

A Day in the Life of Civil and Special Civil Part: How the Hudson Vicinage Meets the Challenge

Editor's note: This is the first in a regular series of "a day in the life" articles highlighting the good work that judges and Judiciary staff are doing around the state. This first article focuses on a day in the life of the civil division and special civil part in Jersey City, the Hudson County seat.

A visit to landlord/tenant court

"Good morning, everyone! Please turn off all cell phones and beepers! I'm about to call today's cases. If you're a tenant, it is imperative that you let me know you're here. Once I complete this list you will not be allowed to check in. And if you do not deposit your rent with the court by 4:30 p.m., you may be locked out approximately nine days from today!"

This is landlord/tenant court in Jersey City where dozens of requests to evict people are heard four days a week.

This is just one part of the operation of the civil division. In addition to landlord/tenant, civil hears major lawsuits, small claims and the thousands of bill collection cases of the special civil part.

Continued on page 17

Judiciary Times

The newsletter of the New Jersey Judiciary

Winter 2003-2004

Robert W. Smith Brings 25 Years Experience To New Role as Municipal Assistant Director

Robert W. ("Bob") Smith's career with the Judiciary began at an age when most people are only starting to think about what they want to do in life.

"I started as a student assistant in high school delivering mail at the

Middlesex County Courthouse," reflected Smith recently. "I worked there while in high school and continued through college while studying business economics at Rutgers."

Smith graduated from Rutgers in 1980 and kept on working at the courthouse. He eventually became municipal court liaison and joined the Administrative Office of the Courts in 1986 as an information technology analyst in the municipal division.

As his interest in courts and technology grew, so did his career. Smith was promoted to assistant chief of the municipal court automation section in 1988 and became chief of the Automated Traffic System/Automated Complaint System (ATS)

Continued on page 10



Bob Smith, new assistant director of municipal court services, at work in his office in Trenton

Inside...

Administrators certified	p. 2
Jobs for probationers	p. 3
Burlington Law Day Award	p. 5
Roots & Wings takes off	p. 8
Fifty years with Judiciary	p. 13
Middlesex renovates	p. 14
A-sail on Pete Seeger's ship	p. 20

Cape May County Municipal Courts First to Achieve Full Certification of All Municipal Court Administrators

by Tamara Kendig
Communications Specialist
Office of Communications

Cape May County municipal courts are the first in New Jersey where every municipal court administrator has

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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Thanks to the other Judiciary staff who contributed articles and photographs.

achieved state certification, according to Dennis L. Bliss, chair of the Municipal Court Administrator Certification Board. The announcement was made in Atlantic City this fall at the annual conference of the Municipal Court Administrators Association of New Jersey.

"Cape May has established the standard for qualification excellence in municipal court administration," said Bliss. "The goal now is to achieve that standard throughout the state and make New Jersey's municipal court administrators, through the certification program, the best qualified in the country."

The three-part certification process consists of 105 hours of coursework, written and oral exams, and the development of a written court improvement project. The coursework includes the study of administration, operations and management of municipal courts; and advanced study of the municipal court computerized case tracking system and *NJMCDirect*, the online payment system. The court improvement project must contribute to the administration of justice in the municipal courts and further a court's interests as a part of the local community.

Retaining certification requires a career-long commitment to professionalism. Municipal court administrators must be recertified every three years, during which they must acquire 45 hours of continuing education credits in order to qualify for recertification.

Municipal Court Presiding Judge Louis J. Belasco, who oversees operations of municipal courts in Cape May and Atlantic Counties, offered his praise.

"I have had the opportunity to see first-hand the dedication

and professionalism of the Cape May County municipal court administrators," he said. "I am pleased that their combined effort to achieve the mark of distinction that comes with certification has brought this recognition they so richly deserve."

According to legislation signed in 1994, the Municipal Court Administrator Certification Board establishes courses and designs examinations for certification of municipal court administrators. The Judiciary municipal services division administers the program. The legislation was written in response to the growing demand for managerial skills and the increasing professionalism required of those responsible for the daily operations for the state's 536 municipal courts.

"This is an important milestone in the Judiciary's vision to certify every municipal court administrator in New Jersey," said Robert Smith, assistant director of municipal court services.

Currently, 320 of the state's more than 500 municipal court administrators are certified, and more than 100 additional court administrators and deputy court administrators are in the process of obtaining certification. Cape May County has 14 certified municipal court administrators.

Judge Richard J. Williams, administrative director of the courts, spoke to the conference of municipal court administrators.

"We are proud of the professionalism demonstrated by those municipal court administrators who have dedicated significant time and effort to achieving certification," said Judge Williams. "Certification is not easy, and Cape May County municipal courts have distinguished themselves by having every one of their administrators certified."

Detailed information about certification for municipal court administrators is available on the Judiciary's Web site at njcourtsonline.com.

Camden Probation Links Clients with Jobs

by Rosanne Martin
Vicinage Assistant Chief Probation Officer

Finding and keeping jobs is a key to the success of probation clients.

Experience has shown that if a probationer can get and keep a job, it will give him or her not only an income but also a new sense of self-respect.

An employed probationer is less likely to re-offend, and that's what probation is ultimately all about.

Since November 2002, the employment committee of the Camden probation division has successfully helped probation officers assist clients in finding jobs. The committee was initiated by a senior probation officer, Maura Procopio-Barr, who served on the Outcome Based Standards Employment Committee. Today, it is composed of officers with an interest in employment services.

The program is part of a statewide partnership between the Judiciary and the New Jersey Department of Labor (DOL) to help probation clients get and keep jobs.

Camden's committee maintains a job services board in the reporting area, offers weekly career bulletins for distribution to clients, acts as a liaison with DOL and verifies weekly attendance at the One-Stop Job Program (part of the Judiciary-DOL partnership).

Following a presentation by DOL's One-Stop Job Program placement specialist, training was provided to all adult section employees last spring. This training included information about DOL procedures, proper use of employment coding in CAPS, alternative employment programs, innovative sanctions to implement with unemployed clients and available educational programs.

The training ended with a

videotape featuring the Strive job readiness model (Strive is a three-week intensive job training program based in Harlem and funded entirely from corporate and charitable donations). Training was conducted with small groups of officers in order to encourage questions and participation. The presentation was taped for

viewing by newly hired probation officers.

The committee will continue to assist section probation officers in their goal to help each client become employed resulting in client rehabilitation, reduced recidivism and safer communities.



Committee members (left to right, back row) are: Toyia Walker, VACPO; Pamela Graham, PO; Maura Procopio-Barr, Senior PO; Sarah Barbella, Senior PO; Kathy Allison, PO; Rosanne Martin, VACPO ; (center front) Debbie Thomson, Senior PO.

Steps We Can Take Now to Help Ease Records Storage Challenge

Managing the storage of court records is always a challenge. Some records may need to be kept for a few months; others, for many years. It costs the state millions of dollars a year for storage space and other costs associated with maintaining 350,000 boxes of files.

An article about how the Judiciary proposes to deal with this crisis will appear in an upcoming edition of *Judiciary Times*. But in the meantime, courtesy of Kate McCann in the records management unit, here are some steps that can be taken now to help ease the records crisis:

1. Remove any papers that may be purged from files pursuant to the retention schedule.
2. Dedicate time each month to keep records organized.
3. Keep your records inventory up to date.
4. Dedicate time at the end of each year to identify records that can be destroyed.
5. Apply for destruction of records when they become eligible. See Directive #3-01 for a listing of Judiciary retention schedules.
6. Avoid storing duplicate copies of reports or documents in files.

