in aspects of Spanish spoken in Uruguay, Cuba and Mexico, for example, when compared to Spain or even to each other. The same may be said of varieties of English spoken in England, the United States and Australia. To add further diversity, there may be many dialects within each country.

There is even a difference depending on whether the language is spoken or written. Spoken language may be casual, while written text may offer a more formal expression.

The richness of languages poses unique opportunities for writers and editors hoping to communicate with the maximum number of people who speak a given language.

Educators and other language professionals have developed standard forms of Spanish, English and other languages. These standard

forms enable students studying a language in classrooms in Moscow, Los Angeles or Pretoria to learn the same basic grammar and vocabulary.

Meanwhile, communicators around the world are becoming more aware of the various ways a language evolves and expresses a people's culture and identity. For example, a *New York Post* article (June 30, 2003) described how a Spanish TV news station decided on what form of Spanish would be best for its broadcast.

Another example is cited in a *New York Times* article (April 8, 2003) that emphasized the importance of clear communication in medical facilities when different versions of Spanish are spoken by the patient and the doctor or interpreter. In some cases, the same word could mean two completely different conditions (*intoxicado* could mean nauseated or intoxicated, for example).

The courts, too, have their own specific terminology. This is why the courts rely on professional interpreters familiar with legal terms as well as the varieties of the language being spoken.

When a booklet such as *New Jersey Courts: A Guide to the Judicial Process* is translated into Spanish, readers are correct to point out that it may not be translated into a form of Spanish that all court customers will recognize as "their own."

Another challenge to comprehensibility of translated documents, as with all documents, is the fact that people who read Spanish, just as with English, come to the document with different degrees of formal education and familiarity with the terminology used in specific professional contexts, such as the courts.

However, a team of professional court interpreters and translators from different backgrounds worked together to produce a text that accurately translates the English original into Spanish that is not unique to any particular country and should be comprehensible to all Spanish speakers.

The result is a complete, accurate translation that will lead our Spanish-speaking public to a clearer understanding of New Jersey's courts.

Safe & Sound

Staying Safe – You Have More Control Than You Think

by Arlene M. Bonville, Court Access Services



In my previous article, we discussed how not paying attention to our surroundings could put us in very vulnerable, unsafe situations.

Personal safety is just that – personal. Yes, there are situations that we have no control over, like being rear-ended while we’re stopped at a traffic light or having to evacuate a building because of a fire alarm.

However, a large portion of our ability to be safe and secure rests with personal choices we make, or don’t make, throughout our lives. It is

true that we see evidence of poor choices made by other people every day, and unfortunately those poor choices by others can put each of us in vulnerable situations with no control over the results.

But are we just as guilty of doing the same or similar dangerous and irresponsible acts we see others doing? We may not do these things all the time, and we may not even do them intentionally, but it only takes one time for something to go wrong and a disaster to occur.

Have you ever...

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

...turned around to check on your kids in the back seat while you were driving?				
...answered, called or remained on your cell phone regardless of hazardous road or traffic conditions?				
...left food cooking in pots on the stove unattended?				
...left your front door unlocked while you were in the back yard?				
...opened the front door to individuals you did not know?				
...walked to your car from shopping and electronically unlocked the doors way before you get to your vehicle?				
...driven with your car doors unlocked?				
...walked alone at night on a street that was not adequately lit?				
...continued to play golf even when you heard thunder or saw lightning?				
...tried to read a map or newspaper (or shaved or put on makeup) while driving?				

Out of an infinite number of unsafe practices, this is just a random list of 10 that came to mind. If most of your check marks are in the first two columns, you might want to rethink some of the choices you make on these and other daily routines. I know that I have been guilty of several of the items listed – maybe not routinely, but at least occasionally.

During the training of court employees on safety measures, it is not uncommon to see one of two reac-

tions: either heads shaking affirmatively to the instructor’s message, or eyes rolling, indicating they feel like children being lectured.

So to all the “eye-rollers” reading this: yes, you know what is safe and what is unsafe – we all do. But, as human beings, always in a hurry and always multi-tasking, there are times that we might tend to be careless and make mistakes – sometimes very costly mistakes. It never hurts to pay attention to the obvious and err on the side of safety.



Tech-KNOWLEDGE-y

Take Two Antivirus Programs And Call Me in the Morning

by Janet Bastien, Project Manager, Information Technology

With the change of seasons, germs just seem to spread like gossip at the office party. Your kids bring a cold home that goes through everyone in the family and just when you recover, another strain comes through and back under the covers you go.

Your computer is subject to infections, too. Just like all the varieties of human germs, many super-human varieties stalk our computers, targeting those with low resistance.

To learn about the different types of electronic infections just waiting to contaminate your machine, visit www.howstuffworks.com/virus. This interesting site lists the four most common types as:

- **Virus** - a small piece of software that piggy-backs on real programs. For example, it could attach itself to a spreadsheet program. Each time the spreadsheet runs, so does the virus, often reproducing each time
- **E-mail virus** - a virus that travels in *e-mail messages*, and usually replicates itself by automatically mailing itself to people in the victim's e-mail address book.
- **Worm** - a small piece of software that uses *computer networks* and security holes to replicate itself. A copy of the worm scans the network for another machine that has a specific security hole, copies itself to the new machine using the security hole and replicates from there.
- **Trojan horses** - computer programs that claim to do one thing (maybe claim to be a game) but instead do damage when you run them (like erase your *hard disk*).

