



On The Record

Volume 14, Issue 2

Spring 2011

Charles Keller, Jr., *Editor*

From the Trial Court Administra-

Evening at the Courthouse



Todd Nuccio

Justice Initiatives, Inc. hosted the 5th annual *An Evening at the Courthouse* fundraiser at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse on May 10th. This fundraiser has proven to be the premier event within the legal community over the years as many distinguished members of our federal and state judiciary, state and local

elected representatives and leading members of the Mecklenburg County Bar regularly attend.

This year's event featured a sampling of cuisine prepared by BLT Steak, Blue, The Capital Grille, Dressler's, McCormick and Schmick's, and Mez. Desserts were offered from Amelie's, Polka Dot Bake Shop, Greek Isles, and The Secret Chocolatier. Attendees were treated to the musings of Keynote Speaker, Dennis Stone, Dean of The Charlotte School of Law, who spoke about challenges facing our justice system and the value of an organization like Justice Initiatives to advocate on it's behalf and provide supplemental resource to meet the community's needs. Due to inclement weather, festivities that normally take place on the 9th floor terrace were held on Level 2 of the courthouse. Despite the change of venue, attendees

enjoyed an array of delicious desserts and danced to music by The Jack Rabbit Blues Band. Attendees also had a unique opportunity to enjoy an after-hours viewing of the courthouse and to learn more about the various innovative and award winning court programs that serve this community.

Fundraising

Several new fundraising opportunities were offered this year, including a raffle and a silent auction. The raffle included a three night stay at the Las Vegas Hyatt for two, including air fare. The raffle was won by Kenston Griffin. \$1,300 was raised through the raffle. The silent auction included several packages: a seven night stay at the Hyatt Regency in Cancun including airfare, a rooftop seats and dining experience at Wrigley's Field in Chicago with a three night stay at the Hyatt and airfare for two, Carowinds admission tickets for four, and an uptown Charlotte getaway package including a one night stay at the Hilton Center City and breakfast for two. Tommy and Martha Odom won the Chicago Wrigley Field package, Judge Elizabeth Trosch and her husband Eric won the Carowinds tickets and former District Court Judge Nancy Norelli won the uptown Charlotte hotel package. The biggest donors this year were Moore & Van Allen and The Wilson Family



Dean Dennis Stone speaks to attendees



The Jack Rabbit Blues Band provided music

Foundation who each donated \$5,000. All totaled, \$41,000 has been raised thus far thanks to the generous donations of our sponsors.

Raising the Bar

Jl also announced Charles Keller, Jr. as the winner of the annual Raising the Bar Award. Charles is the Community Access & Outreach Administrator for the 26th Judicial District. Among the accomplishments noted in his nomination were his performance as jury coordinator, his establishment of a volunteer program for the courts, his educational outreach efforts with students including the innovative Court Camp, as well as the numerous educational tours he provides to various civic groups. In addition, his efforts for finding ways for the TCA's Office to give back to the community through various volunteer efforts was also noted. Each year, this award is presented to honor an employee who has made a significant and notable contribution to the advancement of the Mecklenburg County court system. The type of contribution made can vary. It may be related to performance, leadership, innovation, advocacy, public education or some other meritorious area related to the public good. The board of directors determines the relevancy, level of importance and degree to which each contribution has made a difference. The winner receives a check for \$1000.00, a plaque in recognition of his or her accomplishment and the permanent listing of their name in the registry of past winners.



Mark Sumwalt presents Charles Keller with the Raising the Bar Award

Continued Support

Justice Initiatives, Inc. is an organization formed by a group of community and justice system leaders who



Attendees learn more about Justice Initiatives, Inc at the fundraiser

believe that Mecklenburg County deserves nothing less than a world-class court system. Justice Initiatives has no large staff or budget. It operates with concerned volunteers who seek to enlist the assistance of the local community to see that more State funding is directed to Mecklenburg County and to support local professionals in the creation and funding of smart justice programs. In that way, Jl hopes to improve the administration of justice for all of our citizens. The Evening at the Courthouse Fundraiser furthers this mission by highlighting and celebrating the success of the innovative court programs that continue to help make our community a better place to live and work.