N.J. Judiciary Web Site Ranked #1 in the Nation

The New Jersey Judiciary took first place in the Top 10 Court Web Site competition at the 2003 National Center for State Courts' Court Technology Conference (CTC).

The event is the world's only conference dedicated exclusively to court technology. Since 1984, judges, court administrators and information technologists have gathered at the center's CTCs to learn about the latest information and trends in court technology.

This is the second major award that the New Jersey Judiciary received for its Web site in 2003. Earlier in the year, a study ranked it 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.

The Judiciary's Web site is administered by Internet Services in the Office of Communications under the leadership of Winnie Comfort, director, and Toni McLaughlin, assistant director. Other members of the Web team are Thomas Arey, administrative supervisor; Jeanne Hart-Convery, Doris McCormick and Nicole Southard, Web developers; and Andrea Quarino, secretary.

Jude Del Preore, Mercer TCA, Elected MAACM President

Jude Del Preore of Moorestown, trial court administrator (TCA) for the Mercer Vicinage, was elected president of the Mid-Atlantic Association for Court Management (MAACM) at the organization's 10th annual meeting this fall.

With 500 members, MAACM is a diverse, regional association of professionals dedicated to excellence in court administration in the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

"I am greatly honored to be elected president of MAACM," Del Preore told his colleagues during the annual meeting in Cherry Hill. "I want to thank you for your continued support of our great organization and for (your) trust and confidence...It is truly an honor to serve you, our colleagues, in the nation's premier regional association for court management."

As Mercer's TCA, Del Preore is responsible for 370 staff and the management of the civil, criminal, family, general operations, human resources, information technology, municipal, probation and finance divisions. He reports to Mercer Vicinage Assignment Judge Linda R. Feinberg.

MAACM is committed to continuously improving court management and services to the public through visionary leadership. It

The professional organization is nationally recognized as a leading regional resource for creative and challenging approaches to educating and developing court leaders.

Del Preore has been in the field of both court and corrections administration for over 25 years. He has served on numerous judicial and legislative subcommittees, planning groups, and advisory boards.

He is a certified trainer and serves on the adjunct faculty of Seton Hall Law School, two county colleges, the New Jersey State Policy Academy, several county police academies and the New Jersey State Administrative Office of the Courts Training and Organizational Development Unit.

Del Preore completed his undergraduate education at Rutgers University and a Masters degree in Public Administration for Kean University. He has completed the Court Executive Development of the National Center for State Courts' Institute for Court Management and is certified as a Fellow.

As president, Del Preore will preside at meetings, manage association business, appoint members to committees and see that all orders and resolutions are carried out.



Jude Del Preore

provides a variety of accessible, high quality, professional development programs. The association promotes collaboration among court professionals to promote best practices, networking, and information sharing within the justice community.

ABA Selects Burlington Vicinage Law Day As One of the Nation's Top Five Programs

The American Bar Association (ABA) has recognized the Burlington Vicinage for offering one of the five best Law Day programs in the country in 2003.

The vicinage will be honored during the ABA Mid-Year Meeting to be held in February in San Antonio, Texas.

According to the ABA Web site, winning entries for Law Day 2003 represented a wide geographic and programmatic diversity. Winning projects showed creativity in reaching out to students and the public to convey the importance of the rule of law.

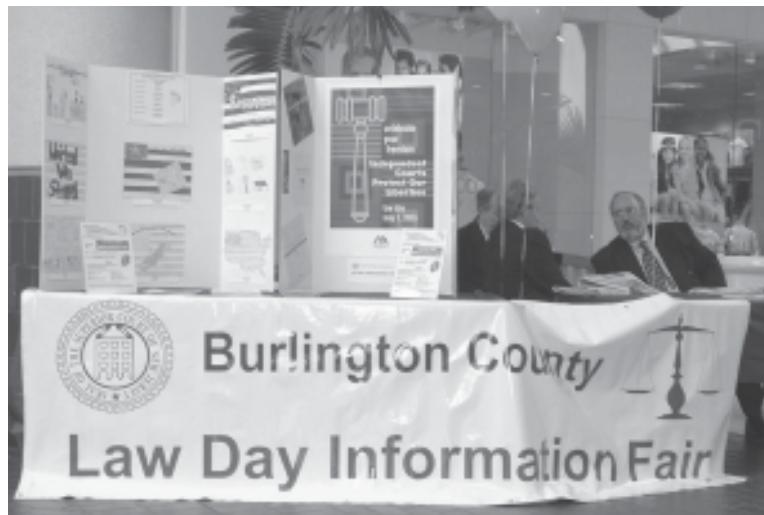
"Our Law Day project serves to emphasize the commitment that our vicinage has to the 'rule of law' and its importance to those who are affected

by what we do," said Assignment Judge John A. Sweeney.

The Burlington Vicinage Law Day

program is a cooperative effort of the Burlington County Bar Association, the Burlington County Superintendent

Continued on page 15



National Magazine Features Bill Mecca Among Top Video Producers of 2003



William Mecca, video production coordinator in the Office of Communications, Administrative Office of the Courts, was featured in *AV Video Multimedia Producer*

Magazine's "Profiles in Excellence, a Showcase of Top Producers." The announcement, with a biography and photo, appeared in the November 2003 edition.

A Judiciary employee for nine years, Mecca formerly was radio news anchor with WOBM-FM and was also a television newsman with WYOU-TV in Scranton, Penn. He graduated from Rowan University (formerly Glassboro State College) in 1982.

At the Judiciary, Mecca has produced a wide range of educational and informative videos including *New Jersey's Child Support Hearing Officer Program*. He is currently working with the Family Division on a series of training videos for judges and court staff on domestic violence.

Mecca resides in Manchester Township with his wife, Christine, and their four children, Elizabeth, Katherine, Meghan and Christopher. When not producing videos, Mecca enjoys spending time with his family and indulging his other passion, rock 'n' roll tenor saxophone.



A dramatic scene involving actors from the first in a series of domestic violence videos produced in 2003 by Christine Hepner of the family division and directed and edited by William Mecca.

Safe & Sound

'Twas the Season – You Shopped-'Til You Dropped – But Did You Do It Safely?



by Arlene M. Bonville, Court Access Services

I have never, ever needed a reason to go shopping, but provide me with a legitimate reason, like Christmas, and I'm out the door before you can say, "CHARGE(it)!"

The fun, or rather the stress, of the holiday season has come and gone. We managed to expand our multi-tasking abilities – holiday shopping, wrapping, cooking, baking, decorating, entertaining, family obligations, as well as still working full-time – and for the most part, have kept our sanity (debatable!).

Now the big question: Did you take added safety precautions during the holidays when you were at the mall? The department store? The grocery store? Driving on the highway? Or did you fall victim to the venomous Scrooges in the world?

Statistics show that during the holiday season the crime rate goes up, e.g., thefts, robberies, road rage, assaults, kidnappings and murders. People tend to be edgier because of a lack of time, energy and, most of all, money.

Nerves are frayed, tempers are short, and it doesn't take much to set someone off without really trying. Here are just a few unsafe practices



Improved Search Engine on InfoNet

Information on the InfoNet is now easier to find thanks to a faster and more powerful search engine that locates both text and PDF documents.