Just as your child pretends to have a cold to stay home from school, some pranksters pretend to send you a virus which is really a "hoax." Hoaxes usually arrive in the form of an e-mail.

Check Symantec's Web site at www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax for a complete list of hoaxes. Mark this site in your favorites to consult as needed. If you've been sent a hoax, delete the e-mail. If this happens on your PC at work,

report it to your IT staff. Since all Judiciary servers are connected, a virus exposure in one vicinage could infect the entire Judiciary.

We are protected by Norton Antivirus (NAV), a software program, on our gateways that constantly checks incoming mail, "scrubbing" detected viruses before they infect. Each individual desktop also has Norton running and is linked to the NAV gateway. Norton is updated daily, fortified with new "virus signatures." Also, Web sites that are known to have virus downloads are "blacklisted," which prevents access to them by anyone on the Judiciary network.

An Intrusion Detection System (IDS) monitors traffic in and out of our network, detecting "denial of service attacks" which clog our network, impeding access to us. The IDS gives the sender a taste of their own medicine by resetting the traffic back their way. From the "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" department, you can take similar precautions to bolster your home PC's resistance to bugs:

- Inoculate your PC with antivirus software and be sure it pre-scans your e-mail for viruses. Install the updates offered by the software company regularly.
- Don't open e-mail from unknown senders. Don't open attachments unless you are sure what is being sent, even if it's from someone you know.
- Turn off your preview pane in Outlook. Trojans can launch if the mail is opened in the preview pane. (From the menu bar select "View" and then "Preview Pane.")
- Delete chain and junk mail.
- Be cautious when downloading files from the Internet. Ensure that the source is legitimate and reliable.
- Back up your files regularly.

ITO's George Smith told me the only sure way to protect yourself from viruses is to "sever your connections with the outside world." Since this isn't a practical remedy for your PC or your children, caution and common sense, just like extra Vitamin C, go a long way in reducing infection.

Hudson Vicinage's CASA Program Makes a Difference for Children

by LaTia McNeely, MSW
Executive Director
Hudson County CASA

The Hudson Vicinage's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program trains and supervises community volunteers who speak in court on behalf of abused

and neglected children after they have been removed from their homes.

These volunteers receive extensive training in court process and procedures, child advocacy, juvenile justice, social services systems and the special needs of abused and neglected children. Once trained, volunteers are appointed by family court judges and assigned to represent one child (or one family of children) by helping these children receive the necessary services to help move them toward safe and permanent homes.

According to the national CASA Web site www.nationalcasa.org, one half million children in the United States are in foster care because they cannot safely live with their families. Nearly 70,000 National CASA volunteers serve approximately 280,000 of those abused or neglected children every year.

Hudson's CASA program has trained 22 volunteers and 90 percent are actively advocating for children while 10 percent are involved in nonadvocacy roles.

The tasks performed by CASA volunteers include: gathering information, researching family history, investigating circumstances, interviewing relevant parties, reviewing files, documenting findings, preparing reports and making recommendations to the court.

The CASA organization is an international program more than a dozen years old, with programs in Guam and Brazil. Hudson's CASA has been in operation just under two years and is among the newest in the state.

CASA programs have made a tremendous impact on the child welfare system throughout the state. Considered a Judiciary "best practice" and fully supported by the Family Division in the Hudson Vicinage, CASA works diligently to meet the needs of children in out-of-



Hudson Vicinage volunteers undergo intensive training as they prepare to assist with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. (Photos by C. Rizzolo)



home placement.

Hudson's CASA volunteers appreciate the courts' continued support during the planning and inception of this program.

Hudson's CASA program trains volunteers twice a year. The next training class is scheduled for October 2003. Judiciary staff may need to seek an opinion from the Code of Conduct Committee before volunteering. Some staff, based on prior opinions, are prohibited from participating. For further information about Hudson CASA, call (201) 795-6812 or email HUDSONCASA@YAHOO.COM

N.J. Judiciary Web Site Receives World Class Ranking



A recent study ranked the New Jersey Judiciary Web site (www.njcourtsonline.com) as one of the 10 best court-related Web sites in the world.

For its annual ranking, the firm Justice Served examined more than 900 Web sites worldwide. The New Jersey Judiciary Web site ranked first among all state judiciary Web sites and fourth internationally.

All of the Web sites were evaluated using several criteria, including design, ease of navigation and the ability of the public to conduct court business online, including filling out forms and making payments.

Of the New Jersey site, which was ranked fourth on the list, the firm stated, "New Jersey has it all, including e-filing, statewide traffic index and online payment, statewide civil calendar index, online opinions and a mass tort information center."

Judge Richard J. Williams, administrative director of the courts, expressed pride in the Judiciary's Web site.

"Our staff has worked hard to develop our extensive Web site into a world-class resource for those seeking information from or doing business with our courts," he said. "We are delighted to be recognized on an international level."

According to Assistant Director of Communica-

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New Jersey Judiciary Marks 25 Years Of Volunteer Child Placement Review

The Child Placement Review Act is 25 years old this year, a testimony to the dedication and service of citizen-volunteers who serve on Child Placement Review Boards (CPRBs) throughout the state.

Signed into law in 1978, the act requires third-party review of cases involving out-of-home placements of children throughout the state, predating the federal requirement for such review by two years.

