



On The Record

Volume 14, Issue 4

Fall 2011

Charles Keller, Jr., *Editor*

From the Trial Court Administrator

Fight the Good Fight



Todd Nuccio

"I have nothing to offer but blood, sweat, and tears." This famous line comes from Sir Winston Churchill's World War II speech on becoming prime minister of the UK in 1940. The speech was intended to be stirring and uplifting call to arms. Churchill was aware of the public hopes that he could change the direction of the war and he wanted to make best use of that tide of feeling. He was also well aware of the difficulties ahead and, not wanting to raise false hope, he entered notes of caution and warning. "We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many months of struggle and suffering."

Granted, we are not at war, but I can't help feeling that same stir of emotions given the events that transpired over the last budget cycle. We did suffer casualties in the loss of Drug Treatment Court (DTC) but, fortunately, the triage that occurred afterwards with Mecklenburg County allowed us to resurrect this award winning and life saving program. Time will tell if these courts will experience a rebirth and accelerated growth now that they have come out from under the tepid support and perennial threats of elimination by the State. While I suspect we will now do much better as an independent entity, as a State employee, I cannot help but be embarrassed that the wisdom and leadership was not present to have these courts prosper under the umbrella of State support and funding. As they say, though, that is water under the bridge at this point and our attention must turn to the next threat.

One of the battles that lie ahead concerns the future existence of our Family Courts. Although we prevented the Legislature from immediately eliminating its funding in the last session, it did call for a continuation review study. This approach essentially equates to the placement of field-dressing on a wound that still needs serious medical attention. You see, under the terms of a continuation review, the funds for Family Court have already been eliminated for the next fiscal year. It is only by demonstrating the merits of these courts and the identification of additional funding that they will be saved.

It is for this impending struggle that we must plan and begin to execute our battle plan. While much work is already being done to research and capture the data that will clearly demonstrate the worth of Family Court, the battle will be won or lost by influencing the hearts and minds of those who influence the decision-makers. In short, the key to accomplishing that objective will be through increasing public awareness. For it is through better informed citizens that seeds of advocacy will rise with the wind and take root far and wide.

But why should the public care? The answer is simple. Our court system is the foundation of a civilized society and a well-run and well-supported court system is the key to healthy and vibrant community. Family Courts are an essential component of any well-run court system.

It is unfortunate but well-documented that the issues of divorce, custody, support, property distribution and domestic violence will touch the lives of many of us. I would also hazard to say that all of us know at least one friend or family member who has had to face one or more of these issues. The nature of these matters can take a tremendous emotional and financial toll on those involved. It can consume their days and nights and create general dysfunction for them and those around them. The question we face is whether the public wants programs like Family Court, which bring about constructive and holistic solutions, reduce costs and minimize the amount of time that those affected must spend in distress, to continue.

If I'm an employer, I know that I want my employees to be as productive as possible and that cannot occur if they are distracted by personal matters. If I'm a parent, I know I want to limit the pain my son or daughter must experience and will do whatever I can to help them gain a timely and just resolution. If I'm a member of this community, I know I want the best interests of children to be protected and to ensure they are not used as pawns in any legal battle. As a tax-paying citizen, I also want to reduce the cost of social-welfare programs. Family Courts achieve the timely awarding of spousal support so that litigants need not turn to public assistance. Family Courts also reduce the amount of time that children spend in foster care by providing their parents with tools and direction to help restore them to fully functioning individuals.

So, the above question and information is what must be brought to the public's attention. If made aware, I'm confident they will stand with us. Our goal over the next 6 months must be to reach out to as many different constituencies as possible and to increase their awareness of what they stand to lose if they do not act. We have already begun making contact with the business community, faith-based community, legal community, and professional community. If you are a member of any group that you think might benefit by learning more about the impact of the potential loss of Family Court or has an interest in any other aspect of our judicial system, please let me know.

While I do not pretend to compare myself with Winston Churchill, I will fight for the desired outcome with no less energy and enthusiasm. In the words of Napoleon Hill: "Victory is always possible for the person who refuses to stop fighting."

I am dismayed that each year we have to justify the progress we have made in the handling of family law cases in order to maintain this level of progress. Funding of Family Court should no longer be considered optional. There is clear and convincing evidence that Family Courts are an effective method of handling a high volume of cases that are charged with emotion and complex legal and factual issues. Yearly justification should be unnecessary.