The new Google search engine may be found at the top of the InfoNet home page.

witnessed this holiday season. But please note, these safety suggestions, offered *after* the offenses, should be practiced at all times, not just during the holiday season.

- When paying for merchandise, people tend to open their wallets, exposing cash-a-plenty, as well as an assortment of major credit cards just screaming, "Take me!" **What would be safer?** On each excursion, take a very limited amount of cash, enough for a soda and a soft pretzel, and no more than two (preferably one) major credit cards that are accepted in the stores in which you shop.
- Women sometimes leave their handbags in shopping carts, then walk away from the cart (albeit often only a short distance) to look at something on a rack or shelf.

What would be safer? Use a handbag with a long shoulder strap that can be put over your head with the bag tucked safely under your arm. This will avoid someone grabbing your bag and running, or just simply lifting it from your shopping cart. Men, on the other hand, should keep their wallets in their front pants pockets to avoid the ever-so-crafty pickpocket.

- With parking lots filled to capacity, you've no doubt witnessed many "fights" for a spot being vacated, barely allowing the individual enough room to exit from the area. Obviously, only one vehicle can claim the vacant slot, so oftentimes a shouting match ensues that has the potential to turn violent.

What would be safer? If you have a few dollars to spare, perhaps you could treat yourself by taking advantage of the valet parking service that malls offer during the holidays and sometimes straight through the winter months.

- People loaded with packages walk from the store, alone, in the dark, to the far end of the lot, making themselves vulnerable to a possible assault.
What would be safer? If you're going to be shopping alone — and this is not only during the holidays, but any time — try to shop during daylight hours when it is somewhat safer to walk a distance to and from your car. And if you are buying a large quantity of items, purchase oversized store bags so you can fit several items in just one or two bags.
- Never leave mail on the front seat of your car with your name and address clearly visible to anyone who walks by. According to a recent news report, an individual who did this came home to find a stranger waiting for her at her house. He had watched her leaving her car at the mall, walked past her car, saw the mail on the front seat and wrote down the information.

What would be safer? Before walking away from your car, make it a habit to do a quick check – look in your windows and make sure no personal items are visible, especially those that identify you by name and address.

Have a safe and happy winter. More to come in the spring!



Tech-KNOWLEDGE-y

An Appetizing Menu: “Spam & Regs”

by Janet Bastien, Project Manager, Information Technology

Upon returning home from vacation recently, I found my e-mail account cluttered with correspondence from unfamiliar sources offering solutions to every kind of problem imaginable; offers for mortgage reductions, weight reduction, pain relief and several offers for services which would definitely be of no interest to a respectable married woman like me.

There were also several indecipherable messages like “noluntu kukiopportunity” from senders I was sure I had never met at any stage of my life. What is all this nonsense choking my inbox? A phenomenon started over a generation ago that has become known as “spam,” unsolicited junk e-mail usually sent to multiple addresses simultaneously.

Like the Vikings in that Monty Python film singing “Spam, spam, spam, spam” until somebody yells “SHUT UP!” spammers on the Internet can drive you nuts. Even more annoying, it costs the incessant spammer virtually nothing to send e-mail, so once they obtain your e-mail address, they can spam you again and again and again.

How do they find you? One source is chat rooms and newsgroups; they even have special software to extract your address from these sites. Spammers also create search engines that spider the Web searching for e-mail addresses.

Have you entered any online contests enticing you to win a million bucks or a vacation in Tahiti just by typing in your e-mail address? Chances are you didn’t win that prize, but the spamming community hit the jackpot by obtaining thousands of addresses from hopeful contenders like you. Selling e-mail addresses from such sources is big business.

Since many Americans have said “we’re not gonna take it” to the imposition of spamming, many are petitioning lawmakers to pass legislation regulating spam. There is a push for a national “Do Not Spam” list much like the National Do Not Call Registry recently enacted.

However, cynics feel that spammers are so devious they would set up servers in foreign countries and harvest fresh addresses from the list. The 106th, 107th and 108th sessions of Congress have considered a number of bills aiming to bring the spam machinery to a grinding halt.

These include protection for seniors, requirements for opt-out options, labeling of unsolicited commercial e-mail messages, etc. Good ideas, but at the bottom of each session’s list it reads, “none of these were enacted.” With an 86 percent majority of e-mail users saying they favor this legislation (according to a report in the September 2003 issue of *New Jersey Tech News*), why isn’t it passed?

A strong marketing lobby may be the reason. On Nov. 11, *USA Today* reported, “Congress has been trying for at least three years to pass an anti-spam bill. Prospects are much brighter now that groups such as the Direct Marketing

Association (DMA) have dropped their opposition to legislation. Growing public disgust with spam and recent moves by state legislatures to pass a patchwork of anti-spam laws help explain the change in attitude.”

Also, regulating spam is tricky business. One man’s spam can be another’s filet mignon. That is, you may welcome information on a particular cause or party platform, while your friend may like to hear about a new company’s business or services. At the same time, I may view all such correspondence as an intrusion.

First Amendment rights can be compromised by over-regulation or the wrong regulation. Before passing legislation to control spam, Congress must sift through issues balancing privacy rights and an individual or organization’s right to free speech and free enterprise.

So until Congress provides regulations for spammers, following these Ten Commandments can reduce your chance of being whacked by what one critic has called “the organized crime of the Internet”:

- ¶ Thou shalt not open or reply to junk e-mails (even to “opt-out” as this just confirms to spamster that they’ve hit a target)
- ¶ Thou shalt not post your e-mail address in a public forum
- ¶ Thou shalt review a Web site’s privacy policy before doing business online
- ¶ Thou shalt refrain from forwarding chain e-mail
- ¶ Thou shalt install filtering software to help detect and stop spam (go to spam.abuse.net for more info)
- ¶ Thou shalt avoid the temptation to enter contests requesting your e-mail address
- ¶ Thou shalt report persistent spammers to the FTC at uce@ftc.gov. The FTC will pursue law enforcement actions against people who send deceptive spam e-mail
- ¶ Thou shalt not compile lists of e-mail addresses; if you do, don’t e-mail the list.
- ¶ Thou shalt use a unique e-mail address (one that doesn’t look like a name)
- ¶ Thou shalt stay informed. Check out sites such as the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov and www.cauce.org (the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-mail) to learn how to protect yourself and stay current on regulations.



Helping Youth in Transition--Judges and volunteers gathered recently in the Morris/Sussex Vicinage to discuss the Roots & Wings program. Attending were: Presiding Judge Barbara Zucker-Zarett (third from right, front row), Judge Thomas J. Critchley (third from right, back row); Edith Larsen (second from left), family division manager; Malik Gray (second from right, back row), vicinage support staff; and volunteers (not in order) Joan de Vriis, Diane Turner, Cathy Dougherty, Carol Rufener, Irene deGrandpré, Neisa Maute, Stephanie Roth, Elaine J. Condon, Patricia Witt.

Morris/Sussex Vicinage Works with Volunteers Helping Young People in Transition

by Kim Daniels Walsh, Ombudsman and EEO/AE Officer, Morris/Sussex Vicinage

Rosalyn (not her real name) had been in the state child welfare system all her life. She had lived in foster homes since she was two, and all her shelter, food and medical needs were met by the state.

On her 19th birthday, however, everything stopped. She had nowhere to live, no source of income, no educational prospects. Rosalyn was a prime candidate for descent into a life of homelessness, drugs, crime and even prostitution.

