

JUDICIARY TIMES

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Fall 2010

Ombudsman Program Marks Milestone

Statewide Initiatives Have Led To Improved Customer Service, Community Outreach

By Mike Mathis

Judiciary Times Editor

It's business as usual for the Judiciary's ombudsman program, which is marking its fifth anniversary this fall.

Fifteen individuals dedicated to helping the public navigate the court system are enhancing customer service by answering questions, providing assistance and performing community outreach.

The work of the ombudsmen is critical to maintaining the Judiciary's core values of independence, integrity, fairness and quality service.

"As a former ombudsman and now the AOC liaison to the statewide committee of ombudsman, I recognize the exceptional customer service ombudsmen offer," said Nancy Manuele, manager of litigant services. "By providing one on one, customized services, the ombudsman is able to ensure equal access to the courts for all court users, regardless of whether they are represented by an attorney or not.

"The New Jersey Judiciary is proud to be the first state nationally to implement such a unique program and will continue to support the work of the ombudsmen who are dedicated to serving the public," Manuele said.

Piloted in Camden and Essex counties in the 1990s, the program became statewide in 2005.

An outgrowth of suggestions from the Supreme Court Committee on Minority Concerns, the ombudsman program was developed with input from judges and Judiciary staff from across the state.

In response to a charge by the Administrative Council, a working group chaired by Collins Ijoma, Essex trial court ad-

ministrator, recommended a statewide ombudsman program in its final report in 2001. The logistics of the program were included in the final report of the ad hoc working group on the ombudsman program.

The program was implemented statewide in 2005 when Judge Philip S. Carchman, then acting administrative director of the courts, sent a memo to assignment judges and trial court administrators that described the program and detailed the duties and responsibilities of the ombudsmen.

"This was a brand new concept, so they had to start from square one," Sue Regan, trial court administrator in Mercer Vicinage who is the Administrative Council's liaison to the ombudsman committee, said of the ombudsman program. The ombudsman reports directly to the trial court administrator.

"This has been an invaluable resource to provide the best customer service we can to the public," Regan said. "The ombudsman gets the big picture."

One of New Jersey's earliest attempts at improving customer service was the opening of the first self-help center in Essex Vicinage in 1997. Staff at the Information and Community Relations Center assists an average of 30 people per day.

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Burlington Court Administrator Elected to National Court Post



Janie Rodriguez, ombudsman in Morris/Sussex Vicinage, explains the content of the New Jersey Judiciary's website to librarians during a seminar at the Cherry Hill Public Library. Public outreach is a major duty for the Judiciary's 15 ombudsmen



Assignment Judge Ronald E. Bookbinder administers the oath of office to Jude DelPreore, Burlington Vicinage trial court administrator, as president of the National Association for Court Management. See story on Page 4

Probation Olympics Allows Teens to Compete, Build Confidence

After 22 years, one might expect an idea to get a little stale, but the annual Judiciary Juvenile Probation Olympics continues to improve both in terms of the number of attendees and the activities that are provided.

A total of 160 probationers from 17 counties and the Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program competed for medals in a variety of events, including track and relay races, an obstacle course and basketball free-throws, at this year's Olympics, which were held July 29 at Toms River High School South. First, second and third place individual medals were awarded for each of the events, and the counties with the three highest overall scores were awarded trophies.

This year, Burlington Vicinage was first, Bergen, Monmouth and Ocean Vicinages tied for second, and Passaic Vicinage placed third.

"I was very impressed by the conduct

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Jim Kelly, Ocean Vicinage chief probation officer, Joanne Feldman, Ocean Vicinage assistant chief probation officer and Mary Lazorchak, Ocean Vicinage probation officer, at the 23rd annual Judiciary Olympics at Toms River High School South. The Judiciary Olympics exposes juvenile probationers to positive athletic events designed to develop team building skills and self-esteem.

Judiciary's Ombudsmen Celebrate Fifth Anniversary By Providing Assistance and Outreach

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Other self-help centers are operating in Monmouth and Union vicinages.

Regan said that having one person in a vicinage dedicated to answering questions and addressing concerns has allowed other court staff to better serve the public by focusing on their own case-related or administrative jobs.