Regan Miller, District Court Judge
Mecklenburg County

In the eyes of a child, time is a critical factor. A month can seem a year. Four months an eternity. Being deliberate and swift in making decisions about a child's permanence is CRITICAL. The data clearly shows that the Family Court is a much more time efficient process for children and families.

Executive Director Frank
Crawford Youth Homes

Court Reporter Retires After Twenty Years of Service

Superior Court Reporter Gena Kirby recently retired after twenty years of service. Gena was the recipient of the FY2008-2009 Helen Stonestreet Employee of the Year Award. Gena was described in her nomination as someone who consistently went above and beyond in meeting her daily job requirements; someone who was cognizant of the big picture, the role we have in serving the community and someone who lives life with integrity and honesty and incorporates those values into their work routine. During her career, Gena was described as the ultimate professional: a skilled court reporter that brings the best to her position everyday. Judges consistently rated her with high marks as always being on time, prepared and going the extra mile without complaint. Gena received distinguished marks in attendance, public contact and working relationships, and in her adherence to policies, procedures and standards. Congratulations to Gena and thank you for your hard work and dedication!



Todd Nuccio presents Gena with letters of appreciation from the Chief Justice, AOC Director, and Senior Resident Superior Court Judge

TCA Raises Donations to Benefit Military Families and Wounded Soldiers

The Trial Court Administrator's Office started the Community Involvement Initiative a few years ago to create an opportunity for our organization to give back to the community in a personal and meaningful way. Through the years, Community Involvement activities have included TCA staff volunteering through Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation, replacing wooden slats on benches in Latta Park, painting the dining room at Southside Senior Center, planting flowers, sorting clothing for Crisis Assistance Ministry, helping build the Rayce Place Children's Theme Park, book/sundries/clothing drives for local shelters and charities, and volunteering at various senior citizen events. These have all been enjoyable, rewarding, and worthwhile experiences.

With the 10 year anniversary of 9/11, we put together an initiative that involved a donation drive in partnership with the Marine Corp League-Detachment 750 (www.mclcharlotte.org) to support military families who are struggling financially while their loved ones are deployed as well as to support veterans who have been injured while serving. Several boxes of clothing, sundries, school supplies, and food were donated, as well as gift cards and money.



Court employees and judges made donations to this most worthy cause

TCA Team Member Rebuilds Home After House Fire

You may recall that the home of Lead Fine Collection Coordinator Mohammed Kemokai and his wife Julie was destroyed in a fire in March of this year. It happened on Leadenhall Lane, just off Harris Houston Road, in the Wexford neighborhood. Mohammed and his wife were not home when the fire started around 2:30 p.m. At the time, Mohammed said it was difficult to look at the burned out home and think about what he and his wife would do. "Obviously it is difficult to put it into words, but in my heart it is very hard," he said during a television interview with WCNC on the day of the fire. Mohammed said the family was lucky that no one was hurt. "I thank the Lord for that," he said. Charlotte Fire Department Capt. Rob Brisley said the flames were so intense at one point that firefighters had to get out of the house until the flames could be knocked down. Brisley said extra hoses were brought out to make sure the fire did not spread to homes on either side. The Charlotte Fire Department's investigation attributed the cause to arcing. Arcing occurs when two or more insulations shielding live electrical wires rupture and melt due to age, thereby facilitating contact that ignites those wires.

After the fire, Mohammed and his family were initially lodged in a hotel suite for a month. Later they moved into temporary housing.

As word spread around the courthouse about the fire, TCA staff and judges immediately began taking up a collection for the Kemokai family. Donations of money and gift cards poured in. "I shed tears of joy on learning that my coworkers, colleagues and high level court officials rendered helping hands to me and my family," Mohammed said. "That gesture made me feel that I am surrounded by kind-hearted and caring people on my job. We extend our sincere gratitude."

Mohammed and Julie are now back in their home. The structural damage to the home was \$175,000.00, and it took six months to rebuild.

Mohammed and his wife recently sent a thank you card addressed to everyone who donated funds to help his family. The card read: "To the entire TCA family, With our true appreciation for your thoughtfulness and generosity, Mohammed and Julie"



Mohammed's home smoldering after the fire



Mohammed Kemokai





After the fire



After the rebuild



After the fire



After the rebuild



PJSC Customers Go with the Q-Flow

After completing a successful pilot, the Post-Judgment Services Center (PJSC) implemented Q-Flow (ACF Technologies) on June 30. The PJSC assists clients in complying with court orders by providing a single point of contact for defendants and multiple court-related agencies. Q-Flow is a database and queuing system that enables personnel to manage and route clients to multiple agencies within the PJSC. As a database, Q-Flow enables staff to create and maintain a customer record. This record not only allows them to store and update contact information, but it creates a history of each client's visits. Every visit to the PJSC is stored, along with a record of which agencies a client saw on that date.