Fortunately, this scenario was interrupted *before* Rosalyn turned 19 by a Morris County non-profit program called Roots & Wings.

Roots & Wings provides personal support and practical life skills for teenagers who have “aged-out” of the child welfare system. The organization accepts referrals from the court as well as various public and private organizations including the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) and Catholic Charities.

This fall, Morris/Sussex Vicinage judges and staff joined volunteers and professionals to help young people transition from the child welfare system to a world of self-actualization.

On Oct. 17, Presiding Judge Barbara Zucker-Zarett, Morris/Sussex Vicinage Family Division, administered the oath of office to seven volunteer members of the Roots & Wings Foundation.

During the event, board members, caseworkers and mentors engaged in an informal question and answer session with Judge Zucker-Zarett and fellow Family

Division Judge Thomas J. Critchley. Irene deGrandpré, founder and board of trustee member, explained that the organization provides housing, mentoring, access to health care, educational and employment assistance. Individuals who are accepted into the program are provided with transitional support for two years.

Elaine Condon, a retired graphic designer, mentors a 19-year-old woman in the program. She recounted how lonely the young women felt when she left the security of a foster family. As a mentor, Condon seeks to fill that void.

The two women meet regularly for meals as well as to discuss future educational plans (the 19-year-old is attending Morris County College, but has hopes to pursue a bachelor's degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York).

“Whether it’s car trouble or stocking the refrigerator, I try to be there for this young woman,” said Condon.

Board Member Pat Witt, who is pursuing a master of social work degree at Kean University, noted, “The need is great, but the potential for these kids is incredible.”

She added that this program “is a terrific vehicle for kids to realize their dreams.”

As a result of Roots & Wings, young people like Rosalyn can leave the child welfare system with a network of support and help getting a place to live, go to school and work. As one participant put it, “I would have been homeless except for this program.”

Hudson Vicinage and Jersey City Public Schools Hold Teen Dating Violence Education Forum

by Kyle Warren, Intern, Hudson Vicinage

Teen dating violence is a growing problem throughout the country, affecting many students at the high-school level.

Many times violence that occurs during teen dating goes unreported because the victims feel at fault or feel the need to protect the offender. It is a terrible situation that, in many cases, leaves the victims feeling vulnerable and guilty.

It is absolutely important for young people to know how to recognize when a relationship is abuse and to know exactly how to react and where to get help.

For the past two years, the Hudson Vicinage and local schools have recognized teen dating violence as a problem and are working together to provide solutions.

An example of this cooperation took place Oct. 24 when the Hudson Vicinage Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns held its second annual forum on teen dating violence. More than 120 high school students attended the forum titled, "What's Love Got To Do With It? The Problem of Violence in Teen Dating Relationships."

Video, mock trial and panel

Students from seven local high schools filled the historic, second-floor courtroom in the Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. Courthouse to participate in the forum. During the course of the day, students watched an informational videotape on the subject matter, participated in a mock trial and asked questions to a diverse panel of professionals.

These activities were especially appealing to the students as there were student actors playing the roles of plaintiff, defendant and witness. In addition, jurors of the mock trial were randomly selected from among the student participants. Peer participation made it much more engaging for the students and showed the audience how a trial of this type is adjudicated before a judge. The matter being tried also allowed the students to see how violence affects the lives of so many young people.

What's Love Got To Do With It? was a huge success. The work put in by all involved was clearly apparent as the events of the day unfolded. The students left with the tools necessary to identify and aid their peers involved in violent dating situations.

Made available to other schools

Although the courtroom could accommodate select students from seven different high schools, students from Jersey City's Snyder High School videotaped the entire forum to make it available to students throughout the county. The program will be shown on closed-circuit cable television for high school students and will also run on the municipal access channel for the community of Jersey City.

The Hudson Vicinage Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns, which is currently chaired by Jersey City Municipal Court Judge Sheila A. Venable, plans to implement additional education forums for various segments of the community in 2004.

Chinese Law Professionals Learn about New Jersey Judiciary



Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz (right) described New Jersey's independent Judiciary to visiting Chinese law professionals. (Photo by L. Holt)

A delegation of the Beijing Legal Professionals Training Group visited the New Jersey Judiciary on Dec. 16 and 17.

The visit included some 20 legal professionals from the People's Republic of China, accompanied by Karen Morelli, director of the Center for Corporate and Workforce Training at Atlantic Cape Community College.

The group met Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz; Judge Richard J. Williams, administrative director of the courts; visited with Appellate judges and met with other AOC officials.

During their visit, the law professionals observed the Appellate Division in session and had the opportunity to ask questions about the judicial process.

The visitors included a civil presiding judge, assistant judges with Beijing's High People's Courts, as well as prosecutors, chiefs and other law officials.

Robert W. Smith Named Municipal Assistant Director

Continued from page 1

ACS) support unit in the municipal division in 1999.

This fall his career hit a high note with his promotion to assistant director of the Judiciary's municipal court services division. He succeeded Dennis L. Bliss, who retired and is now chair of the Municipal Court Administrator Certification Board.

Great mentors

"Middlesex was a great place to learn about the court system," Smith reflected, seated in his seventh-floor office in the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton. "I had some of the best mentors in Middlesex County."

Technology was one of the areas that most appealed to Smith as he was learning court operations in Middlesex.

"The potential for accessing case information through the web and offering online payment services was enormous," he said. Today, Smith is credited for leading the team that implemented *NJMCdirect*, the Judiciary's online e-payment system. The site is linked from the Judiciary home page, www.njcourtsonline.com. A fast, secure and convenient way to access traffic ticket information online, *NJMCdirect* was one of the most significant customer-service initiatives of the past year.

35,000 payments a month

"With 35,000 payments a month, the system is very successful," said Smith. "This wouldn't have happened without the vision of the director and the expertise of the project team assembled by Jim Rebo. And, I have to admit, I get a lot of credit for the hard work done by ITO and our ATS/ACS Support Unit!" he added with a smile.

In addition to *NJMCdirect*, Smith was involved in the development and implementation of the original Parking Authority Ticketing System (PATS).

The PATS system is an automated ticketing system that uses radio-frequency (wireless) communication with the Judiciary ATS/ACS. The Judiciary provides handheld devices to parking authority officers to be used for violation entry, inquiry and ticket printing. Once information is entered into the hand-held devices, the ticket is printed and all information is simultaneously transmitted to ATS/ACS through a wireless communications technology. This summons information is then immediately available to municipal courts and law enforcement officers statewide.

"With the two systems, cases are electronically filed, managed and disposed of without municipal court staff handling any paper or even touching a keyboard," Smith said.

New Jersey is truly on the leading edge in building and maintaining statewide systems. "I was at a tech conference in Kansas City last year and I still haven't come across another state that is so unified in this area," he said. "The credit truly belongs with ITO."

A common thread

Looking ahead, Smith sees an even greater convergence of procedural and computer environments in the next five to 10 years. "Computers are the one common thread among all our initiatives," he noted. "The vision of our presiding judges and division managers is to make continual improvement in the services provided to the public. Tech-

nology will continue to be at the forefront of that effort."

For most citizens, contact with municipal courts is their first contact with the state's judicial system. "The feedback we receive from the municipal courts is of paramount importance," he said. "The municipal courts let us know what is important and we make every effort to be responsive to their needs. It's a forum that has really worked well for us."

