



# On The Record

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Charles Keller, Jr., *Editor*

*From the Trial Court Administrator*

## In the Running: Legislative Update



Todd Nuccio

As the General Assembly prepares for the short session, I recently met with our local legislative delegation to present several items to them for their consideration. I wanted to take this opportunity to update you as to what we are asking for when it comes to the budget. I asked our representatives in

the General Assembly to consider three areas with three specific needs that have been identified as being critical. Those issues include continuing permanent funding for Family Court, addressing an access to justice issue, and lifting the pay plan freeze for AOC employees.

Family Court is critical in the thirteen districts which have instituted them both as an access to justice issue and an effective administrative measure, and recurring funding needs to be restored. The loss of Family Court would create a major lack of efficiency and possibly create public safety issues. Family Court has proven to be efficient because it provides professional management of cases involving issues such as divorce, domestic violence, child custody, marital property distributions, alimony, emergency possession of homes and children, child abuse, and child neglect. These are oftentimes the most volatile types of cases we process and are expected to resolve. Any delays in these cases would pose risks of emotional responses by litigants and danger to spouses and children. In addition, the average case could take three times longer to get through the court system. In short, the longer families are placed in state of flux and uncertainty, the more likely they are to face both financial and emotional difficulties. Without alimony, child support and equitable distribution, people will lose their homes, cars and turn to social welfare.

The good news is that the General Assembly has been

listening and now appears to favor the idea of restoring full time funding for our Family Courts. (At the time of this publication, the House JPS Committee has restored funding for Family Court. The are hopeful this decision will stick as the budget works its way through the rest of the House structure and Senate.)

Another area of concern is to increase expansion of interpreter services as part of the overall access to justice for non-English speaking people who come into contact with the court system. As you may be aware, the Department of Justice recently informed the AOC that our court system is in violation of Title VI laws regarding equal access to justice. As such, additional resources must be identified to extend the range of interpreting services beyond that being provided to indigent criminal defendants so that so that NES litigants in civil and domestic matters are also served.

Finally, in keeping with Judge Smith's last priority, we are asking that the freeze on pay increases and steps for assistant and deputy clerks and magistrates be lifted and the step increases restored at least prospectively. In order to retain good workers, many of whom are the lowest paid, pay increases are needed. Many who were left behind by last year's RIF have sacrificed to fill the void left by vacancies once filled by experienced staff. In addition to this we asked for AOC flexibility in using available funds remaining in the appropriated allotment balances to provide increases to those assistant district attorneys and other employees who have not received pay increases and are not included in the pay plans.

While economic conditions are improving, we have a long way to go before we're "out of the woods." This legislative session is likely to bring many twists and turns that will force us to defend funding choices in areas not yet even known. We will need to be flexible and adaptable but unified in our commitment and determination to protect the Third Branch of government.

## Teens Learn About NC Judicial System in Civics 101

A group of local teens from various schools recently visited the Mecklenburg County Courthouse as part of Youth Civics 101: A Venture into Local Politics sponsored by Generation Nation (formerly Kids Voting). Deputy Sheriff Linda Lopez with the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office gave the teens a presentation on the role of the Sheriff's Office in the judicial system and her role with the K-9 Unit. The teens also learned about the structure of the North Carolina Judicial system from District Court Judge Ty Hands. Judge Hands also lead the teens through a mock trial after her presentation.



Judge Hands educates teens on the NC Judicial system



Deputy Lopez educates teens on the role of the Sheriff's Office

## Court Employees Learn About Wellness Opportunities

Several members of the 26th Judicial District Worksite Wellness Committee including Erica Adams (TCA) Elise Bautista and Carrie Wilson (DA) and members of Drug Treatment Court including Tara Miller, Rosalind James, Yvonne Jones, Sherrill Foust, Calvin Stanton, and Daniel Coward, planned and hosted a Wellness Fair in the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center on Thursday, May 10. Other members of the Worksite Wellness Committee including Mary Baker (TCA), Elaine Hunter (PD) and Tawana Parker (CSC) volunteered at the event. Several vendors raffled off various prizes, including massages, acupuncture sessions, health consultations, groceries, fitness classes and gift cards. Some vendors demonstrated exercise routines and one vendor provided free five-minute massages. The event was well attended. Vendors included the following:

*Charlotte Health Center*  
*Susan G. Komen for the Cure – Charlotte Affiliate*  
*Jason's Deli*  
*Charlotte Acupuncture*  
*Mecklenburg County Health Department*  
*Mecklenburg EMS Agency (Medic)*  
*Charlotte Radiology – Mobile Breast Center*  
*Elite Physical Therapy*  
*Know Your Farms*  
*Childress Klein YMCA of Greater Charlotte*  
*Project STAR - Carolinas Rehabilitation*  
*Therapeutic Massage & Reflexology*  
*All Eyes on You Health & Fitness*

*YWCA*  
*Community Culinary School of Charlotte*  
*BJ's Wholesale Club*  
*RAIN*  
*Earth Fare*  
*Total Lifestyle Consulting*  
*USA Fit & Run For Your Life*  
*Renew Natural Weight Loss*  
*Carolinas Natural Health Center*  
*Omega Sports*  
*M Power Company*  
*Presbyterian Healthcare Behavioral Health*  
*Mecklenburg County Drug Treatment Court*

# Chilean Court Officials Visit Mecklenburg County Courthouse *by Kenny Pittman*

On February 20 this year, court officials from the South American country of Chile visited the Mecklenburg County Courthouse as part of a three state trip that included Washington D.C, North Carolina and Florida. The purpose of their visit was to understand how the U.S. handles Domestic Violence (DV) cases. Their visit was arranged locally through the International House Diplomatic Exchange Program. International House (IH) is a non-profit that promotes international understanding and assists in immigrants needs. The Chilean District Attorney was very impressed with the accountability held against those convicted of DV and the support for those who have been a victim of DV. There is not much support for victims of DV in Chile and they are looking for ways to implement some of our procedures into their system. The visitors were given a tour of the courthouse before meeting with Assistant District Attorney Jaime Adams, the lead prosecutor over DV cases, and District Court Judge Karen Eady-Williams who often presides over DV cases. When asked about the success of the visit, Maura Chavez, the Community Support Coordinator who guided their tour of the courthouse, indicated "Being Chilean myself I felt proud to see Chile moving forward." In a letter written as a follow up to the visit, representatives from International House wrote, "The guests had a delightful time meeting with the professionals whom you arranged for the question and dialogue exchanged, [sic] and were very appreciative of the efforts to make their visit fulfilling, valuable, and complete with warm hospitality." To learn more about International House, visit [www.ihclt.org](http://www.ihclt.org) or to learn more about Chile visit [www.gobiernodechile.cl](http://www.gobiernodechile.cl). Make sure you click on the English version button in the top right corner.



District Court Judge Karen Eady-Williams, Assistant District Attorney Jamie Adams, and Trial Court Administrator Todd Nuccio pose with the Chilean court officials.



## TCA's Office Hosts Spanish Classes for Court Staff

by *Kenny Pitman*

Maura Chavez, Community Support Coordinator for the Trail Court Administrator's Office, recently created a series of classes designed to teach basic Spanish to courthouse employees. The classes were free and offered during lunch time so as not to interfere with job responsibilities. Since this is the first attempt at offering Spanish classes, the course was designed for beginners. However, Ms. Chavez quickly realized that quite a few of the students' possessed advanced skills in the language. There were thirty-three registered for the class, but thirteen regularly participated. The class was designed to focus on legal terminology and language that a front line clerk may encounter on a daily basis. To keep the skills they learned fresh, Ms. Chavez recommended that her students stay fluent by "listening to the language being spoken, watching or listening to Hispanic media, and to practice." When asked what she would like to say about the class, Ms Chavez indicated "It's fun! It is developed to meet the persons' needs and to get more people fluent in Spanish." Classes are held during lunch in the TCA Training Room.

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## Attorneys From Abroad Visit Mecklenburg Courts

The Trial Court Administrator's Office recently hosted two attorneys from other countries who were here in the U.S. to learn more about our judicial system. This visit was made possible through a partnership with International House. Mr. Sayed Abdul Ahad is an attorney from Kabul, Afghanistan and is the National Legal Advisor for the Justice Sector Support Program in Afghanistan. Ms. Asel Akmataliyeva Junusova is an attorney from Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic who is the Program Coordinator for the Public Foundation "Civil Initiative on Internet Policy."