Additionally, as a queuing system, Q-Flow allows personnel to route a client to one or more agencies within a single visit, and the client's availability is coordinated and communicated to the agency

representatives. Q-Flow facilitates the delivery of information to agency representatives and enables them to use their time more efficiently. For many of the agencies, a significant amount of prep work is required for each case prior to meeting with a client. Q-Flow alerts agencies to the arrival of a new client, and the agency representatives can access sufficient information from what is initially entered into Q-Flow at the front desk to do their prep work while the client is completing paperwork in the lobby. Furthermore, knowing when a client has completed the paperwork and is available to be seen by an agency results in a coordinated effort between two or more agencies needing to see the same client. As a result of the Q-Flow implementation, it is anticipated customer service will continue to improve through increased efficiency, as well as a decrease in the total amount of time required for a client to complete his or her business in the PJSC.

Mecklenburg County Bar, Mecklenburg Bar Foundation & Justice Initiatives, Inc. Join Forces to Golf for a Good Cause

The Mecklenburg County Bar, the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation and Justice Initiatives, Inc. are partnering for the first annual **Legal Eagle Charity Golf Tournament**. As with MCB golf outings in years past, this is a great way for attorneys to enjoy some fun and fellowship on the links, but now with the added benefit of supporting two great organizations—the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation and Justice Initiatives. Net proceeds will benefit both organizations in their efforts to award grants supporting organizations/projects with a legal nexus in our community.

MCB, MBF & JI would like to thank Eddie Knox for the use of the award-winning Verdict Ridge for this year's tournament!

When: Friday, October 21, 2011. Registration/Lunch begins at 11:15 a.m. with a shotgun start at 12:15 p.m.

Where: Verdict Ridge Golf & Country Club, 7332 Kidville Road, Denver, NC.

Prizes: Longest drive, closest to the pin, and top net team score.

Other Good Stuff: Lunch and refreshments before the game and a post-round catered reception and prize ceremony recognizing the winners (registered guests welcome at the reception).

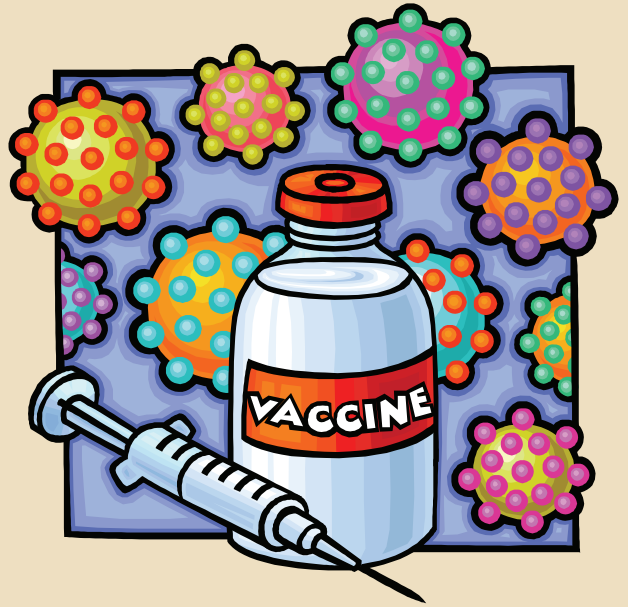


State Employees Stick it to the Flu!

Flu season is just around the corner and anyone can be a potential target. Your best protection against the debilitating effects of this virus is to get a flu shot. For this reason, the 26th Judicial District Worksite Wellness Committee sponsored an onsite flu shot drive in early October. A record number of State employees turned out to get their flu shots this year.

ABOUT THE FLU

The flu is a disease of the breathing passages caused by the influenza virus. It affects people of all ages as it spreads through the air from person to person. The virus can be as contagious as the common cold and is easily transmitted from people who are already infected. You can also get the flu from those who have been exposed, but have not yet developed symptoms. This means that you can be contagious and not even know it.