Now a resident of South Brunswick, Smith and his wife, Judi, are the parents of Allyson, age 3-1/2. When not working and spending time with his family, Smith admits to being a "huge fan" of Rutgers' basketball and football games.

Professionally, Smith hopes to continue the strides in municipal court services made under the leadership of Dennis Bliss. "The municipal court system has been dramatically improved under Dennis' leadership - I hope to continue that tradition," he said.

Addressing a recent conference of the state's municipal court administrators, Smith told these court professionals not what the AOC wanted *from* them, but what the AOC was going to do *for* them. His plans were greeted with rousing applause.

It was an auspicious beginning.

—Linda Brown Holt

Lawrence Haman Named Outstanding Probation Supervisor of the Year

The Probation Association of New Jersey (PANJ) selected Principal Probation Officer Lawrence Haman of the Union Vicinage as the Outstanding Probation Supervisor of the Year for 2003. The award was made during the PANJ conference in Atlantic City in November.

Haman was honored for his "leadership, understanding, compassion and

exemplary character" and for significant contributions to his fellow employees as a practicing professional. A probation officer in Union since 1973, Haman specializes in juvenile supervision. The probation officers in his unit nominated him, with the support of the administration.

Sheriffs' Staff and CEP Share Information at Conference



William Freeman of the Department of Corrections addresses the SLAP/CEP meeting in Trenton.

The annual meeting of the Sheriffs' Labor Assistance Program (SLAP) and the Enforced Community Service (ECS) program took place Oct. 31, 2003, in the Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton.

Dennis R. Martin, chief of the Comprehensive Enforcement Program (CEP) in Probation Services, welcomed attendees from throughout the state.

Following "brag time" in which participants spoke about positive activities in their community, William Freeman (shown at left), director of community assistance programs in the Department of Corrections, gave the keynote address.

The program included a discussion of warrants and drug courts and the introduction of John Pizarro, the new chief of adult supervision.

Views of the Staff College 2003



This year's staff college offered Judiciary employees from throughout the state a chance to improve their skills, ponder issues, listen to motivational speakers and interact with each other across divisional and geographic lines. Presented by the Judiciary Organizational Development and Training Unit, the two-day event was held at two sites to accommodate the largest number of staff. (Photos by L. Holt and W. Mecca)



Intensive Supervision Celebrates 20th Anniversary

by Tamara Kendig
Communications Specialist
Office of Communications

The New Jersey Judiciary's Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) observed its 20th anniversary this fall with an evening of presentations and a panel discussion. ISP gives certain carefully selected offenders, who were originally sentenced to state prison, the opportunity to become responsible and productive citizens while under close supervision.

The evening program was attended by judges, probation division staff, ISP graduates and representatives from the New Jersey Department of Corrections.

"You have helped people begin to realize the dignity and potential inherent in each human being," said Judge Richard J. Williams, administrative director of the courts, in his opening remarks.

ISP was designed to test whether an intermediate form of punishment, one that would be less costly than prison, but more onerous and restrictive than traditional probation, would achieve the criminal justice objective of deterrence and rehabilitation.

Low Reconviction Rate

Currently the re-conviction rate of program graduates is 8 percent, compared to a 47 percent reconviction rate for prisoners released directly from prison. In addition, the program has reduced prison overcrowding by providing an alternative to continued incarceration.

At a cost of approximately \$8,100 per offender, it has resulted in cost savings to New Jersey taxpayers of more than \$110 million since its inception. The average cost for an incarcerated prisoner is \$34,000 per year.

The program has been recognized both for its success and its cost

effectiveness, having achieved an average 95 percent employment rate over its twenty years of operation. Participants have earned almost \$140,000,000 during the past twenty years in gross wages, on which appropriate federal and state income taxes were paid.

They also paid more than \$15 million in court-ordered fees and restoration and performed more than 2.3 million hours of community service.

Development of a work ethic is a focal point of ISP. All participants must be employed full-time, unless physically disabled. Additional mandates include adherence to a nightly curfew, submission to frequent alcohol and drug testing, performance of 16 hours of community service each month, verified attendance at treatment meetings, and other restrictions.

"This is a program that saves lives. It is a program that was designed to ensure compliance with the law but it has become much more," said Judge Williams.

The anniversary observation included a presentation on the history of ISP.

A panel discussion, led by Judge Frederic G. Weber, covered the remarkable expansion of the program from its inception as a way to reduce prison overcrowding to its current and future mission of helping offenders find ways to improve their lives and contribute to their communities. Judge Norman Telsey also participated in the panel. Both judges served on ISP panels after their retirement from Superior Court. Other panel members included screening board members and an ISP graduate.



ISP 20th Anniversary—Participating in a panel at the fall celebration are (left to right): Lynch Hunt, ISP graduate; Nick Fagioli, ISP officer; Dr. Michael Nittoli, ISP screening board citizen member; Judge Norman Telsey (Salem), ISP resentencing panel; Judge Frederick C. Weber, retired, ISP resentencing panel. Speaking is Richard Talty, retired, former ISP manager, now screening board citizen member.

Stanley Grabowski Celebrates Half a Century In the Probation Division of the Hudson Vicinage

by Christoph Stanecki, Assistant Vicinage Chief Probation Officer, Hudson Vicinage

Do you recall January 4, 1954? Many, if not most judicial employees, were not even born, and few of us that were can remember 1954.

In January 1954 Dwight D. Eisenhower was President of the United States, Elvis Presley recorded a 10-minute demo record in Nashville, the most popular soap opera was *A Brighter Day*, and the Nautilus nuclear submarine was launched.

But something else significant happened on this date. Newly appointed Probation Officer Stanley Grabowski reported to work. Stanley was first assigned to a branch office in supervision where he remained until September 1960. During this time he was appointed to the position of senior probation officer. In 1960 he was transferred to the Family Relations Division and in March 1970 provisionally appointed a principal probation officer I.

He was permanently appointed to this position in September 1972. Other supervisory assignments included the Adult Supervision and Criminal Investigation Divisions. As he begins his 50th year of service PPO I Grabowski continues to provide valuable service to the Judiciary.

In recognition of this milestone, Judge Richard J. Williams, Administrative Director of the Courts, wrote to Stanley on behalf of Chief Justice Poritz and himself. Thanking him for his service, Judge Williams noted that while the Judiciary has changed over the past 50 years, the constant was the commitment of persons like Stanley.

Acknowledging this momentous event, Assignment Judge Arthur N. D'Italia added his voice to the chorus of those noting Stanley's extraordinary dedication to the important work of probation. Judge D'Italia stated "He (Stanley) has, I

know, seen it all over the years, having performed in virtually every branch of probation service and his commitment remains as strong as ever."

Asked to share her thoughts, Family Division Presiding Judge Patricia Costello added a very personal perspective. Judge Costello has had the pleasure of knowing Stanley Grabowski for more than 40 years, meeting him when she was in kindergarten and Stan and her father were office mates.

Judge Costello noted that before the days of sentencing guidelines, sentencing by the numbers, plea cutoffs and business casual, Stan was at his desk or in the courtroom or in the field aiding the court or helping a probationer in his starched white shirt, red tie and formal suit.

"No matter how the trends in fashion or probation change, Stan remains a constant model of what is good and honorable about his profession. Stan is a throwback in the best sense of the word," Judge Costello stated.