The act created the statewide Child Placement Advisory Council, a volunteer panel operating with staff and administrative support under the auspices of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The council includes representatives from Child Placement Review Boards (CPRBs) in every county.

"We are fortunate to have so many give so much of their time for our most unfortunate children," noted John P. McCarthy Jr., director of trial court services. "We are inspired by their dedication and celebrate the silver anniversary of child placement review in New Jersey."

"Volunteers have given thousands of hours of their time reviewing cases for Family Court and interviewing caseworkers, children and both the biological and foster families," said Andrea Freedman, a member of the advisory council's executive board.

At present, some 450 volunteers serve on 73 boards throughout the state (one board for every 200

reviews). Appointed by the assignment judge for the vicinage in which they serve, the boards consist of five members with two alternates.

New Jersey was the first state to have CPRBs composed entirely of volunteers, according to Donna Aster, the Judiciary's children-in-court program coordinator. Twenty-six other states now have child placement review boards entirely served by volunteers.

In New Jersey, board members follow guidelines specified in the Child Placement Review Manual, a document currently being revised, and take part in training activities. According to Kimberly Jenkins, AOC staff to the advisory council, there are four quarterly trainings each year as well as an annual conference.

This year the annual training conference on Oct. 21 will coincide with the 25th anniversary. According to Andrea Freedman, the conference will include addresses by Superior Court Judge Ellen L. Koblitiz, chair of the Conference of Family Presiding Judges, and U.S. District Court Judge Katherine S. Hayden. Delegates from other states have been invited to attend and share their own perspectives on the child placement review process.

Further information about child placement review may be found on the Judiciary's InfoNet at <http://home.aoc.judiciary.state.nj.us/cpr/index.htm>.

Youth from 15 Counties Compete and Grow...

By Mary McGinty
Administrative Specialist IV
Juvenile Probation Services

The 16th Annual Judiciary Olympics, sponsored by the Positive Interventions Committee of Juvenile Probation Services, was held on Aug. 13, 2003, in Warianco Park, Union County.

One hundred and eighty-six juvenile probationers from 15 counties and the Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program competed for the gold in a range of sporting events, then enjoyed a picnic lunch served by the Union Vicinage probation staff.

Judge Roberto Alcazar of the family division was on hand to award the medals and trophies. The seemingly effortless flow of activities throughout the day was a testament to the hard work of the committee, and particularly the Union Vicinage probation staff who formed their own ad hoc Olympics committee to take on the role of host. Even the weather cooperated to ensure success.

The participants, divided into county teams and by over/under age 16, competed in a 100-meter dash, a relay race, football throw, home run derby, long jump, obstacle course, softball throw, jump rope competition and, finally, a tug of war. Gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded in each event, then overall county winners were identified for first, second and third place trophies. Congratulations to Bergen County (first place), Ocean County (second place) and Essex County (third place).

Probation Officer Meg Farmer led the Union Vicinage

Probation staff in tackling the details of the day. Meg and her staff introduced two new ideas at this year's games that will probably become regular features in the future: an opening ceremony with the national

Judge Alcazar peppered his speech with references to Michael Jordan's discipline in pursuing his goals, and how that kind of commitment could make anyone a winner in any arena,



Judge Roberto Alcazar and CPO Fred Bostel (above) announce winners during the Judiciary Olympics for juveniles on probation. (Photos by L. Holt)



anthem, and volleyball games.

This year, volleyball was used during downtime between games, but there was talk about designating it as a regular medal-winning event next year. In fact, some of the probationers asked to see a game between the probation officers!

including school. The judge encouraged the participants to view themselves as winners whenever they set and reach their goals.

Mary DeLeo, assistant director for probation services,

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...in Action-Packed Judiciary Olympics Aug. 13

Continued from page 11

attended the Olympics for the first time and praised both the committee and the Union Vicinage probation staff for the hard work that went into making the day so successful. Gayle Maher, chief of probation services, and Philip Hill, director of the Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program, were on hand to cheer for the probationers and to thank the probation officers for making



such a meaningful contribution to rehabilitating juvenile offenders.

Probation officers select participants for the program to provide them with an opportunity to enjoy a leisure experience with adults who will support them in learning new social skills. Participants also are selected based on their compliance with the terms of their probation.

Many juvenile probationers do not have an opportunity to play sports at their schools or to take trips with their families, so the

Positive Interventions Committee plans recreational and educational outings to aid in their rehabilitation. Probation officers view the events sponsored by the committee as an important aid during their probation term.

As Union's Chief Probation Officer Fred Bostel, who is also chair of the Positive Interventions Committee, told participants, this was a day for *them*. He and the committee members hoped that at the end of the day everyone left feeling this was true.

Team Practices Questionnaire Coming Soon to a PC Near You

As part of its emphasis on continuous improvement, the Judiciary is seeking to identify its level of success with teams and team processes.

To meet this need, the Management Committee of the Administrative Council has developed a short team practices questionnaire that was first given to managers and team leaders at last year's Judicial Staff College. The intent of the survey was to solicit individual comments and attitudes about both their own team, as well as teams across the Judiciary.

In October, judges and staff alike will get a chance to complete a slightly revised version of this anonymous, two-part survey.

"Knowing how team members themselves feel about their teams is important to identifying where and how we can improve our service to court users," said Jude DelPreore, trial court administrator for the Mercer Vicinage and cochair of the committee.