In closing, I want to thank each and every volunteer for helping to make this fundraiser another successful venture. The time and effort offered that is offered by our volunteers is very much appreciated. This event could not be done without them. I also want to give special thanks to my intern Carl Wenzinger and to Kenneth Hart for their tremendous assistance in the set up and breakdown that evening. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank Cathy Fletcher and Janeanne Tourtellott for dealing with the chaos of the last minute adjustment from the terrace to the 2nd level. Thank you all!



Attendees enjoy desserts and music on Level 2

May is National Drug Treatment Court Month

May is National Drug Treatment Court (DTC) month and our district is participating in a variety of ways this year. We received a local proclamation declaring May 2011 Drug Court Month at the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners meeting on May 3.

To raise awareness of the program, materials related to Drug Court are displayed throughout the courthouse. An informational table and display is located outside of the DTC Suite and includes printed materials and handouts regarding substance abuse, copies of *The Insider*, the DTC newsletter and testimonial booklets. A "Celebrate Success: Drug Court Works!" banner is also displayed above the table. Once again, posters designed to show that addiction affects individuals from all walks of life are displayed throughout the courthouse. Testimonial booklets are available at various locations throughout the month. The booklets contain stories and encouraging sentiments from past and present DTC clients, team members and partners.



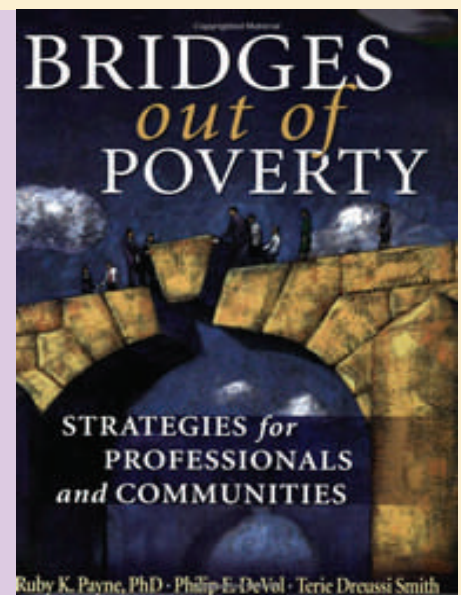
Display outside of the Drug Treatment Court Suite on Level 4 in the courthouse

In addition, a Drug Court Rally is planned for May 20 at 10:30 a.m. Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, Richard Boner, is scheduled to appear and make remarks, along with others, regarding the effectiveness of Drug Courts. The rally will take place on the Plaza at the rear of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse.

Finally, the annual DTC cookout for clients and team members will be held on Saturday, May 21 at Horner's Nest Park. The cookout is held as part of National Drug Court Month. Those who attend will enjoy an afternoon of great food, games, live music and fellowship!

Bridges Out of Poverty

On Friday, April 8, Drug Treatment Court hosted a training session entitled Bridges out of Poverty. This curriculum provides professionals who work directly with those in poverty a better understanding of the challenges and strengths of their clients without judging. Participants explored ways of using Bridges out of Poverty within the criminal justice system, as we encourage the promotion of equal justice under the law for all persons regardless of economic status. The challenge is to identify obstacles within the criminal justice system for those from generational poverty. Once identified, efforts are made to eliminate them without jeopardizing the integrity of the criminal justice system. Attendees received a copy of the book *Bridges Out of Poverty*, which was included in the cost of registration.



Chinese Officials Visit Mecklenburg Courts

A group of Chinese court officials and law professors visited the Mecklenburg County Courthouse the afternoon of Tuesday, April 5 and all day on Wednesday, April 6. The main purpose of their visit was to observe various components of the Juvenile Justice System. Part of the focus was on alternative sentencing and diversionary options. As such, they learned more about how Drug Treatment Courts are structured and operate. The visitors were:

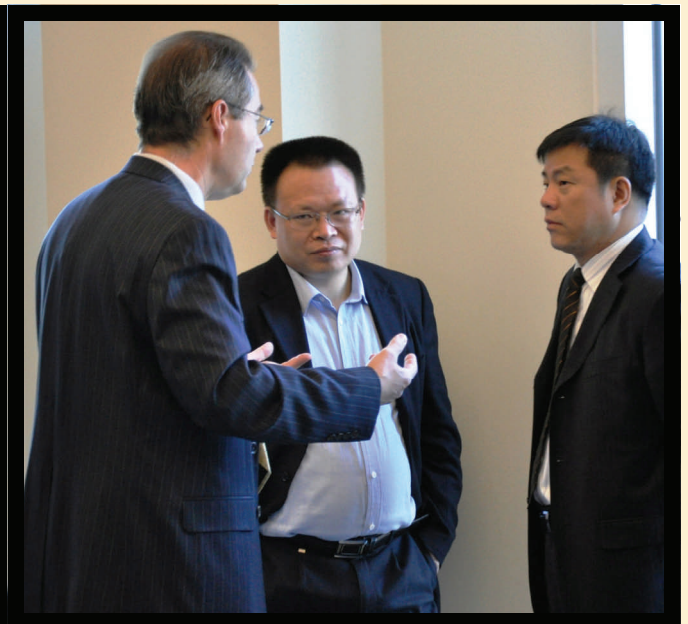
- Li Changlin: Professor, Vice Dean, Southwest University of Political Science and Law (SWUPL), Executive Chief Prosecutor of Shapingba District People's Procuratorate (part-time)
- Sun Changyong: Professor, Vice President - SWUPL, Special Counseling Expert of the People's Procuratorate of Chongqing
- Xia Yang: Chief Prosecutor, Shapingba District People's Procuratorate, Chongqing, Professor, SWUPL (Part-time)
- Long Zongzhi: Special Counseling Expert to the Supreme People's Court & Supreme People's Procuratorate of China, Professor of Law at SWUPL & Sichuan University School of Law

The guests began their visit by taking a tour of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. In the evening, they attended a dinner and reception hosted by The Charlotte School of Law. On Wednesday, Chief District Court Judge Lisa C. Bell welcomed the visitors. Afterwards, they were given an introduction to Drug Treatment Courts. In the afternoon, the group took a tour of Jail North before coming back to the courthouse for a panel discussion with District Attorney Andrew Murray, Public Defender Kevin Tully, Assistant Public Defender Bob Ward, District Court Judge Elizabeth Trosch, and David Wallace with the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

The visit was made possible through a partnership with the UNCC Criminal Justice Department, The Charlotte School of Law, and the Mecklenburg County Drug Treatment Courts.



District Attorney Andrew Murray explains how drug treatment courts work with the delegates as Drug Court Administrator Janeanne Tourtellott listens



Public Defender Bob Ward talks to the delegates about his role in drug treatment courts

District 26 Wins Award for Judicial Administration

The North Carolina Conference of Court Administrators (NCCCA) recently announced the 26th Judicial District of North Carolina (Mecklenburg County) as the winner of the 2010 Judicial Administration Award. The Judicial Administration Award was established by the NCCCA to publicly recognize courts and related organizations in the State of North Carolina for meritorious projects and exemplary accomplishments that enhance the administration of justice. A plaque was awarded and will be displayed in the Trial Court Administrator's Office in the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. The 26th Judicial District was selected this year for the innovative creation of Justice Initiatives, Inc., a local non-profit.

Justice Initiatives, Inc. (JI) was formed in 2004 by a group of community and justice system leaders in North Carolina who believe that Mecklenburg County deserves nothing less than a world-class court system. Justice Initiatives is a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) nonprofit whose mission is to educate the community about the court system and to advocate, support, and advance its needs and interests. The members of Justice Initiatives, Inc. are committed to tirelessly advocating for increased funding to the judicial branch and for raising seed money needed for the continued development of innovative programs and services that have brought forth national recognition and admiration. Justice Initiatives envisions a court system that delivers the highest quality of justice and fosters community trust and confidence.

To date, Justice Initiatives has invested approximately \$100,000 into new court programs and services.

The following are a few of the smart programs sponsored by JI that have brought forth added value to this community.

- Strengthening Community Relationships Forums
- Town Hall Meetings
- Judicial Candidates Forum
- District Attorney Debate
- Court Camp
- Customer Satisfaction Survey Incentives
- Drug Court Month
- Courts and Media Seminars
- I-CAN Self-Help Forms
- Juror Appreciation Month
- National Adoption Day
- Continuing Education Programs
- Courthouse Wireless Access
- Family Court Handbook
- Mecklenburg County Teen Court



From L to R, Erica Adams, Meredith Davis, Charles Keller, Todd Nuccio, Ella Wrenn, Janeanne Tourtelott, and Mary Baker

Caseflow Management Holds CLE for Attorneys

The Caseflow Management Division of the Trial Court Administrator's Office recently held a continuing legal education seminar designed to educate local attorneys about caseflow management in the Mecklenburg County courts. The subject matter included the mechanics of practicing in the general civil district court and superior court, as well as information regarding future initiatives such as on-line calendaring. The training was well attended and will be offered to attorneys on a regular basis. This seminar is modeled after the annual paralegal conference that is also offered by the Caseflow Management Staff. The event was sponsored in part by Justice Initiatives, Inc.