The flu is more serious than a cold, often causing severe symptoms such as body aches, exhaustion, high fever, respiratory inflammation, congestion, cough and more. You could be ill for a week with some symptoms lingering for up to a month. For people that are classified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as high-risk, it is especially important to get vaccinated. This group includes people over 65; a household contact of persons at increased risk of flu-related complications, anyone with heart disease, diabetes, kidney disorder, blood disorder or an impaired immune system.

A FLU SHOT IS YOUR BEST PROTECTION!

Flu vaccine is 75 to 90 percent effective in preventing infection. Contrary to a popular myth, you cannot get the flu from the vaccine since it is made from highly purified, egg-grown viruses that have been rendered noninfectious.

The vaccine causes your body to produce antibodies that protect it against the virus. Even if you received a flu shot last year, you still need to receive another one this year to remain protected. The reason being, each year the flu strain changes and your body slowly loses its immunity to the flu.

As with any vaccine, flu vaccine has some side effects. Less than 1/3 of those who receive a flu shot will experience some soreness at the vaccination site, and only 5 to 10 percent will suffer mild side effects such as low-grade fevers and headaches. Anyone with a history of hypersensitivity to eggs or egg products should not receive a flu shot since the vaccine is grown in hens' eggs.

October and November are the optimal months for flu vaccination. However, getting vaccinated later will still prevent illness in most flu seasons. The CDC recommends that vaccination continue through December and as long as vaccine is available.

International Delegations Visit Mecklenburg Courts

An international delegation of 8 professionals visited the Mecklenburg County Courthouse on Friday, September 18th. These visitors were invited to the United States under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. The theme of this Multi-Regional Project was "Accountability in Government". The multi-regional participants wanted to learn about the process and challenges of dealing with political corruption, ensuring fair and transparent elections and financial accountability in government. This group wanted to learn more about the role of city-level government systems in ensuring transparency, the role of NGOs and local Watchdog organization in monitoring the government, Public Servants and their accountability to citizens. The multi-regional group of professionals represented the countries of Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Panama, Latvia, Jamaica, Afghanistan, Malaysia, and Romania. Additionally, an international delegation of Ukrainian professionals visited the courthouse on Monday, September 19th. The theme of this program was "Accountable Governance and NGO Development". Our Ukrainian visitors hoped to learn about the role of a transparent government in society, tax policy and financial accountability in government, and how citizen involvement helps ensure fair and transparent elections. Some Specific interests of the delegates included the role of the government in addressing social problems and citizens' role in local governance; The Mass Media and transparency in government; The American electoral process; NGO Development and the NGO interaction with government bodies; Youth participation in the socio-political process. The visitors were also given a behind-the-scenes-tour of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse.



Todd Nuccio poses with the Ukrainian visitors



Todd Nuccio poses with the multi-regional group representing Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Panama, Latvia, Jamaica, Afghanistan, Malaysia, and



Second Annual TCA Family Day Held

The TCA's Office held the second annual Family Day on Friday, August 12. TCA team members were encouraged to bring their children and/or close family members to their office to see where they work, learn more about their job, and meet coworkers. Twenty children attended and participated in activities. Children worked on craft projects, took a tour of the courthouse, and participated in a mock trial to determine if Humpty Dumpty's fall was an accident or if someone pushed him. In the afternoon, families joined to enjoy ice cream and watch the movie *Rio* in the TCA Training Room. A survey was conducted among team members and their family members who participated. The results were all very positive. "This was a wonderful family day!" one participant said on the survey.



Operations Administrator Erica Adams and Programs & Services Manager Mary Baker serve ice cream to team members and children



Children worked on craft projects



Children participated in a mock trial to determine who pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall



TCA Team Members and family watched *Rio*



RIAC Report



The Rewards, Incentives, and Activities Committee (RIAC) will be holding a couple of fundraising events in the coming weeks. There will be a Gift Basket Raffle beginning on October 28. The cost will be one ticket for \$ 3 or two tickets for \$5. There will be four baskets to bid on. The themes include: Kitchen, Spa, Movies/Chocolate, and Sports. You will choose which basket you are bidding on at the time of ticket purchase. The drawing will be held on November 18. Another raffle will be held for TCA Team Members only. The winner of this raffle will receive “TODD FOR THE DAY” Tickets for this raffle go on sale on October 28. You can purchase one ticket for \$ 3 or two tickets for \$5. The winner of this raffle will be announced at TCA Holiday Luncheon. The proceeds from these raffles will be used to purchase main dishes at the annual TCA Holiday Party and other staff appreciation events held throughout the year. Thanks to the members of RIAC for their hard work in ensuring we have regular, fun events and the money to hold them!