Both attorneys were here in the U.S. to learn more about the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of our government, the role of civil society and their involvement in politics, good governance and statesmanship, political, socio-economic, geopolitics, dynamisms of the government as a whole, as well as grassroots organizations the U.S. In addition, they wished to learn other cultural norms and values, religious sensitivities and historical backgrounds of our

nation. Mr. Ahad and Ms. Junusova were given a behind-the-scenes tour of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, attended several meetings, and observed several court proceedings, including jury selection in a criminal trial. Both attorneys enjoyed their visit and indicated they learned about some things they are excited to share with their colleagues in their respective countries.



Ms. Asel Akmataliyeva Junusova (L) Mr. Sayed Abdul Ahad (R)

## Court Personnel Learn About Montagnard Community

The Trial Court Administrator's Office recently hosted a lunch and learn at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse on the Montagnard community as part of its Strengthening Community Relationships series. The lunch and learn was designed to educate court staff and judges on the Montagnard culture in the event members of this community have interactions with the court system. The Degar (referred to by French colonists as Montagnard) are the indigenous peoples of the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The term Montagnard means "mountain people" in French and is a carryover from the French colonial period in Vietnam

Rachel Vo, a Prevention Specialist with Anuvia Prevention and Recovery Center, gave a presentation based on an assessment she performed of the Montagnard community in Mecklenburg County.

Forty-five court staff and judges attended the educational lunch and learn. A sampling of Vietnamese food was provided. This event was sponsored by Justice Initiatives, Inc.



Attendees learn about issues facing the Montagnard community

Rachel Vo with Anuvia provided information on Montag-

### What People Are Saying

*"This is a very good program!"*

*"Wonderful presentation!"*

*"Food was great and presenter was very personable"*

*"Continue lunch and learn program!"*

*"Information presented is very valuable."*

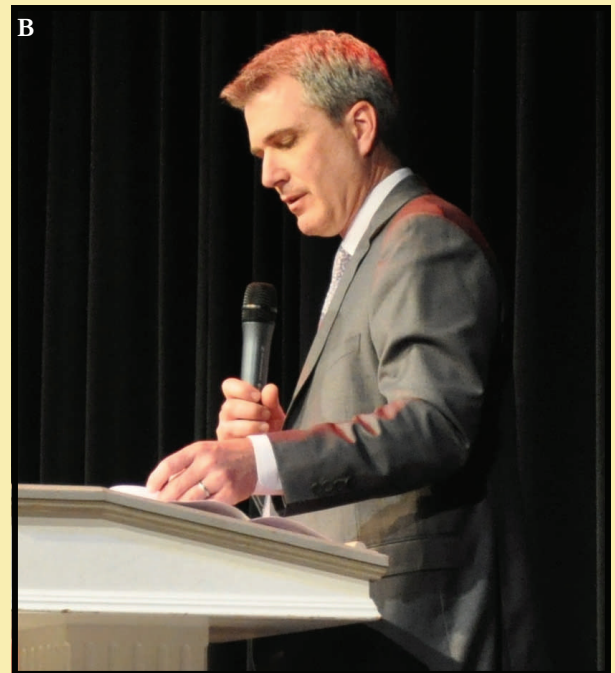
*"It was very informative!"*

## Town Hall Meeting Held at Local School

On Friday, March 30, 2012, a panel of key court officials and judges met for a town hall meeting at Carmel Christian School. The 26th Judicial District of North Carolina is continuing with a series of Town Hall Meetings designed to educate the public about the court system and provide citizens the opportunity to learn more about the roles of local court officials. This session was held at noon in the Uptown Auditorium on the Matthews campus of Carmel Christian School. The public was encouraged to attend.

A panel comprised of Senior Resident Superior Court Judge Richard D. Boner, District Court Judge Elizabeth T. Trosch, District Court Judge Rebecca T. Tin, Civil Magistrate Deborah Pope, and court officials, including District Attorney Andrew Murray, Chief Public Defender Kevin Tully, and Trial Court Administrator Todd Nuccio presented information on the role and responsibility of the Court in administering fair, timely and impartial justice. Panel members answered questions from members of the audience so that the public could become better informed about their local court system. Approximately 300 middle and high school students at Carmel Christian School, the host of the event, were in attendance. Judges and court officials were not able to discuss pending cases or give legal advice. News14 Carolina anchor Rob Boisvert served as the moderator for this session.