Caseflow Management Administrator Meredith Davis educates attorneys about Caseflow Management in Mecklenburg

Local Media Learn About Mecklenburg Courts



Deputy Clerk Caleb Newman provides local media with an overview of the Criminal Clerk's Office

The Trial Court Administrator's Office, in partnership with Justice Initiatives, Inc., recently held a Courts and Media Seminar. This luncheon seminar, which is held twice a year is designed to educate members of the local media about the Mecklenburg County courthouse and North Carolina court system. Attendees learn about the various offices, how to look up court records, and take a tour of the courthouse. Judges and court officials also attend the seminar, which gives them an opportunity to meet members of the local media, ask and answer questions, and learn about the media. This seminar also serves to build an even better working relationship between the courts and the media. This particular seminar featured a presentation on the

operations of Courtroom 5350, which was given by Trial Court Administrator Todd Nuccio, as well as an overview of the Criminal Clerk's Office, which was given by Deputy Clerk Caleb Newman. Several media outlets were represented, included WFAE Radio, WBTV, Fox News, WCNC, and WSOC. Several judges were also in attendance to ask and answer questions.



TCA's Office Hosts Foreign Government Officials



From L to R, Jaclyn Gilstrap with International House, Fahima Quoreshi, Todd Nuccio, Oleg Nikolaevich, Dilorom Saidjonovna

The Trial Court Administrator's Office recently hosted several visitors from abroad through a partnership with International House. A delegation of three government and human rights officials from Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan were in Charlotte April 7 through May 1 for a professional exchange program through the Legislative Fellows Program, a U.S. State Department Program, in collaboration with International House in Charlotte.

The Legislative Fellow Program is designed so participants can engage in meetings related to legislation, the role of civic society, and the relation between communities and local government. These particular participants were interested in observing legislation in action, attending meetings with local judges and/or court officials, gaining a better understanding of the role of government, the electoral process, and how legislation affects communities.

The participants included Ms. Fahima Quoreshi from Dhaka, Bangladesh. She is the vice president of Dhaka University, Joint Secretary of Gulshan Society, Executive Member of Bangladesh National Women

Lawyers' Association, among others. She is currently involved in human rights as an activist and also filing public interest litigation for women and children's rights. Mr. Oleg Nikolaevich is currently the Deputy Head at the Department of International Policy of Almaty City in Kazakhstan. He is interested in the role of local government in civil society. He implements policies to promote unity between communities and local government. He also implements democratic principles of social harmony and political stability, foster civic patriotism, development of a common strategy and coordinated interaction of all structures of local executive authority in the field of public relations, social sphere, science, education, culture, health, media, youth, language policy, tourism, and sport. Ms. Dilorom Saidjonovna hails from Khujan, Tajikistan. She is a Local Government Specialist, Member of Mercy Corps and Brandy Westerman. She is interested in strengthening the link between communities and local government, and the role of civil society and politics along with immigration issues.

The delegates visited the Mecklenburg County Courthouse on Friday, April 15 and were given a tour of the building. After the tour, they met with Trial Court Administrator Todd Nuccio who gave them a presentation on the structure of North Carolina court system, as well as information as to how legislation is created in North Carolina. The delegates enjoyed their visit and indicated that they learned a great deal. The information they received can be used to further their efforts in their respective countries once they return.



Mecklenburg County Courts Are Worldwide!

In recent years, we have hosted court officials from China, South Korea, Russia, and the Ukraine who came to Charlotte to examine our courthouse, learn about our award winning jury service, our drug treatment courts, and our juvenile courts.

TCA Staff Appreciation Event: Pancake Eating Contest

On March 24th, the TCA RIAC hosted its first Pancake Eating Contest. As the TCA staff enjoyed a continental breakfast with bacon, mini pancakes, an assortment of mini muffins and fresh fruit with juices and coffee, the contestants focused mightily on a hearty 10-stack of freshly made pancakes. This year's contestants were Linda Pierce (DTC), Todd Nuccio (TCA) and Michael Hamilton (DTC). Todd Nuccio was confident he would be the winner and even dressed the part of Rocky Balboa. All contestants came on strong, but by the end of the first five pancakes, their eagerness slowly begin to wain. In the end, Todd Nuccio managed to devour the most in the time allotted. Each of the contestants gave it their all in true team spirit and did a great job!