Maura Chavez (CAO)

Erica Adams (OP)

Lynette Richter (CM)

Amy Kolodziej (CM)

Mary Florence (FM)

Janet Norwood (JS)

Mary Baker (OP)

Rosalind James (DTC)

TCA's Office Hosts International Fellows

The TCA's Office recently partnered with International House of Metrolina to host three visitors from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Kyrgyzstan through a Legislative Fellows program. Sanu Sunar from Nepal, Tanvir Ahmed from Bangladesh, and Asel Momoshova from Kyrgyzstan visited the courthouse over the course of several days to learn more about how our court system operates. Sanu and Tanvir are both local elected officials who represent their political parties in the regions in which they live. Asel is a Junior Lawyer with a firm in her country.

This Legislative Fellows program is funded by the Department of State. This program exposes professionals from countries in South-Central Asia to the U.S. political process through hands-on fellowships in U.S. Congressional offices (including state/district offices), state legislatures, city councils/local government bodies, and advocacy organizations across the U.S.

The goal of their visit was for us to provide them with a unique well-rounded experience that helped to enhance their knowledge of our local government. This included opportunities to shadow members of our office, observe trials and court proceedings, attend committee hearings or other meetings, and learn the method in which citizens have input into and affect the outcome of local government. The visitors were able to attend several meetings and observe all levels of court, including a homicide trial and jury selection.



From L to R, Tanvir Ahmed and Sanu Sunar

State Employees Combined Campaign Kicks Off

By now, you should have received your information packet for the 2011 State Employee's Combined Campaign (SECC). Since its first campaign in 1985, the North Carolina State Employees Combined Campaign has raised more than \$82 million in gifts from state employees!

The SECC is the only fundraising campaign authorized to solicit charitable contributions in the state employee workplace. The SECC is led by state employees for state employees and just 10% goes to fundraising and administrative costs, so state employees can give with confidence. More than 1,000 nonprofits are eligible for donations this year.

There are a few important things to remember this year:

- (1) If you provided an email address last year, you should have been contacted by Michael Smith, Judicial Branch SECC volunteer, the week of September 5th. This e-mail listed a link and information about donating on-line. If you did not receive this information and want to donate on-line, please contact Maura Chavez.
- (2) Although there are several methods for contributing, the easiest and most convenient is using the payroll deduction system. It is the most efficient and the best part, the deductions do not start until January 2012.
- (3) Aside from the annual approved half day administrative leave for anyone donating at least \$75.00, those who donated \$100 or more were entered in a drawing for Carolina Renaissance Festival adult tickets (each valued at \$20.00) give away. Congratulations to Erica Adams (OP) and Jennifer Acheson (CM) who won the tickets!
- (4) Lastly, if you are donating to this year's SECC please turn in your paperwork by November 15, 2011.

Let's make this year's campaign the best yet! If you have any questions, please contact Maura Chavez.

Courthouse Complex Used as Setting for *Homeland*

Producers of the Showtime series *Homeland*, which is filmed in Charlotte, will be using the plaza area behind the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, the old Civil Courthouse building, as well as using the terrace of the courthouse to mount cameras to film the season finale of the show. Filming takes place on October 29 and 30. Fourth Street will be closed off on those dates for filming. The show stars Claire Dane, Damian Lewis, and Mandy Patinkin airs on Sunday nights at 10:00 p.m.



New Faces

There are several new faces in the Trial Court Administrator's Office this fall. Catherine M. Goodwin joined the Judicial Support Staff Division. Cathy comes to us with over 20 years of experience as a court reporter. In 1990, Cathy graduated from The Cittance Institute's Court Reporting Program in New Jersey. She was a freelance court reporter until 2000 when she became an Official Court Reporter in Beckley, West Virginia. In 2005, she was hired as an Official Reporter with AOC and assigned to work in various counties in NC. Cathy received her certification as a Registered Professional Reporter from the National Court Reporters Association in 1994 and is currently a Central Regional Director of the North Carolina Court Reporters Association.



Cathy Godwin

We also welcomed Daniel Coward to Drug Treatment Court on the Adult District Court Team. Daniel comes to us from Mecklenburg County Area Mental Health where he was the night shift supervisor for inpatient services. He comes with a wealth of experience in working with individuals whose history involves substance usage and addiction. He has worked in the capacity of case management as well as community support.