"It's been a great service not just to the public, but to the vicinages," she said.

The ombudsmen say that every day is different, with its own challenges and opportunities.

There has been a steady increase in the number of self-represented litigants, a population the Judiciary has worked hard to accommodate through initiatives such as the development of forms and kits and collaboration with organizations to hold workshops on topics such as foreclosure and expungement.

The Judiciary also has created a training program for librarians to help their patrons find legal information and court resources.

And a growing number of staff is using the program. Judges and staff make referrals, and the ombudsman program is an integral part of orientation for law clerks and new Judiciary employees.

"Every day is different because we don't know who's going to come to the door of the courthouse or who's going to e-mail," said Ann Marie Fleury, ombudsman in Ocean Vicinage.

Regan said the ombudsman committee has taken steps to promote themselves and have become an indispensable resource to Judiciary staff and the public.

Succeeding takes a balance of knowledge and patience, the ombudsman said.

"We are a respected resource for this organization," said Jennifer Shultis, ombudsman in Bergen Vicinage.

"When you help someone resolve an issue, they often ask for your assistance in other matters," said Nalo Brown, ombudsman in Camden Vicinage.

"They feel they can count on us,"

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Monmouth's Ombudsman Broadens Outreach

Office Offers Services Outside the Courthouse to Improve Accessibility to the Public

Expanded outreach remains an important focus for the Monmouth Vicinage Office of the Ombudsman and Self-Help Resource Center.

Several initiatives were introduced this fall to spread the word to internal and external clients about the ombudsman's role and the services offered at the resource center.

Initially, the vicinage EEO/AA Advisory Committee invited Ombudsman Theresa Romano to be a guest speaker at a recent training session.

Romano presented information to vicinage employees on how resource center staff can assist court users and the research tools that are available to the public.

Romano also provided guidelines for making appropriate referrals to the center using the vicinage inter-

divisional referral form. This form was adapted from a similar document in use by another vicinage to facilitate the referral of court users from one division to another.

The Office of the Ombudsman also hopes to increase the number of citizens reached by offering services at locations outside the courthouse. Romano is available a one-half day per month at the eastern branch of the Monmouth County Library in Shrewsbury.

Based on the success of this pilot project, similar service might be offered at other branch locations in the future.

The concept was developed when Romano participated in one of four regional trainings as part of the "Libraries and the Judiciary-Partnering to Promote Access to Justice" initiative. During the training, Romano spoke

about the newly opened resource center and the resources offered to the public. She was asked to expand the range of outreach by making services available at the Shrewsbury location.

Because the Shrewsbury location has extensive legal holdings, many of its patrons have questions about the court process. A collaboration ensued that enables the ombudsman to be on-site on a monthly basis to explain court procedures, answer questions about self-help kits and forms, and assist with navigating the Judiciary website, njcourts.com

The resource center continues to provide several workshops every month about current legal topics. Ongoing collaboration with Ocean-Monmouth Legal Services also enables eligible individuals to receive free legal information at the center.

Ombudsman Program Marks Fifth Anniversary

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Brown said. "Sometimes people come back to talk about the outcome of their cases. It's nice to see the result of your work."

Regan said an unintended benefit is that the ombudsman program has led to efficiencies in the trial court divisions so that court users are better served.

"It's been invaluable to me in my work with the divisions," Regan said. "We are streamlining processes and procedures and making it easier for litigants."

"I saw the advantage to the public," she said. "Now we see the advantages to the system."

Monmouth Vicinage Hosts Aging Out Seminar

By Richelle Coleman

Assistant Family Division Manager and

Fern Varasano

Court Services Supervisor 2
Monmouth Vicinage

Monmouth Vicinage is committed to meeting the needs of aging-out youth by raising awareness and providing assistance for young adults discharged from the foster care system.

The children in court unit of the family division recently collaborated with the Rutgers Child Advocacy Center to present a Youth Expo.

Young adults were identified for participation by the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) and other agencies.

Valuable information was provided to them on resources available for continuing education, financial assistance, continuation of health benefits and career advancement.