The food was provided by the Courtside Cafe.



Pancakes were provide by The Courtside Cafe



Linda Pierce: Just a spoonful of syrup helps the pancakes go down!



Todd Nuccio came out swinging!



Mike Hamilton: Slow and steady wins the race!



“Bring it on, Rocky!”



“I got this!”



Processing nicely!



The Agony of Defeat!



Victory!



The Pancake Eating King!

Long Awaited Juror Website Goes Live

Residents summoned for jury service in Mecklenburg County courts can now access detailed information about their jury service and submit requests to the Jury Management Office online with a new interactive application created by the Mecklenburg County Information Services & Technology (IST) Department, in conjunction with the Trial Court Administrator's (TCA) Office, called the Jury Manager System.

Residents who receive a summons for jury service can access and manage their information online at jury.mecklenburgcountync.gov, as an alternative to contacting the TCA's Jury Management Office by phone or mail. The Jury Management Office is staffed by only two Jury Coordinators (one full-time and one part-time) who are responsible for issuing approximately 6,000 summonses per month and performing all jury management functions, which includes responding to a high volume of requests and inquiries pertaining to jury service. The TCA's Office sought assistance from IST with developing an interactive online jury management application that would reduce staff time involved with answering calls and processing mail, decrease the cost of communicating with jurors by mail when a request to be deferred or excused is submitted, improve response time (jurors are notified automatically by email when their request has been processed) and the overall level of customer service provided to jurors, thereby increasing customer satisfaction.

Most interaction between residents who receive a summons to appear for jury service and the Jury Management Office involves requests for deferral of jury service, excusal from jury service, and summons information, when lost or misplaced. The new application was designed to manage these common requests and offers many helpful features for jurors, including the ability to look up a lost juror number and obtain reporting instructions; view current reporting status or the status of a request for deferral or excusal submitted via the online application; access jury service history; verify or update personal data; request a deferral or an excusal; request special assistance; learn about the "no pay" option; request a jury service reminder; view and contribute to the "Employer Honor Roll," for employers who continue to pay jurors while they serve; complete a pretrial questionnaire or an exit questionnaire; print jury service notifications; and print an employer letter, verifying service dates and the amount to be paid; or a jury service verification certificate after service has been completed. Since the online application went live on April 1, 2011, in excess of 1,500 requests for deferral and excusal have been submitted and processed via the website.

IST created the application in-house at no additional cost to taxpayers. It is estimated that the internal labor cost for the project was \$95,000. The TCA's Office anticipates the application will significantly reduce its costs and the staff time required to process mail and answer calls, which will enable the Jury Coordinators to be more attentive to those who report for jury service.



Girl Scouts Learn About Careers in the Court System

A group of local Girl Scouts from the Hornet's Nest Troop recently spent a portion of their spring break learning about the North Carolina court system and the various career tracks associated with it. This educational program was made possible through a partnership with the Girl Scouts of America, the 26th Judicial District Trial Court Administrator's Office, the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, The Charlotte School of Law, and Moore & Van Allen. Superior Court Judge Hugh B. Lewis spearheaded the initiative. The program took place over two days and included lectures and hands-on activities. The participants ranged in age from fourteen to eighteen.



Community Access & Outreach Administrator Charles Keller, Jr. spoke to the girls about careers in the Trial Court Administrator and Clerk of Superior Court's Office at Moore & Van Allen

On Saturday, April 16, the group of Girl Scouts visited Moore & Van Allen in their law offices located in the Bank of America building in uptown Charlotte. A variety of speakers talked to the girls about various careers available to them, including administrative positions within the court, Guardian Ad Litem, crime scene forensics, in addition to being a lawyer and a paralegal.

On Tuesday, April 19th, the group visited the Mecklenburg County Courthouse where they had lunch in the Judges' Conference Room before breaking up into groups to observe actual trials. Volunteers from The Charlotte School of Law and other volunteer attorneys and paralegals assisted the girls as they made their way from courtroom to courtroom. After court, Deputy Sheriffs Robert Sherwin and Linda Lopez gave the girls a presentation on the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office K-9 Unit, which included a demonstration of a bomb-sniffing and a search and rescue K-9. Afterwards, the girls enjoyed a pizza dinner before breaking up into groups to conduct a mock trial in actual courtrooms. The program ended around 8:30 in the evening.