This Town Hall Meeting was sponsored by Justice Initiatives, Inc. in partnership with The 26th Judicial District of NC, Carmel Christian School, and News14 Carolina.



A) Mr. Van Wade, Head of School at Carmel Christian School, makes opening remarks to welcome panelist and students; B) News 14 Carolina Anchor Rob Boisvert moderates the discussion between students and panelists; C) Students pose questions to the panelists

## District Court Judges Receive Awards

District Court Judge Louis A. Trosch, Jr. was selected as the recipient of this year's Lucille P. Giles Award sponsored by Florence Crittenton Services in Charlotte. Judge Trosch was presented with the award at an annual luncheon fundraiser in May. Judge Trosch has improved the lives of families and children with his hard work, innovative thinking and passion. Since his appointment to the bench in 1999, Judge Trosch is nationally recognized and in July 2010 became the first judge in North Carolina to be certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist. He was awarded the inaugural Distinguished Jurist Award by the NC Association of District Court Judges "for his dedication and loyal service to the citizens of North Carolina." The spirit and legacy of the volunteerism that started Florence Crittenton Services nearly 110 years ago is commemorated each year through the presentation of The Lucille P. Giles Award. The late Mrs. Giles served as a leader of the Crittenton Board of Directors for more than forty years. Known throughout the Carolinas for her exemplary philanthropic dedication to human and social concerns, the FCS Board of Directors presents this award annually to an individual who has demonstrated a significant commitment to helping single, pregnant young women and their families deal with the risks associated with single pregnancy, single parenting and adoption.

The Julius L. Chambers Diversity Champion Award, which celebrates persons in our community who have advanced the cause of diversity and equal opportunity, was presented this year to Judge Rickye McKoy-Mitchell. Presented by the Mecklenburg County Bar, the purpose of the award is to recognize an individual who embodies high ethical standards, unquestioned integrity, consistent competence, and who champions diversity in the legal profession. Criteria may include one or more of the following:

- Facilitates recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of diverse individuals in the legal profession.
- Provides outstanding service and education to the community at large by unifying and uplifting diverse people of all backgrounds.
- Promotes ideals of diversity in the legal profession.

Judge McKoy-Mitchell has served the community as a District Court Judge since 1998, where she currently presides over Civil and Criminal Domestic Violence Courts and Administrative Criminal Courts, although she has presided over all the District Courts during her tenure. Prior to her judicial position, she worked for the District Attorney's Office, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Social Security

Administration, and Legal Services of the Southern Piedmont. In addition to her diligent public service as judge, Judge McKoy-Mitchell also serves or has served on a number of boards in the community. She currently serves on the Mecklenburg County Bar's Special Committee on Diversity and is on the faculty for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges providing training to judges across the country through the Institutes of Domestic Violence. She has also served in a leadership role for the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and Community Building Initiative Partnership Project, the Children's Law Center, the Devonshire School Lawyer Partnership, and the YWCA, just to name a few. She has received numerous awards for her professional and community work including but not limited to the Unsung Hero Award from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Chapter of the Black Political Caucus. Judge McKoy Mitchell received both her B.A. and J.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. During her undergraduate tenure, she was the recipient of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, among the most prestigious awards presented by the Governor of North Carolina to individuals who have a proven record of extraordinary service to the state. She is one of the youngest persons to receive the award.

## Summoned to Jury Service? There's an App for That!

Mobile users summoned for jury service will now be able to take advantage of the online Jury Management System developed by Mecklenburg County nearly a year ago. The service allows residents to access detailed information about their summons and submit requests for a wide variety of changes previously done by phone or fax.

Those called for jury service can log onto [jury.mecklenburgcountync.gov](http://jury.mecklenburgcountync.gov) as an alternative to contacting the Trial Court Administrator's (TCA) Jury Management Office by phone or mail. The website will automatically detect the existence of a mobile device and redirect the user to the mobile site. Citizens can still use the full-featured public Jury Manager website on any computer, and they also have the option of using the full site by clicking the "View Full Site" link at the top of the Mobile website.

The new mobile app offers many helpful features for jurors, including:

- Ability to search for jury summons by juror ID or social security number
- Confirm juror status and reporting date

- Request a deferral for jury duty
- Create an email reminder for jury service

The application also contains convenient links that will locate the Jury Management Office if GPS is active on the mobile device and populate the smartphone's dialer with the Jury Management office phone number.