The goals set for the scope of this project include the following:

- Report on team successes throughout the Judiciary in an effort to expand team development;

- Examine the effectiveness of team processes (e.g. communication and decision making) as a means to improve the completion of work;

- Identify best practices in team organization and development that may be transferred or applied to teams across all divisions;

- Link the study findings to refinement of existing training at all levels of the organization.

"The more people who complete the survey, the better idea we will have of just how well teams function in the Judiciary," according to DelPreore. For that reason, the committee is asking all recipients to take a few minutes from their busy schedules to participate in the study. The results of this study may impact team operations throughout the organization.

The revised survey has been automated to simplify answering it and compiling the results. Staff will receive instructions in two to three weeks on how to access the survey, which will be online for a two-week period.

Union Vicinage Seminars Focused on Powers and Impartiality of Arbitrators

by Lloyd Garner, Esq.
Union Vicinage Assistant Civil
Division Manager/Special Civil
Part

(Editor's note: An article in the Summer 2003 edition of Judiciary Times described the Union Vicinage's seminars for mediators and arbitrators held May 30. This article follows up with information presented at the seminars on the complementary dispute resolution process and the role of arbitrators.)

Complementary dispute resolution (CDR) events such as non-binding arbitration have expanded significantly since Oct. 4, 1983, when a state statute mandated that all auto negligence cases valued at \$15,000 or less be submitted to non-binding arbitration.

Non-binding arbitration has been expanded by Court Rule to include many case types pending in the law division, such as all auto negligence and personal injury cases, regardless of the amount in controversy, personal injury protection (PIP) cases and so forth.

In addition, even the most complex cases can be subject to non-binding arbitration pursuant to the managing judge's discretion. Under Court Rules, arbitration hearings have the same dignity as trials, and the arbitrators have subpoena power and may compel witness attendance and document production.

The Rules also allow arbitrators to determine the law and facts, administer oaths and

affirmations, and in general exercise the powers of the court in the conduct and management of the arbitration hearing.

Arbitrators typically know and are experienced in the areas of law that pertain to the particular cases they have been assigned. They offer invaluable insight to the litigants and their counsel based upon their knowledge and experience.

The members of the Advisory Committee on Contract/Commercial Arbitration and Mediation, in conjunction with assistance from Sandra Thaler-Gerber, Union's civil division manager; Union's CDR administrator, Doris Tarquinio; and the arbitration staff take an active role in assuring that cases scheduled for arbitration are assigned to the most qualified arbitrators in Union County.

This team reviews the area of the law that forms the basis of each lawsuit and scrutinizes the recommended arbitrator's particular experience and expertise.

Under Assignment Judge Edward W. Beglin's direction, the May 30 seminar encouraged arbitrators to provide objective and reasonable decision-making and to

offer impartial insights to the parties that participate in this process.

When arbitrators maintain balance and objectivity, not favoring either the defendant or the plaintiff, they help create a successful arbitration and mediation program.

These goals are part of the Union Vicinage's continuing mission to promote and increase the efficiency and value of CDR events. CDR truly has become an integral part of our vicinage and the Judiciary.

Linda Greenhouse Of New York Times To Address Judicial College

Linda Greenhouse, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who reports on the U.S. Supreme Court for *The New York Times*, will be the keynote plenary speaker at this year's Judicial College. The college will be held Nov. 24 through 26.

In addition to addresses by Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz and Judge Richard J. Williams, administrative director of the courts, the college will feature 30 workshops for judges on topics such as medical malpractice, juvenile law update, recent developments in product liability, international parental abduction, drugs and the brain, and cultural diversity.

The text of the workshops is provided on CD-ROM to judges in advance, with updates and audio tapes of sessions available after the college, according to Richard L. Saks, assistant director of Judicial Education and Development, and Richard Young, chief, Judicial Education/Performance.

Union Drug Court Honors “Graduates” Who Have Gone on to Help Others Succeed

by Colin Lochner
 Drug Court Coordinator
 Union Vicinage

Superior Court Judge James C. Heimlich of the Criminal Division recently presented special achievement awards to five drug court participants for their extraordinary vocational success and significant contributions to the Union County Drug Court Program.

Approximately two years ago, Randy Lawson, Marty Abbot, Lazaro Tabachnick, James Myers and Preston Jones were each referred by their drug court probation officers to the First Occupational Center of New Jersey in Elizabeth.

The probation officers hoped their probationers would acquire some basic building trades skills enabling them to find entry-level jobs in the construction industry.

No one on the Union County Drug Court Team ever expected what would come next.

Not only did Randy, Marty, Lazaro, James and Preston complete the building trades program, they were each offered positions by the school as building trades instructors. Since that time, they have provided instruction and mentoring to more than 100 other students referred to the program by the Union County Drug Court and

students who, like themselves, are recovering from substance abuse and they help students to get the counseling they need if they return to using drugs.

Lew Garley, the director of the building trades program, said that the program helps create a safe environment for students to experiment with new, more healthy, responsible and satisfying behaviors.

Randy explains that he is living to work rather than working to live since becoming a teacher. One of his students recently reported to him that she had been offered a position making \$40,000 after years of drug addiction and dependency on welfare.

Lazaro

attributes much of his success to drug court because he never would have gone to school on his own. Randy, Marty, Lazaro, James and Preston are proof that drug court can change lives.

other law enforcement and social services agencies.

In addition to teaching carpentry, plumbing and electrical skills, the five men serve as positive role models for their students.