During recent conversations current and past coworkers reflected on Stanley's career and their associations. Court Administrator Joseph Davis, who began his judicial career as a Probation Investigator 25 years ago, recalls Stanley's willingness to break-in the "rookies" and pass on what he had learned over the years.

"He was and is a true role model for all who have had the fortune of crossing his path," Anthony Casale, vicinage chief probation officer, added, "Stanley has given 50 years of his professional life to serving the citizens of Hudson County and the state. He has shown that perseverance and diligence can overcome many of the obstacles put in your way. To serve for so long, to be admired by your

colleagues is a tremendous testimony to the quality of Stan's professional life. We all congratulate him and look forward to sharing many more years together."

Retiree Bill McDonough, a man of many words, recalled Stanley as being extremely intelligent, ambitious and the consummate professional, "someone who thought 'outside the box' before it was a popular management concept."

Principal Probation Officer II Jack O'Brien recalls starting in the department some 30 years ago, how Stanley took him "under his wing" and mentored him during those early days, and how over the years he discovered how respected Stanley was throughout the Judiciary. Jack concluded his comments saying, "Stanley was not only my mentor and supervisor, but more importantly he became a friend. Meeting and working with Stanley Grabowski is one of the highlights of my career."

Performance appraisals conducted by past supervisors reflect a commitment to the service of the public. Words that described his work effort were "complete professional," "a prodigious quality of work," "punctual and cooperates with all agencies and fellow workers." On several occasions his knowledge of the Polish language and willingness to use this skill was noted. In 1963 (not 2003) his ability to manage a large caseload, a "sound and effective worker, organized alert thinker and cooperative" was acknowledged.

To this day Stan continues to trek from his hometown of Harrison, commuting on the PATH to Journal Square and then the short walk to the Administration Building. He maintains the high level of professionalism mentioned by Judge Costello..." a throwback in the best sense of the word."

Middlesex Courthouse Renovations Result in Customer-Friendly Environment

by George Stahanovich
Municipal Division Manager
Middlesex Vicinage

It has taken six years, \$33 million dollars, multiple office moves and the involvement of hundreds of people, but the renovation of the main Middlesex County Courthouse is almost complete.

The major burden of the undertaking rested on Wayne Fiorino's shoulders. He is the vicinage assistant trial court administrator in charge of operations, and operate he did.

Trial Court Administrator Gregory Edwards gave him the task, not only because of his management abilities, but because the TCA knew that this long-term project would require the patience of a saint.

Accomplishing this task required extensive juggling. Wayne had to try to please all the parties, from the judges involved in the layout of courtrooms and benches, to the union representatives who would inquire about every change in the condition of the air in the courthouse.

It was not an easy task.

The original west wing was built in 1960 with the east wing added in 1976. Each wing had a different design, yet their combination provided the courts with sufficient space for all court activities until the 1990s.

In 1997 Assignment Judge Robert A. Longhi and TCA Edwards formed a task force to oversee the renovation and restoration of the courthouse.

At that time it was decided to build a new family courthouse two blocks away in order to alleviate the

congestion caused by an ever-increasing workload. The family courthouse completion was just the first step in a master plan to provide adequate facilities for the next 20 years.



The decision was made by the Board of Freeholders to have the New Brunswick Development Corporation (DEVCO), a private/government cooperative group formed to develop government facilities, oversee the gutting and refurbishing of that building while creating space for court activities on three of the floors of that building.

Renovation of the courthouse and the old administration building began about the same time. Here's where good planning became crucial. If a new building goes up, you just move in when the inspection is completed and the furniture delivered. Not so in this case.

We had to allow for a floor-by-floor renovation without disrupting functions of the rest of the court-

house. The juggling of space, the frequent relocation of offices and functions was mind-boggling.

Through it all, Wayne Fiorino and the task force came through with a balanced plan that minimized physical moves and caused little disruption to the on-going court activities.

Sure, some broken pipes here or there, lots of machine-generated racket, and the occasional "un-friendly" odors caused all of us concern, but the problems seemed to diminish as the work progressed.

This fall, the last of the renovations were completed on the first floor and the basement.

Some radical changes to the floor plan have occurred, including moving the jury room, providing an additional entrance and adding five more

courtrooms. All the other courtrooms were totally redone, with new benches providing the judges and courtroom staff additional workspace. Every courtroom was provided multiple computer lines for future use.



One "high-tech" courtroom was created and outfitted with multiple flat-screen monitors, the latest in computer access and facilitation for modern audio-visuals.

The auto arbitration section of the civil division was installed on the first floor near one entrance to accommodate the large volume of traffic it creates. The computer server was moved from the basement to an

Continued on page 15

ABA Selects Burlington Vicinage Law Day

Continued from page 5

of Schools, the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office and the Burlington Vicinage Superior Court. Charles B. Castillo, Esq., the vicinage EEO/AA Officer, coordinated the Law Day program and emphasized that "most of the credit for the success of Law Day should go to the numerous volunteers."

The 2003 Law Day program consisted of several events including "Be a Juror for a Day," a Law Day student forum focusing on the Bill of Rights in post-9/11 America, the Law Day Information Fair, and student art and essay contests.

According to ABA, the awards program showcases effective and innovative Law Day activities and promotes sharing of these models with others throughout the country. In selecting the winning entries, ABA judges looked for outstanding Law Day activities that expand the public's understanding of the rule of law and appreciation of the role law plays in society.

At the awards ceremony in February, the Burlington Vicinage will receive an inscribed plaque and credit of \$100 toward the purchase of Law

Day materials. In addition, the vicinage's winning entry will be prominently featured in the ABA's planning guide and Web site for Law Day 2004.

Other winners of the 2003 awards were: Connecticut Judicial Branch, Hartford, Conn.; Cumberland County (North Carolina) Bar Association, Fayette, N.C.; Dallas (Texas) Bar Association; and the J.K. Mullen High School, Denver, Colo.

[Click here](#) for more materials on Burlington's Law Day.



"High Tech"--The new "high-tech" courtroom (above) in Middlesex offers a drop-down screen, flat monitors and the capacity for multiple computer hookups for attorneys. Standing together in a renovated courtroom are key players behind the renovations (left to right): Wayne Fiorino, assistant trial court administrator; Gregory Edwards, trial court administrator; and Assignment Judge Robert A. Longhi.

Middlesex Renovations

Continued from page 14

interior room on the second floor, to provide greater security. Finally, three floors in the old administration building were allotted for civil records and the appellate division.

In addition to the drive of Judge Longhi and TCA Edwards, DEVCO was a major force in the success of the renovation. This is their fourth major undertaking in New Brunswick.

Architectural firm Ford, Fairwell, Mills and Gatch received a design award for their other work on Civic Square. We can hope their work on the courthouse renovation will be equally recognized.

"It took a lot of cooperation and hard work by so many people, but the justice community will be pleased with the results," said the TCA as Judge Longhi and he recently discussed project progress.

Judge Longhi added, "Cooperation between the courts, the county and DEVCO is what made this project possible."

The long-awaited dedication ceremony was held on Dec. 13.

Ocean Vicinage Municipal Administrators Enjoy a “Career Makeover” at Fall Conference

by Tina LaLena, Administrative Specialist , Ocean Vicinage

After a long summer dealing with a heavy caseload and staffing challenges, the Ocean Municipal Team decided that their annual conference needed to be more than business as usual. In previous years, the division held its fall conference to review statistics and discuss current topics. This year, however, the focus was on revitalizing the administrators themselves with the theme, *New Year, New You*.