The program included remarks from family division Presiding Judge Michael A. Guadagno, a presentation by Nana Wilson of the Rutgers Child Advocacy

Center and conferences with representatives from Brookdale Community College, the Office of Law Guardian, the Federation of Multicultural Programs and Project Stepping Stone.

"It was very satisfying to see the tremendous efforts of the organizers of this event, dedicated to assisting our aging out youth in their most difficult time of integration upon reaching majority," Judge Guadagno said. "It was very well received by those in attendance and hopefully will assist them in their efforts to succeed."

The family division this summer hosted the Partners in Permanency II program.

More than 200 professionals joined with employees from Monmouth, Ocean, Middlesex and Mercer vicinages.

Various sectors were represented, including the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Child Placement Review Boards, Office of the Surrogate, and the Administrative Office of

Editor's Note

The deadline for the winter 2009-2010 edition of the *Judiciary Times* is Friday, Dec. 4.

Story ideas and submissions can be sent to Mike.Mathis@judiciary.state.nj.us.

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Essex Vicinage Opens Family Justice Center in Newark

By **Lila Maxwell**

Administrative Specialist 4
Family Division
Essex Vicinage

New Jersey's first Family Justice Center has opened in Essex County.

The center, which temporarily occupies space on the 12th floor of the Wilentz Justice Complex in Newark, offers a limited number of co-located advocates, civil legal service providers and a representative from the Essex County Prosecutor's Office to assist domestic violence victims.

A total of 318 domestic violence victims have visited the center from its opening in May through the end of September.

Once permanent space is secured, the center will expand its scope into a full service center and will offer comprehensive coordinated services to victims of domestic violence and their families.

The federal Family Justice Center (FJC) initiative began in October 2003.

The initiative created centers across the country that offer services in one location for domestic violence victims.

The centers were created to coordinate services such as community based advocates, prosecutors, police officers and civil legal service providers into a centralized delivery service system.

The national FJC model is based on the first FJC, started in 2002 in San Diego.

The FJC model is considered a best practice in domestic violence prevention and intervention. Research based on the FJC model has documented reduced domestic violence homicides and increased victim safety.

A combination of services and interventions in one location increases access to help for victims who might be overwhelmed by the process.

The efforts to create an FJC in New Jersey began in 2004 when the Essex County Domestic Violence Working Group, under the leadership of Glenn A. Grant, former presiding judge of

the family division and current acting administrative director of the courts, endorsed the FJC model.

In 2007, Partners for Women and Justice, a local non-profit legal services organization, was awarded a grant to develop a strategic plan to study the feasibility of implementation of a FJC in Essex County. The development of the strategic plan led to the procurement of the needed resources such as funding, office space and staff to actualize the opening of the center.

Numerous agencies including the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, the Essex County Executive, the Newark Mayor's Office, the Newark Police Department and more than 25 community based organizations have contributed support for the Essex County FJC.

Many groups are working in collaboration with the center as it operates to provide victim support and services.

To refer a victim of domestic violence to the center or for more information, call 973-487-9683.

Monmouth Hosts Aging Out Seminar for Older Youth

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the Courts.

The program included a motivational presentation by Allison Blake, commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

Pat O'Brien, director of the "You Gotta Believe! The Older Child Adoption and Permanency Movement," provided information on strategies for preventing homelessness by finding permanent adoptive homes for teens and preteen children in foster care.

A panel consisting of adoptive parents and young adults shared first-hand experiences about adoption after aging out.

Another panel of family and teen permanency advocates discussed permanent commitments by foster families, reconnecting with birth families and the moral and legal aspects of adoption.

Burlington Vicinage Administrator Jude DelPreore Sworn In As Head of National Court Association

Burlington Vicinage Trial Court Administrator Jude Del Preore was elected president of the National Association for Court Management (NACM) at the organization's 25th annual conference in New Orleans.

"I am greatly honored to be elected president of NACM," Del Preore told his colleagues during the annual business meeting. "I am excited about the upcoming year and feel extraordinarily privileged to work for and with each of you."

An active member of NACM, Del Preore most recently served as president elect. He has been a member of the NACM board of directors and served as vice president, secretary/treasurer and urban court director.