They run a self-help group every Wednesday morning for



Drug Court Success Story--Shown left to right are: Robert Smith, drug court participant; Lazaro Tabachnick; drug court participant; Lew Garley, director of the Community Institute for Career Advancement; Colin Lochner, Union County drug court coordinator; and Randy Lawson, drug court participant.

Essex Courts Host Local Librarians In Day-long Community Outreach

by Nichole Purcell
Community Relations Liaison
Essex Vicinage Information and
Community Relations Center

The Essex Vicinage hosted a community outreach program July 7 for Essex County librarians. Libraries are a key resource for information about our courts and justice system.

Held in the New Courts Building in Newark, the Essex Vicinage Court and Community Exchange Program focused on the role of the courts and identified areas in which the court and local libraries can collaborate to provide services to the public. This dialogue provided librarians from the Newark, Belleville, Nutley, Bloomfield, Montclair, West Orange and South Orange public libraries with a better understanding of the judicial system and the courts' role in the community.

In welcoming remarks, Assignment Judge Joseph A. Falcone stressed the importance of the courts reaching out to community organizations as part of an ongoing effort to provide quality service to the residents of Essex County. He emphasized that this was the first of this kind of outreach program that the court would sponsor in order to effectively address community needs. He invited library representatives to contact the vicinage's Information Center to arrange a tour of the court for their summer or school-year programs.

Vicinage staff distributed copies of the booklet, *A Guide to the Superior Court of New Jersey – Essex Vicinage*, which was developed by the Vicinage Customer Service Committee as a resource for members of the

public about the court. In remarks to the librarians, Shazeeda Samsudeen, ombudsman for the Essex Vicinage, noted that committee representatives from each division were responsible for their division's content. All of the vicinage's more than 1,000 employees have a copy of the guide to ensure the accuracy of information given to the public about the court.

Members of the Customer Service Committee discussed their division's section of the guidebook. They included: Brenda Carmichael, supervisor of the civil customer service unit; Darryl Vartabedian, manager of criminal records; Vernest Moore, supervisor of the Family Information & Community Relations Center; Patricia Wooten, assistant manager of the jury management division; and Amy Chack, municipal division liaison.

Following the presentations, Nichole Purcell, community relations liaison in the Information & Community Relations Center, conducted a tour of the court complex for library representatives. Participants viewed a proceeding in Judge Falcone's courtroom and visited the law library where Debra Womack, law librarian, described the library's holdings and the types of questions asked daily by library users. The tour concluded with visits to the busy customer service areas of the criminal and civil divisions and a final stop in the Information & Community Relations Center.

After lunch, Thomas O'Malley, supervising librarian of the New Jersey State Library Law Section, presented information on legal resources (federal and state

statutes, periodicals, Web sites, etc.) that should be available in all public library collections. He noted that the Essex Vicinage guide was an excellent addition to the resource list and that the libraries should make it available to their staff and the public.

The day ended with a wrap-up discussion with Collins Ijoma, trial court administrator, who thanked the library representatives for taking the time out of their schedules to spend a day at the court. He emphasized that this program was the first in what he and Judge Falcone hope will be an ongoing dialogue with local libraries and other community organizations to provide quality service to the residents of Essex County and instill public trust and confidence in the court.

The response from the librarians was overwhelmingly positive. Evaluations completed by the librarians said they found the program to be "very useful" and informative. When asked, "What information did you find most helpful?" one librarian said, "Everything. I got the answer to many of the questions we deal with everyday at the library. My first time exposed to the courthouse. Impressive." A state librarian found the panel discussion of each court division by the Customer Service Committee to be very helpful. A librarian and writer noted, "I found several publications that I wanted to add to the Newark Public Library collection." Several of the representatives offered suggestions for other organizations the court should include in its outreach programs including municipal and school employees.

Shelley Webster, New Management Services Leader

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upwards of 900 employees.

Webster learned the work ethic that has driven her throughout her three careers at a very early age. “I was one of nine children in a poor but loving household,” she recalled. “My father was a truck driver and my mother, who’s still extremely active at 79, was a homemaker. I had an older sister who was physically disabled from birth—paralyzed from the waist down from spina bifida—so I’ve always been concerned for people with disabilities.”

Sensitivity to the needs of people with disabilities runs deep in Webster’s family. She also has a niece with learning disabilities who is paralyzed from the chest down.

“Society’s treatment of people with disabilities is much different today,” observed Webster. “My niece is ‘mainstreamed,’ but my sister wasn’t even allowed to go to school. There weren’t ramps and handicapped access years ago. I remember carrying my sister’s wheelchair up steps. It really made an impression on me.”

Despite the challenges, growing up in a big family gave Webster the tools to succeed in a competitive workplace.

“All 11 of us lived in a house with three bedrooms and one bathroom, but we learned to cooperate and care for each other,” she said. “We did everything for ourselves, from canning vegetables and making bacon to fixing the electricity and the plumbing. We learned to hustle: we collected and sold newspapers, bottles and scrap metal to earn extra money.”

Her first job while still a teenager was at McDonald’s where she was promoted to manager within a few months. She enjoyed the challenges of management and continued to excel in her work while completing her education.

Webster was the only one in her family to go to college, which she paid for entirely on her own. Her education included a bachelor’s degree from then-Trenton State College, an MBA from Rider University, and professional certification as a CPA.

“My education meant a lot to me because I really had to work for it,” Webster said. “When I hear people say they never went to college because of the cost, I tell them that they can do anything they put their minds to.”