Kicking off the conference were Acting Presiding Judge Peter J. Giovine and Eric R. Muniz, municipal division manager. Burlington County Presiding Judge Bonnie Goldman energized the group with her poem for the occasion. She observed that no matter how many times we repeat our actions, we should remember it is the first time for the defendant, using the analogy of an actor in a Broadway play performing every night. She then led the group in a rousing chorus of “There’s no business like court business!”

Phyllis Petrino-Ferone and Colleen Farley-Kocsis of the technical assistance unit presented *Less is More*,

outlining the benefits of decluttering workplaces, closets and homes. Sharon Poinsett, an administrative specialist, discussed the power of a positive attitude and how to hold on to it in a sea of negativity.

After lunch, a panel of certified court administrators—Eve Shapiro of East Brunswick, Gerry Harvey of Pittsgrove Township and Kim Fullerton of Evesham Township—discussed why they still love their jobs in *Keeping the Passion*.

“Image is everything” was the focus of the *Dress for Success* segment presented by Tina LaLena, an administrative specialist. To hit the point home, four volunteers participated in a professional dress demonstration, modeling both a professional and business/casual outfit.

The day ended with administrators going to round tables for nutrition, massage, relaxation, exercise, and makeup and hair advice for the professional.

Administrators left the conference full of energy and ready to tackle the challenging year ahead!

Editor's note: The following light verse was presented by Burlington's Presiding Municipal Judge Bonnie Goldman at the Ocean Municipal Administrators' Conference.

On the Way to Toms River

While driving my car to Toms River
Concerned about the speech I'd deliver,
I thought about all that I might say
To enliven this group and to brighten your day.

I said to myself, “Keep it short, they’ll be antsy.
Express simple thoughts; nothing deep, nothing fancy.”
So I start by commanding you for taking the time
To expand your horizons and to listen to my rhyme.

I thought about the things that you routinely do
And of the varied challenges you all must rise to.
As the court system’s “reps” you must always stand tall.
Despite personal problems, you cannot drop the ball,

Interacting with people from all walks of life
(A little old lady, a husband who beats his wife).
You are challenged each day to be pleasant and calm
And many of you also moonlight as a mom!

You must all listen well—an exceptional skill—
To many individuals who may feel ill will.
You can never take sides or think of rolling your eyes
Despite being faced with occasional lies.

You work “24/7,” as the expression now goes,
And you stand at your counters hearing all sorts of woes.
You must exercise patience and lots of restraint.
Let’s face it: There are times you must act like a saint!

Be the consummate professional, that is surely your goal,
By serving the public in your independent neutral role.
A respectful demeanor will always carry the day
Causing the nastiest person to start bending your way!

So keep up the good work and return with a smile.
No matter: come Monday, your desk is under a pile.
Stay focused on doing the very best you can do
And the rewards that you realize will come shining through.

A Day in the Life of Civil and Special Civil Part: How the Hudson Vicinage Meets the Challenge

Continued from page 1

Joseph Bolles, assistant civil division manager, assisted by Rupert Haller, team leader, and Hector Garcia, JC 3, knows how to project in landlord/tenant court. After all, they perform this opera-like production four days a week. His voice rings clear through a bustling courtroom packed just under the legal room-capacity limit. Six rows of benches fill up quickly with some 100 concerned citizens just before the 9 a.m. calendar call.

It's Thursday morning in the Hudson Vicinage's landlord/tenant court

"Beatrice! Wilson! O'Neill...." The names roll on as Bolles and Garcia sift through papers and politely answer questions from newcomers. They adjust the TV set where the "Harris Announcement" tape by Judge Hector R. Velazquez informs litigants of their rights in both English and Spanish.

Once the call begins, conversations drop from a roar to a low hum, and men, women, even children settle into their seats or find a place beside the wall.

"....Wallace, Geiger, Barton-Smith..."

Reflecting the population of one of America's most diverse counties, the participants are the face of Hudson. A man with thin hair, a well-groomed mustache and a faded denim jacket sits beside a little girl with dark eyes. Chin cupped in hand, a young man in black leather looks out the fifth floor window at the neighboring Brennan Courthouse. A pale woman in a red suit reads a book. Oblivious to the whispers of lawyers with shiny shoes and sharp eyes, an older man in an embroidered cap rests his arm on a folded wheelchair and smiles.

The crowd's low hum is hushed when Judge Carmen Messano enters

the courtroom and welcomes the visitors and describes the next steps in the process. ("A great judge, a great judge," murmurs an attorney waiting on the sidelines. "Do y'know why? He was a lawyer for 25 years before he became a judge!"



Forthright talk to litigants

Judge Messano speaks in a direct, respectful style as he makes eye contact with those in the courtroom.

"If your case is about nonpayment of rent, I just want to go over a few things with you about my role as the judge," he says. "The only issue I can decide under the law is the amount of rent due and owing. Once I have decided the amount due, the landlord has the right to have all of that rent paid today. If you don't pay it today, then your landlord is entitled under the law to a judgment of possession."

"Now sometimes tenants say they withhold the rent because of conditions in the apartment," he



Landlord/tenant court--Judge Carmen Messano (above) explains the day's schedule. Joseph Bolles (left, standing) and Hector Garcia (seated) help a litigant. Visitors (left, below) await their turn during calendar call (photo reduced to protect identities). (Photos by L. Holt)

continues. "If the conditions are so bad as to make it uninhabitable, then you may be entitled to a rebate of rent. If this is the case, then you may bring it up at the time of the trial..."

After Judge Messano's comments, Bolles directs litigants and attorneys to the next step in the process.

"Ready cases will be heard in Room 904," he announces as the crowd breaks up with as much lively movement and chatter as it did when it assembled. In a few minutes, Judge Messano will be on the ninth floor in a different courtroom hearing the 25 to 30 cases that make up 20 percent of the day's calendar (the balance of the calendar is composed of 70 percent defaults—cases where one party does not show up—and 10 percent of cases dismissed by landlords because the tenants paid their rent).

"Our judges have a lot of stamina," said Bolles in an interview later. "They take turns at landlord/tenant court and still have all their regular civil work to do." In Hudson, all civil judges are in a monthly rotation to handle landlord/tenant cases, with the exception of Civil Presiding Judge Maurice J. Gallipoli, who manages the major lawsuits on the master civil calendars.

Continued on page 18

A Day in the Life of Civil and Special Civil Part...

continued from page 17

As the landlord/tenant litigants disperse, Hudson's special civil services continue on the seventh and fifth floors of the nine-story Administration Building and down the street at the Brennan Courthouse. The atmosphere is charged with excitement, with crowded elevators and bustling corridors.

"You've got mail..."

Twice a day in the Administration Building, Michelle Sopata, a finance division staff member, sorts through the incoming mail for civil and special civil.

On a recent Thursday morning—considered a “light” time for mail by insiders—two overflowing carts of mail are



Bins of mail (foreground) await processing by Michelle Sopata (background).

wheeled in. Another delivery in the afternoon will result in some 500-plus pieces of correspondence, half of which is payments and fee-related questions. The mail comes in to the finance division, which separates payments which are deposited at the end of each day.

“The civil division and finance division work very closely together,” says Jeanne Myers, the vicinage finance division manager. “More than half of our staff in this area of finance originally worked in the civil division.” There’s a lot of cross training, she noted.