Del Preore has held the position of chair of the Conference Development and Membership committees. He also also served as president of the Mid-Atlantic Association for Court Man-

agement in 2004 and was honored as Biltmore Who's Who of Executives and Professionals in 2010.

"I have every confidence that Mr. Del Preore will provide the leadership excellence in his role as president as he has demonstrated throughout his professional career," Assignment Judge Ronald E. Bookbinder, who administered the oath of office to Del Preore, said.

Del Preore has been with the New Jersey Judiciary for 36 years.

Del Preore is responsible for managing and coordinating the operations in Burlington Vicinage, including case management, probation, finance, human resources, information systems and facilities.

He has held court administration posts in Essex, Mercer and Burlington counties.

A resident of Moorestown, Burlington County, Del Preore graduated from Rutgers University and holds a master's degree from Kean University.

Judiciary Begins Accepting Filings for Foreclosure Online

By **Jennifer M. Perez**

Acting Clerk of Superior Court

The Superior Court Clerk's Office and the Administrative Office of the Court's Office of Foreclosure launched the Judiciary Electronic Filing and Imaging System (JEFIS) for foreclosure cases in July.

It is expected that the JEFIS application, which was originally developed for special civil part DC cases more than a decade ago, will enable the Judiciary to keep up with record-breaking filing levels in foreclosures and will enable the Judiciary to address one of its core values, quality service.

Foreclosure filings have escalated from approximately 22,000 in court year 2006 to more than 65,000 in court year 2010.

JEFIS-Foreclosure has eliminated a number of labor-intensive tasks, such as opening, sorting, reviewing, stamping and routing incoming and outgoing foreclosure mail; reviewing and stamping pleadings and papers to be data-entered into the Automated Case Management System (ACMS); processing filing fees; tracking, retrieving and returning case jackets; and, of course, filing papers into case jackets.

Most of these time-consuming tasks were necessary solely to manage papers filed, adding little or no actual value to the underlying case management process.

Without the paper filing of pleadings, these tasks have become for the most part unnecessary in foreclosure cases.

The implementation of JEFIS-Foreclosure is the result of a successful, year-long collaboration among the information technology office, the automated trial court services unit, the civil practice division, and the Superior Court Clerk's Office.

Representatives from each of these areas met on a weekly basis to address work flow and technology issues to rework the JEFIS application for the foreclosure case type. This adaptive reuse and modification of JEFIS will result in a substantial savings in staff resources, an improvement in the timeliness and accuracy of case pro-



Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts, cuts the ribbon on a computer that is used to process foreclosure cases electronically.

cessing, and greater access to foreclosure documents for the public, judges and staff statewide.

To celebrate the implementation of JEFIS-Foreclosure, staff in the Superior Court Clerk's Office hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was attended by Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director of the courts; Special

Assistant Steven Bonville, ITO Director Jim Rebo and several managers involved in the project.

"We are excited to be moving forward with our electronic filing efforts," Judge Grant said. "As resources allow, we will continue to seek solutions through technology to ensure high-quality service to our users."

Youth From Across New Jersey Participate in Judiciary Olympics to Win Medals, Build Self Esteem

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and sportsmanship of every young person at this event," Stephen Wainwright, a senior probation officer in Middlesex Vicinage, said after the games. "I felt a lot of the kids have athletic potential if they had a good coach."

Kevin M. Brown, assistant director for probation services, joined many of the probation chiefs and assistant chiefs from the participating vicinages to award medals.

Ocean Vicinage Assignment Judge Vincent J. Grasso gave attendees a brief history of the Judiciary Olympics, including that the first games were hosted by Ocean Vicinage in 1987.

Grasso congratulated the participants on being selected to compete and expressed his hope that competing would be an opportunity for them to dem-

onstrate their athletic ability and show their good sportsmanship, behavior that is an important life skill off the field.

Judge James M. Blaney, who sits in the family division in Ocean Vicinage, said that the goal-setting and hard work the athletes demonstrated was the same kind of approach they needed to take when making all their life decisions.

Blaney said the court staff present at the event were committed to helping the youth learn to make better choices. He encouraged them to take advantage of this support to avoid appearing again in a courtroom as an offender.