All the skills and personal qualities Webster developed during her professional life are called into play in her new role at the helm of management services. Among her main tasks since assuming this role in July are team-building, employee development and hiring key staff. Webster serves as staff to the Administrative Council’s Budget and Planning Committee and looks forward to working with support services, an area she was not previously responsible for at the Judiciary.

“It’s exciting to learn new things,” she said with enthusiasm. “It broadens your perspective.”

While she is dedicated to her work and puts in long hours, Webster finds time to enjoy more relaxing pursuits on her own time. That means skiing vacations, playing various sports and taking her German shepherd, Lee, for

walks in northern Burlington County. She and her family members still make time to meet monthly over dinner.

But whatever she does, Webster puts people at the center. After years of number-crunching at OMB, she was pleased to join the Judiciary where service to court customers is a priority.

“The business of the courts is dispute resolution,” she said. “The culture here is that people are important and what they do is of value. I like that,” she added with a smile.

Staff College To Focus on Partnerships

“Developing Effective Partnerships” is the theme of this year’s John Neufeld Judicial Staff College to be held Nov. 24 and 25.

Conference participants will include some 750 Judiciary senior managers, selected supervisors and team leaders. The Staff College will be held at two locations—the Parsippany Hilton and The Mansion in Voorhees—to accommodate the largest number of staff.

The program will include keynote addresses, 16 workshops and networking opportunities. Workshops added this year include: “Using Your PC as a Management Tool,” “Partnering Through Dialogue,” “Adventures in Managing Conflict” and “Partnerships Within the Judiciary.”

Accurate, Faster Service Thanks to E-Writ System

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staff do their jobs better and more quickly.

“E-Writ has brought the process of writ preparation into the 21st century,” said Stan Repko, a consultant and former director of policy and planning with 32 years experience in New Jersey DOC administration. “The impact it is making on the writ process is unbelievable.”

Computer-to-Computer

Renowned for its innovative use of technologies in the courts, New Jersey is one of the first states in the nation to have an automated E-Writ system that is networked between the mainframe computer systems of the judicial branch of government and the correctional agency. The system is online, but is not delivered over the Internet.

“The fact that this is a closed system between the Judiciary and DOC increases its security,” observed Repko.

Writs are the documents used by the Judiciary to summon inmates to court. According to DOC statistics, there are approximately 28,000 inmates in 15 state correctional facilities. Writs are mostly used in the criminal division, with some in family and only a few in civil.

“In the past, preparing writs was a time-consuming process,” said Byrne. “A staff person would need to look up information in a paper file and type it up. They had to know which institution an inmate was in, get all the names and numbers right, and then get the judge’s signature. The final step was to send the writ via first-class mail.”

Fast and Accurate

Under the new system, most of the work is done automatically.

“The clerk selects the inmate’s name from a list or types in the SBI number,” Byrne said. The State Bureau of Identification number—SBI—is issued by the State Police based upon the inmate’s 10 fingerprints.

“Then the clerk presses a PF key and the entire form is filled out instantaneously and accurately. It can be done in the courtroom during a hearing. No signature is necessary, so there are no delays. The system prints out a copy for the clerk and sends a copy to Corrections in minutes.”

E-Writ is a case of “computers talking to computers,” according to Repko. The Judiciary mainframe PromisGavel “talks” with the DOC’s Offender Based

Corrections Information System (OBCIS). Prior to E-Writ, Judiciary staff had to call DOC to get access to this information.

Before the conversion to E-Writ, some 900 to 1,000 writs went through the judicial and correctional systems in New Jersey each month. That number increased to approximately 1,500 in the first month since E-Writ was implemented statewide in early September 2003.

Improves Scheduling

Another advantage of E-Writ is the impact on scheduling. “With the push of a button, you can see the online calendar of inmates scheduled to appear in court,” said Byrne.

“The earlier we know that an inmate is scheduled, the better,” said Repko. “It expedites DOC’s scheduling process as well.”

Scheduling is not only a time-consuming process for Corrections. It is also an expensive process for taxpayers.

“Inmates aren’t simply transported individually to hearings,” Repko explained. “They may be bussed to different points throughout the state, where some are dropped off and others are picked up. Security is tight and the transportation process is closely monitored. It costs about \$300 to \$500 to transport one inmate to and from a hearing.”

E-Writ not only expedites scheduling, but it also alerts the Judiciary so that inmates’ medical tests and other important appointments can be accommodated when possible.

Standard Codes

Another advantage of E-Writ that is important to the Judiciary is standardization and uniformity of codes. Standardization is a key element in the Judiciary’s statewide unification.

“We are all speaking the same language,” said Byrne.

While Byrne and Repko were the key managers involved in the development and implementation of E-Writ, they acknowledge extraordinary contributions from a number of staff. Byrne said that two information technology analysts on her staff—Lisa Haimowitz and Richard Proctor—do an outstanding job teaching clerks about the system.

Repko recognized the excellent work of Byrne and her staff. Both Repko and Byrne also acknowledged the many contributions of Nancy Soltis,

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Camden Vicinage Puts Customers and Staff First

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employees should not be allowed to work in the building until it was declared safe. Information exchanges continued throughout the night between Judiciary and county staff.



Outside the Parkade Building, Judiciary staff provide information to visitors.

On Friday, August 1, personnel assigned to the Parkade Building were given the day off, while plans were developed for the temporary relocation to the Hall of Justice building.