Daniel Coward

Faith Leaders Learn About Mecklenburg County Courts

Twenty-Four leaders representing various local faith-based organizations recently visited the Mecklenburg County Courthouse for a comprehensive overview of the Mecklenburg County Court System and tour of the courthouse. This free seminar was designed to educate leaders of faith-based organizations about various courts, programs, and services in the 26th Judicial District so they can better inform members of their faith when they have to interact with the court system.

The participants took a tour of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse and visited the areas of the courthouse where most folks have to report when conducting business with the court. Trial Court Administrator Todd Nuccio provided the group with a presentation on how the court system is funded, as well as an overview of the structure of the North Carolina court system. Assistant District Attorney Bruce Lillie spoke to the group about first appearance court for misdemeanors, as well as several programs available to defendants convicted of misdemeanors. Participants also learned about the award winning jury service program in Mecklenburg County and watched the juror orientation video during a working lunch. Several judges addressed the group, including Chief District Court Judge Lisa C. Bell, District Court judges Rickye McKoy-Mitchell, Charlotte Brown, Louis F. Trosch, Jr., Karen Eady-Williams, and Superior Court Judge Yvonne Mims-Evans. Judge McKoy-Mitchell helped to organize the seminar. After lunch, Darwin Rice spoke to the group about Family Court and The SelfServe Center. Responses to the seminar were very positive. One participant wrote, "I learned many new things, that I was not aware of." Another participant commented, "The tour was very informative."

Justice Initiatives, Inc. has provided the TCA's Office with a generous grant to hold the Strengthening Community Relationships series. The series began as part of a Front Porch initiative with a mission of building informal social capital within our community by developing programs and projects that foster bridge-building between individuals, communities, neighborhoods and organizations.



Happy Anniversary!

5 years of Service

10/9/11 Shawana Almendarez

10 years of Service

09/11/11 Elisa Chinn-Gary

09/25/11 Kathy Arnette

11/21/11 Russell Hendrix



Mecklenburg County S.T.E.P. Program

2011 Holiday Court

Date: December 16, 2011
Time: 3:30 P.M.

Our annual holiday court brings together all seven adult treatment courts for a special court session. Please join us as we come together to celebrate success, teach positive coping strategies, and support a substance-free holiday season.

Voicemail Tips



If you want to transfer a voicemail message and prefer to enter an extension rather than looking up the name, press # # when prompted to spell the name and then enter the 7-digit extension #.

To access your voicemail remotely, dial your phone number and press * when you hear your voicemail greeting. You will be prompted to enter your 7-digit phone number # and PIN #. If you will be out of the office due to vacation or illness, please remember to update your voicemail greeting to instruct callers on how to receive assistance during your absence.

Save the Date!

Mobile Mammography
December 8, 2011
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Plaza Level of Courthouse
Call 704-367-2232
Ext. 6241
for an appointment

TCA BIRTHDAYS



October

- 2 Darwin Rice
- 12 Lynn Florczyk
- 16 Pat Hines
- Jillian Turner
- 19 Calvin Stanton
- 25 Cathy Albin
- 31 Jill Valente

November

- 5 Adrienne White
- 6 Tara Miller
- 9 Cathy Fletcher
- 10 Russell Hendrix
- 15 Yvonne Jones
- 20 Lea Glaze

December

- 16 Lizette Parker
- 21 Eislá Chinn-Gary
- 31 Christine Elminowski

Welcome Fall Interns and Volunteers!

- Deana Adamson (FC)
- Connie Callaway (PJSC)
- Hugo Calderon (SSC)
- Katherin Hahn (Jury)
- Melissa Hodgson (FC)
- Michael Munson (SSC)
- Caleb Newman (TCA)
- Jeff Poulsen (TCA)
- David Smith (TCA)
- Erica Starkey (Jury)
- Jessica Yost (PJSC)

Have an Idea?

A suggestion box is located in the TCA breakroom on Level 4. Please feel free to submit suggestions or ideas that would enhance the operation of the TCA's Office, anonymous or otherwise, in this box.



The photographs in this publication were made possible through a grant from Justice Initiatives, Inc.

Court

Holidays

November 11

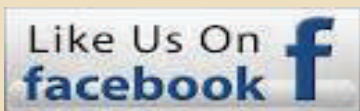
Veteran's Day

November 24 & 25

Thanksgiving

December 26 & 27

Christmas



JUSTICE INITIATIVES

educate • advocate • support • advance