The event was sponsored by the Positive Interventions Committee (PIC), a group of probation officers who meet regularly to plan educational, social and recreational activities for juvenile probationers.

Ocean Vicinage Marks Completion of Life Skills Program for Youth

Ocean Vicinage probation services division recently celebrated the completion of a 12-week cognitive and life skills program for juvenile probationers.

A graduation ceremony was held for 12 probationers and their families. Judge James M. Blaney awarded each participant a certificate of completion.

This class, called the "Service Learning Program," is designed to assist juveniles to set and meet personal goals and to help them make choices.

Participants, who are ordered by the court to attend, are screened and selected by juvenile probation officers.

The class meets weekly for information sessions on topics such as substance abuse education and decision-making. They also take field trips to the Ocean County Jail, the trauma unit at Cooper University Hospital in Camden and Catus Island County Park in Toms River.

Twelve recent graduates completed 250 hours of community service cleaning the beaches and trails at the park.

While Ocean Vicinage has been offering program for more than six years, Joanne Feldman, Ocean Vicinage assistant chief probation officer, said probation officers are continually reviewing how to improve the curriculum.

"We are very proud that this year for the first time we offered the probationers an opportunity to receive CPR/defibrillator training, and all 12 of the graduates successfully completed it and were certified," Feldman said. "In addition to being a life-saving skill, this can also positively impact such things as career choices."

Another change in this year's program was tapping Michael King, the vicinage's training coordinator, to lead two classes with team-building exercises. King modified some of the material he uses for Judiciary staff classes to get the group to be interactive and work as a team. Moving puzzle pieces through a web was one such exercise.

"They had to talk with each other and figure out who had to do what, when, in order to be successful," King said. "And you could see leaders emerge as they processed it. After they were

done, I discussed with them how good communication was key to succeeding, and how there were different kinds of leaders needed at various stages in the task."

Probation officers narrated a PowerPoint presentation that detailed for parents what their children had done during the program.

It included pictures of the trauma center, the jail and the One Stop Department of Labor Office, where they learned how to complete an online employment application.

There also were pictures of the group's participation in the Judiciary Olympics, a trip to a Lakewood BlueClaws baseball game and a visit to the Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum in Atlantic City.

Parents expressed their appreciation of the program and the support their children received from their probation officer.

One parent expressed hope that her son would be able to continue to see his probation officer after his term was completed. Another commented on how positive the probation officer's visits to their home had been. A father was impressed with the telephone calls he received from his son's probation officer to confirm he would be attending classes.

Vicinage Chief Probation Officer Jim Kelly believes the program is a positive activity for the participants and staff.

"I am very proud of how our probation officers have worked each year to make this program even better," Kelly said. "They review it as a team, make revisions, and then implement the improvements with the next class. Our probationers benefit from the training, and our staff benefits by developing the training."

The probation division works with community organizations and agencies to financially support and facilitate the program.

The Ocean County Youth Services Commission fully funds the course, transportation, food, payment for presenters and overtime for probation staff. Other local contributors include

the Ocean County Jail, Family Planning of Ocean County and Toms River High School East.

Monmouth Holds Orientation for Parents of Probationers

By Richelle Coleman

Assistant Family Division Manager
Monmouth Vicinage

The Monmouth Vicinage probation division's juvenile supervision unit has begun a juvenile parent orientation program for juveniles who are sentenced to probation for the first time.

Sessions are held twice a month, on Tuesday evenings in Freehold and on Wednesday evenings in Ocean Township.

The juvenile judge orders attendance as a special condition of probation. Juveniles receive two hours of community service credit for their participation.

Each session begins with the presentation by juvenile probation officers. Guest speakers from local agencies provide information about social services and community resources that are available to the families. Participants are given written materials about services and guidelines for parents.

A question and answer period addresses outstanding issues.

One parent described the program as "a valuable place for parents to turn." Another commended the depth of knowledge presented by the probation officers.

The program is conducted by Senior Probation Officers Rick Matson and Felicia Costantino and Master Probation Officer Jeanette Garner.

As they strive to increase parental commitment to fulfilling probation conditions, they hope to unite families in achieving positive outcomes for juvenile members.