Yang conferred with county and state health officers, and testing for the presence of Legionnaire's

bacterium occurred throughout the Parkade Building. Positive test resulted in remediation efforts over the course of the next six weeks.

The vicinage retained environmental and microbiology experts to assure that the building was decontaminated and a preventive maintenance plan was in place for staff to return on Sept. 15.

A 50-year-old structure scheduled for demolition as part of the city's master plan, the Parkade Building houses some 1,200 workers, including nearly 250 Superior Court employees, mostly involved with probation supervision.

While the building was closed, employees set up temporary offices in courtrooms and other court facilities.



A Bank of PCs turns a courtroom into office space.

"Staff was here until late Friday night setting up phone and computer lines," said O'Brien.

Vicinage leadership and Steve Yang addressed three assemblies of all staff relocated from the Parkade Building.

They also met with union representatives no less than once each week during the relocations to address employee questions and concerns.

"The assignment judge made a bold decision to close the Judiciary offices in the building," said O'Brien. "Staff were cooperative and positive throughout the ordeal, tolerating the discomfort of working in makeshift office space."

Accurate, Faster Service Thanks to E-Writ System

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Judiciary ITO; Bonnie Kennedy-Sinacore, criminal division manager, Monmouth Vicinage (the site of the pilot program); Catherine Halper, acting chief of correctional information systems; Sandy Czenis, principal information manager-information systems technician; and Patti Gaskill, administrative analyst 2 with DOC's central transportation unit.

"E-Writ is wonderful," beamed Repko. "We look forward to the day when other court documents will also be automated, including judgments of convictions and presentence investigation reports."

--Linda Brown Holt

--Linda Brown Holt

New Jersey's Color of Justice Program Opens Doors to Opportunity



Participants in the Color of Justice seminar held recently in New Jersey included: (left to right, back row) Narisa Skillman, attorney; Verna Leath, attorney; Nesle Rodriguez, attorney; Anne Sulton, attorney; Christina Bennett, attorney; Priya P. Ramrup, judicial clerk; Ebonee Hamilton, judicial clerk; Judge Lourdes Santiago; Bhavini T. Shah, attorney; Judge Michelle Hollar-Gregory; Judge Maureen Mantineo; Judge Ana Moriera; (front row) Judge Karimu Hill-Harvey, Judge Shirley Tolentino, Dr. Phoebe Slade, Judge Sheila Venable, Wanda Molina, attorney. (Panelists not shown: Dr. Sandra Bloomberg, Judge Alison Brown Jones and Kenneth Padilla, attorney.)

(Editor's note: The following article is reproduced with the permission of the Jackson Advocate News Service. The article appeared in the July 10-16 edition of the Jackson Advocate, Jackson, Miss., on page 10A. The Jackson Advocate is Mississippi's oldest African American newspaper, and the largest weekly newspaper in the state.)

Jackson Advocate News Service

The National Association of Women Judges (District III), the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, and New Jersey City University recently sponsored a unique seminar for young women attending high school and college. The seminar was organized by Jersey City Municipal Court Judge Sheila Venable and New Jersey City University Professor Phoebe Slade.

As she slowly rose from her seat to approach the podium to deliver her powerful keynote address at the seminar, all of the judges and lawyers in attendance immediately jumped to their feet and gave an enthusiastic standing ovation as a sign of deep respect and admiration for New Jersey Superior Court Judge Shirley Tolentino.

Judge Tolentino is one of America's first African American female judges and former president of the National Association of Women Judges. Judge Tolentino noted that she and Judge Weeks initiated the "Color of Justice" Program to help increase the number of African American female lawyers and judges.

She said: "When I envisioned a seminar to help prepare young women for careers in the field of law, this is what I dreamed about — a room full of lawyers and judges sharing their experiences with young women from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds."

The lawyers and judges in attendance did not disappoint Judge Tolentino. They told the audience of over 100 high school and college students how to get into college, prepare for law school while in college, apply to law school, obtain money for law

school, secure internships with law firms and clerkships with judges, obtain employment as lawyers, and be appointed or elected as judges.

After the seminar, one of the students remarked: "This is a wonderful event. Not only do we get to interact with judges and lawyers, we also are gaining useful information on how we can follow in their footsteps."

Other seminar panelists were: Attorney Christina Bennett, Dr. Sandra Bloomberg, Attorney Ebonee Hamilton, Judge Karimu Hill-Harvey, Judge Michelle Capers Hollar-Gregory, Judge Cynthia D. Jackson, Judge Alison Brown Jones, Attorney Verna G. Leath, Judge Maureen Mantineo, Attorney Wanda Molina, Judge Ana Moreira, Attorney Kenneth Padilla, Attorney Priya P. Ramrup, Attorney Nesle Rodriguez, Judge Lourdes Santiago, Attorney Bhavini Tara Shah, Attorney Narissa Skillman, and Attorney Anne T. Sulton.

Monmouth Recognizes Volunteers

by Carmen Flores
EEO/AA Officer
Monmouth Vicinage

The Monmouth Vicinage recognized the valuable work of its court volunteers at a special program held in June at the Sheraton Eatontown.

Monmouth Vicinage has more than 500 volunteers who participate in programs that aid children and families in crisis, support and direct juvenile probationers, monitor guardianships, mediate disputes and serve on Supreme Court and vicinage committees.