The Girl Scouts participated in a mock trial at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse

This was the first in what could be a regular program to educate Girl Scouts about the North Carolina court system, as well as the various career path girls might choose as they mature.

March Madness Winner Announced

Congratulations to Patrick Richey (FC) who was this year's winner of the TCA March Madness Brackets competition. Trial Court Administrator Todd Nuccio presented Patrick with his prize, a gift card to Sam Ash Music Store, at the annual TCA Spring Fling event on Friday, April 29. In keeping with tradition, Todd tries to tailor the prize to the winner's interests.

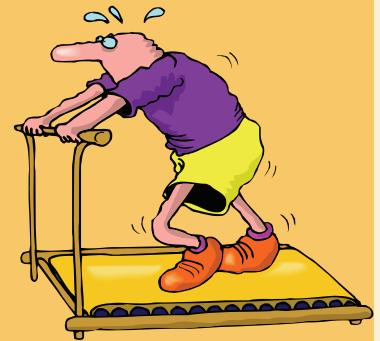
The National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Men's Division I Basketball Championship is a single-elimination tournament held each spring in the United States, featuring 68 college basketball teams, to determine the national champion in the top tier of college basketball. The tournament, organized by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), was created in 1939 by the National Association of Basketball Coaches, and was the brainchild of Kansas coach Phog Allen. Held mostly in March, it is known informally as March Madness or the Big Dance, and has become one of the most prominent annual sporting events in the United States.



TCA Todd Nuccio Congratulates Patrick Richey

Committee to Focus on State Employee Wellness

In an effort to help staff meet new health insurance requirements, the 26th Judicial District has formed a wellness committee to explore and implement wellness options for state employees. The committee is made up of volunteer representatives from various court agencies, including the Trial Court Administrator's Office, Clerk of Superior Court's Office, District Attorney's Office, and the Public Defender's Office. The group has met several times to examine materials provided by the Administrative Office of Courts, as well as begin to map out a plan to identify, promote and implement wellness opportunities and services. A survey will be conducted among all state employees to determine what types of services are already in place, as well as to determine the types of opportunities and services employees might be interested in. Once the survey has been completed and the data compiled, the committee will move forward with efforts to establish wellness opportunities. The group envisions a range of services that could be available to state employees including opportunities for exercise during the workday, nutritional training and information, establishing more options for healthy eating in the work place, stress management, and smoking cessation classes.



To promote the idea of wellness, several state employees recently participated in an Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less class offered through Mecklenburg County. The fifteen week course consisted of weekly classes and weigh-in sessions. Participants monitored their weight loss each week while learning about healthy nutrition and exercise techniques. At the end of the course, participants lost a total of 130.5 pounds. This means each person lost 4% of their total body weight. The two biggest losers lost 33.5 pounds and 19 pounds!

More information will become available as the Wellness Committee continues to meet and explore ideas.

**Welcome to our
Summer
Interns & Volunteers!**

Christine Camancho (OP)

Ashley Johnson (DTC)

Kristen Levy (SSC)

Jacy Martinez (FC)

Abbey Mrkus (TCA)

Katie Shield (OP)

David Sherman (CAO)

TCA BIRTHDAYS

April

- 4 Katherine Arnette
- 11 Mohammed Kemokai
- 16 Vanessa Glass-Harris
- 22 Shawana Almendarez
- 26 Erin Stack

May

- 7 Kym Hanson
- 10 Otis Massey
- 12 Beth Karpen
- 24 Maura Chavez
- 24 Lynette Richter

Carl Wenzinger (TCA)
**Farewell Winter
Interns!**

Jennifer Bennett (FC)

Vinay Chartuvedi (OP)

Keelan Childers (DTC)

Yazmin Dehaven (OP)

Amber Hardy (FC)

Melissa Johnson (FC)

Emily Kearns (DTC)

Elizabet Stites (FC)



TCA Division Codes

- Caseflow Management (CM)
- Community Access & Outreach (CAO)
- Drug Treatment Court (DTC)
- Family Court (FC)
- Judicial Support (JS)
- Operations (OP)



**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.