Colonial Courts and Cape May County's Role in the Revolution

A presentation that focused on what courts were like in colonial Cape May County was held at the Cape May Courthouse on Sept. 3.

There was a partial reenactment of two 1780 cases brought before the court in Cape May County: State vs. Hannah Hand, who was indicted and tried for petit larceny, and State vs. Nathaniel Foster, who was indicted and tried for assault and battery.

Participants included Diane Sullivan; Kim Locker; Judge Daryl Todd; Jody Chase, John McGarr; Pete Arsenault; Rich Brady; Sheryl Coleman; Ray Teller; Chris Carter; Christa Stuart; Bill Pollanger; Sandra Rodriguez and Kathleen Obringer.

Following the trial, there was a walking tour that began at the Old Courthouse, discussion about early public buildings, important events and interesting people.

The highlight of the tour was the Shamgar Hand – Nathaniel Holmes Sr. House at 101 N. Main St. in Cape May Courthouse. The tour included a visit to the 1695 parlor of Shamgar Hand, an important early settler and representative to the General Assembly in Burlington City.

Hand owned the land where the courthouse facilities are located. His descendant, Daniel Hand, built the Historic Courthouse, which was dedicated in 1850.

Tour guides spoke about the beginnings of government in Cape May Court House, previously known as Romney Marsh; the 1848 election deciding the county seat; the former jail; the surrogate's and clerk's office of 1865; and some of the many people who made their mark here.

One of them was Jonathan Hand Jr., who served as Cape May County clerk from 1840-to 1890. Hand's former law office, now the headquarters of the Cape May County Advisory Commission on the Status of Women and United Way of Cape May County, is located across from the courthouse.

Rita Marie Fulginiti, Cape May County adjuster, organized the events.



Kimberly Locker, Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage civil division; Judge Daryl F. Todd Sr., who sits in the civil division in Cape May County, and an unidentified person listen to testimony during the reenactment of two 1780 cases at the Cape May County Courthouse in Cape May Courthouse on Sept. 3. A walking tour that included a discussion about early public buildings, important events and interesting people in the history of Cape May County was conducted following the reenactment.

Passaic Vicinage Family Division Launches Self-Represented Litigant Internship Program

By Mary Broughton
Family Division
Passaic Vicinage

Passaic Vicinage has started a Self-Represented Litigant Intern Program in its family division.

The Self-Represented Litigant Intern Program was developed in response to the needs of the many self-represented litigants who appear in court each year.

The goal of the program is to increase positive relationships with the community served by the Passaic County family court, to educate the community about the correct methods to file documents on matrimonial cases, and to limit the number of documents being returned to self-represented litigants by using a proactive approach and providing personal assistance to selected litigants.

The services of two interns, Yune W.

Nahm, a second year law student at Hofstra University and Nassi Mind-evska, a senior law studies student at St. John's University, were used over a 10-week period in the summer.

The interns assisted more than 50 litigants and educated many others who presented themselves to the family division who needed information about the divorce process.

Nahm, a first generation Korean-American, had great sensitivity to the needs of immigrants in the communities.

Mindevska brought compassion and creativity to the program due to her experience working with a similar project in Queens, N.Y.

Mindevska hails from Bulgaria, where her father is a police officer and her mother a District Court judge.

The program was developed by the family division dissolution team and Ombudsman June Zieder.

Construction of Courthouses Continues in Gloucester, Mercer



Construction is moving quickly on the addition to the Gloucester Justice Complex in Woodbury. Work on the first phase, which includes nine courtrooms, two hearing rooms, jury assembly room and offices for the family, finance and information technology divisions and Equal Employment Opportunity and court administration, is scheduled for completion in mid-November. Construction on the second phase will begin in late November. It will include renovating the existing Justice Complex, which, upon completion, will house four courtrooms, the criminal, human resources and operations divisions, a law library and an officer for the Gloucester County Bar Association.



Construction of the new Mercer County Courthouse in Trenton continues. The corner of South Warren and Market streets has changed dramatically in recent months following the official groundbreaking in June. The new building, which is being built behind the existing 107-year-old criminal courthouse, is expected to take about two years to complete.



Mission Statement of the New Jersey Courts

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