Hudson landlord/tenant court takes place in the 1960s’ high-rise at 595 Newark Ave. But that is only one small part of the civil division’s caseload. The big civil suits of the civil law division are heard in Hudson’s other—magnificent—courthouse a block away: the William J. Brennan Jr. Courthouse.

The Brennan Courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and was selected by the Victorian Society of America as the winner of its 1988 preservation award.

Beneath the granite, copper and bronze exterior of this remarkable artifact beats the caring heart of a state justice system where the latest technologies serve today’s court customers. One way of resolving important lawsuits quickly and efficiently is through New Jersey’s mandatory civil arbitration program.

Arbitration delivers

“Mr. Farynak? You may go in now,” says Vanessa Augusto from her computer station in the lobby. In the shadow of Victorian-style marble columns, her fingers tap on the keys of a laptop computer while she speaks into a headset as she directs attorneys and litigants that are there for auto arbitration.

Edward Farynak, an attorney, crosses the room, beeper in hand and is politely directed to a hearing room.

“The beeper system is similar to the one used while waiting for a table at the Olive Garden!” said Antoinette Outwater, civil division manager, showing a visitor the system for paging attorneys for auto arbitration hearings.

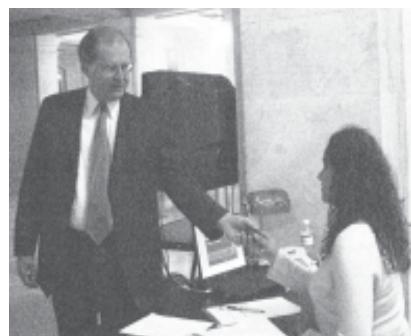
“Attorneys and litigants love the system,” said Cheryl D’Anna, Complementary Dispute Resolution (CDR) team leader, who stopped by. “We’re really pleased to have this system with the help of the civil division in Trenton. Thank you, Michelle Perone!” she said with a smile, referring to the AOC’s chief of civil court programs.

Civil case management teams docket complaints, schedule motions—they process all pleadings and set up all court events with the exception of trials and most CDR events. The teams are in the Brennan Courthouse, named for the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr. The schedule, handled by the CDR team, is well organized, with contract cases on Mondays, personal injury on Wednesdays and auto cases every Thursday.

Behind Vanessa’s workstation, the mail recently sorted in the Administration Building makes its way through the door. Hudson’s civil and special civil divisions handle more

Continued on page 19

Attorney Edward Farynak returns a beeper to Vanessa Augusto in the lobby of the Brennan Courthouse.



How the Hudson Vicinage Meets the Challenge

Continued from page 18

than 50,000 complaints a year. And while there is plenty of hard work to be done according to strict timelines, there is room for fun, too. Inspired by the experience of the Mercer Vicinage, Hudson held its first Customer Service Week in October with coffee, cake and candy for litigants and lawyers, whimsical giveaways and “smile” cards for the best service rendered.

Back to landlord/tenant

The energy of Hudson civil circulates back and forth between the two buildings each day. Later in the morning, Antoinette Outwater, fairly flying down the marble staircases at Brennan, escorts a visitor back to the Administration Building to see a landlord-tenant hearing in process. Presiding once again is Judge Messano.

“I’m stressed out,” laments a tenant, his shoulders



Judge Messano applies the rule of law to a landlord/tenant case.

slumping, as he stands before the judge in Room 904. “I worked hard. I’m a senior citizen. I got no income. They threw me out!”

“That may be the case,” says the judge, listening intently, “but the point is: what does the law say? You worked for the landlord. A landlord does have a right to terminate employment. Landlords can also terminate tenancy. And short-term notice is allowed.

“I know it sounds harsh, but it’s what the law provides,” he continues. “I have to grant them judgment of possession.”

“But I have all my personal stuff in the basement...”

“You won’t be locked out immediately,” the judge responds. “From tomorrow, there are three business days to warrant, then three more business days before you will be locked out. Come back to court if you need to. You’re not evicted yet. Good luck!”

Another landlord and tenant are called in the quiet courtroom, but outside the door, another wave of people seeking to resolve conflicts, solve problems and seek

justice noisily snakes through the hallway. There are smiles as well as grimaces, familiar greetings, laughter and shy requests for directions.

Hundreds of letters, countless e-files, a cross section of one of New Jersey’s most diverse counties.

Lawyers with beepers, a hundred-year-old mural depicting Peter Stuyvesant with Native Americans, a judge making eye contacts with dozens of litigants and explaining the law in clear, unambiguous words.

People from every walk of life. Diverse ages, diverse cultures and diverse attitudes.

People are the subject of these snapshots in the daily journal of one of the New Jersey Judiciary’s busiest vicinages. *Serving people* is the reason it’s another day in the life of Hudson civil.

—by Linda Brown Holt

An Important Role for Xena



This is Xena with her handler Sgt. Debra Faiello. Xena and her partner Caesar are members of the New Jersey State Police Canine Unit. They help protect the people who work in and visit the Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton. (Photo by L. Holt)

Essex Probation Youth Get Lesson from the Sea

by Andy Kafel, Master Probation Officer, Essex Vicinage

With a mighty "Heave! Haul!" 24 young people from Essex County proved the power of teamwork and determination by hoisting into place the one-and-a-half ton mainsail of the Hudson River sloop, "Clearwater," on a blustery Oct. 23. The activity was organized by the Judiciary's Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program (JISP). The program was funded by a grant that the Clearwater organization received from the Victoria Foundation. . .

The huge canvas sail quickly caught the wind and propelled the ship, its newly made young sailors and crew across the choppy waters of the mighty Hudson River on a three-hour voyage of historical and environmental discovery.

The young people participated in the Clearwater "Classroom of the Waves." They were accompanied by two JISP officers, John Thomas and Sonja Asante and six Essex probation officers (Jessica Perez, recreation coordinator, and Melissa Edwards, Chris Igus, Frank Belasic, Kevin Matthews and Andy Kafel) and Assistant Chief William Carr, who said, "In a year that included a trip to the Liberty Science Center and a third place trophy at the Probation Olympics, this constitutes the highlight of a very rewarding and productive year for the juvenile probationers and staff."



Photo courtesy of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

The Clearwater is a replica of the traditional sleek, shallow-draft sailing ship that plied the waters of the Hudson in the 1800s. It was built by folksinger, Pete Seeger, in 1966 as a project to educate young people about the

Hudson River and inspire them to protect the environment. Since then, it has engaged over 500,000 young people in its unique program.

On this day, as the Clearwater pulled out of the tiny dock at Alpine, N.J., and slipped beneath the majestic cliffs of the Palisades, the young people helped to toss out and haul in the seine (fishing net) and examine the catch.

They received a crash course in handling the lazyjacks and halyards (ship's rigging) and were told to "mind the gaff" (the 500-pound beam which swings back and forth above their heads and holds the sail).

Captain J.C. Parker gave each one in turn a hand at the tiller (rudder) and told them to hold a steady course to a point on the horizon. The hands-on learning experience, facilitated by the crew, was carried out at learning stations set up around the deck. The young people learned to read navigational charts, examined Hudson River aquatic life such as plants, fish and even an octopus and took a look at water life through microscopes.

There was even an impromptu fiddle song played by a member of the crew as the ship returned to dock to close out this most rewarding experience.

NEW JERSEY JUDICIARY



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.