The volunteer recognition program included remarks by Assignment Judge Lawrence M. Lawson and a keynote address by Sarah Thoma, director of the Governor's Office of Volunteerism.

John Morton, award administrator, presented The John A. McCormick Volunteer of the Year Award to Doris Sims. Sims has volunteered continually for 18 years as secretary of the Tinton Falls Juvenile Conference Committee. The Probation Association of New Jersey, Local 113, sponsors the award to honor the memory of John A. McCormick, a former

senior probation officer who worked with volunteers.

Judge Eugene A. Iadanza, presiding judge of Monmouth's family division, presided over the presentation of awards to 71 volunteers: 32 volunteers received an award for five years of service, 33 received an award for 10 years of service, four received an award for 15 years of service and two received an award for 25 years of service. Programs in which volunteers serve include the Juvenile Conference Committee, the Child Placement Review Board, the Municipal Court Mediators Program, Minority Concerns, Supervised Visitation and the Student Intern/Administration Programs.

During the program, Judge Lawson swore in some 50 new volunteers, who serve in various court programs throughout Monmouth County. The Stellar Strings, Classical Chamber Trio, provided musical selections. Acting Trial Court Administrator William Lynch presented the closing remarks.



Web Site Receives Award

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tions Toni McLaughlin, who is the Judiciary's Webmaster, many ideas for upgrading the site have come from comments e-mailed to the Web team. One example is a search tool that allows users to search the civil motion calendar by judge. Convenient links to instructions for conducting research and initiating court cases on-line also have been added to assist site visitors.

"We are always looking for ways to make our Web site accessible and helpful to the general user, as well as attorneys and others who regularly conduct business with us," she said.

Honors are nothing new for the New Jersey Judiciary's Web site. The Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University ranked it first among New Jersey state government Web sites in 2002. In addition, the National Center for State Courts Court Technology Conference named it one of the Top 10 Court Web Sites in 2001.

Judge Imai Visits from Japan—Judge Osamu Imai of Tokyo District Court reviews New Jersey Judiciary publications with Tamara Kendig, communications specialist in the Office of Communications, recently. Judge Imai is participating in the Japanese Judge Visitation Program for the 2003-2004 court year. A native of Hokkaido, the judge graduated from the Faculty of Law of Waseda University. Appointed a judge in October 2000, he hears civil trial cases as an associate judge in a panel in Tokyo District Court. During his stay in New Jersey, he will study the state's court system, spending a month with the Administrative Office of the Courts and two to four weeks in several vicinages. He will attend the Judicial College and Orientation Seminar for New Municipal Court Judges, as well as other activities. His work will include researching topics for the Supreme Court of Japan and observing court practices. In addition, his visit will include observation of federal court activities.

Somerset Courthouse Renovations to Improve Customer Service

by Robert Levine
Administrative Supervisor II
General Operations Division
Hunterdon/Somerset/Warren
Vicinage

The quest for better customer service is the driving force behind renovations to the first floor of the Somerset County Courthouse this fall and winter.

Renovations to the vicinage finance division and central fee office are expected to result in a modern, efficient work environment to serve the citizens of Somerset County.

According to Thomas Bernard, the Somerset County engineer, construction on the first floor of the main courthouse at 20 North Bridge St., Somerville, is expected to begin in November and should be completed in the early spring.

The architectural design includes a more accessible central fee office payment window. The plans take advantage of the natural light available in the connecting walkway to the historic courthouse. Carolyn Shefsky, the finance division manager, said that she is pleased with the design that shows the result of the careful planning and coordination process and looks forward to the completion of the project.

The finance division's move from the third to the first floor of the courthouse is part of a larger plan to provide additional court-

rooms. The plan began in the spring of 2002 with the relocation of the general operations division to its present location behind the library on the second floor of the courthouse.

Future plans call for the relocation of the civil division, the municipal division and the court's administrative offices from the third floor of the main courthouse to the first floor of the nearby 40 North Bridge St. site. Plans also include space for the human resources division, a vicinage training facility and a secure connection to the main courthouse. The vacated space on the third floor of the main courthouse will

accommodate at least two new courtrooms with associated judges' chambers and support facilities.

Once the new courtrooms are built, Eugene Farkas, the trial court administrator for Vicinage 13 which includes Somerset, envisions the creation of a new courthouse complex lobby and entrance facing Main St. The new lobby will provide a better-situated point of entry for jurors, staff and the public. Security will be enhanced with a state-of-the-art security office and better placement of screening devices. A modern information kiosk will serve as a focal point to help direct courthouse visitors.

Three-Day Drug Court Training

Continued from page 4

Day Three, the most ambitious program of the conference, focused on "Improving Outcomes in Drug Court." The program provided drug court practitioners with advanced training to improve their effectiveness with drug court participants.

One of the primary goals of drug court teams is to support individual changes in offenders to help them move closer to a sober, productive life.

Effective drug treatment is key, but certainly not the only issue participants face to reach graduation.

The training included plenary sessions on relapse prevention and stress management and 10 workshops on various topics.

The National Development and Research Institute (NDRI) is evaluating the program for BJA, which monitors feedback on the effectiveness of programs it funds. This evaluation reflects the belief that drug court training should be held to the same standards of accountability pertains to drug courts. It is through this process that we continually improve our service to the courts, and the courts improve their ability to reduce drug-driven crime in our communities.

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Mission Statement of the New Jersey Court System

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.