The County's Business Support Services Agency – Information Technology created the original application and the mobile app in-house at no additional cost to taxpayers.

Since the online application went live in May 2011, 4,390 requests for deferral and 3,118 excusals have been submitted and processed via the website. The Jury Management Section of the Trial Court Administrator's Office (TCA) is staffed by only two jury coordinators who are responsible for issuing approximately 6,000 summonses per month and performing all jury management functions. 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.

## New Faces!



We welcome Melissa A. Lagies to our organization. Melissa received her Court Reporting degree from the Elsa Cooper Institute of Court Reporting in Southfield, Michigan in 1994. She began her court reporting career as a rover for AOC in Raleigh in 1995. She returned to Michigan in 1996 and worked as a freelance reporter for five years before returning to NC where she freelanced in Charlotte for Roberts & Kidwell. Melissa transfers to us from Gaston County where she has spent the last ten years as an Official Court Reporter. Melissa received her Registered Professional Reporter certificate in 1994 and her Registered Merit Reporter certificate in 2004 from the National Court Reporters Association. We are looking forward to the contributions Melissa's experience will bring to our organization.



## Valentine's Day and Fish Fry Fundraisers a Success!

The members of the TCA Rewards, Incentives, and Activities Committee (RIAC) recently held a Valentine's Day fundraiser during which the group sold flowers and candy. A total of 364 flowers and 190 chocolate roses were sold for the fundraiser for a total profit of \$858.00. All the chocolate roses were sold and only 36 flowers were left. Instead of wasting them, the flowers were sent with Mary Florence (FC) to donate to a nursing home and/or soup kitchen. RIAC also held a Fish Fry fundraiser in partnership with The Courtside Café. Twenty-nine tickets were pre-sold for a total of \$246.50. The original arrangement was that The Courtside Café would split the profits, but Operator Ryan Palmer allowed the group to retain the full amount of the pre-sold tickets. The walk-in sales of fish plates was split between The Courtside Café and RIAC. A total of \$20.25 was made in donations. After everything was tallied, RIAC realized a profit of \$426.75. The bulk of this was used to pay for the upcoming TCA Spring Fling at The National Whitewater Center. RIAC plans to use the profits from the candy sale toward sunshine gifts and the TCA Holiday Party. The plan is to make the Fish Fry an annual event each spring. The members of RIAC actually helped cook the fish, plate and serve the orders to customers. Many thanks to the members of RIAC and to Ryan Palmer and The Courtside Café for all their efforts on these fundraising projects! Thanks also to those who made a purchase for these fundraisers!



**A)** Amy Kolodziej (CM) and Marua Chavez (CAO) plated and served fish; **B)** Erica Adams (OP) helped keep the Café clean; **C)** Mary Baker (OP) sold flowers and chocolate roses in the lobby **D)** student volunteers from Carmel Middle School working on requirements for the National Junior Honors Society helped package the flowers for the Valentines Day fundraiser.



## TCA Team Members Enjoy Team Building Activities at U.S. National Whitewater Center

The Trial Court Administrator's Office recently held its annual Spring Fling at the U.S. National Whitewater Center (USNWC) in Charlotte. Participating team members were treated to a cookout complete with burgers with all the trimmings, homemade potato chips, cookies and iced tea. Door prizes were raffled off, including a portable BBQ grill, a Carolina Panthers t-shirt, a Quick Sport pass and a Cool Sport pass to the USNWC. The event was paid for through the fundraising efforts of the TCA Rewards, Incentives, and Activities Committee (RIAC). TCA family members were also invited to attend for a small fee to cover the cost of lunch and many did. Numerous attendees also paid to participate in the various activities offered at the USNWC, including zip lining, white water rafting, rock climbing, and an adventure course. Those who chose not to participate in the activities enjoyed watching others and exploring the grounds. Case Coordinator Jennifer Acheson stated "I had a lot of fun!" Family Court Case Coordinator Russell Hendrix stated "It was great! It was fun seeing coworkers getting drenched!" Attorney Fee Coordinator Barry Sims participated in whitewater rafting with a group of his coworkers. "It was a blast!" he stated about his experience. "It was exhausting and exhilarating and all around fun!"



## Drug Court Team Members Race to the Top!

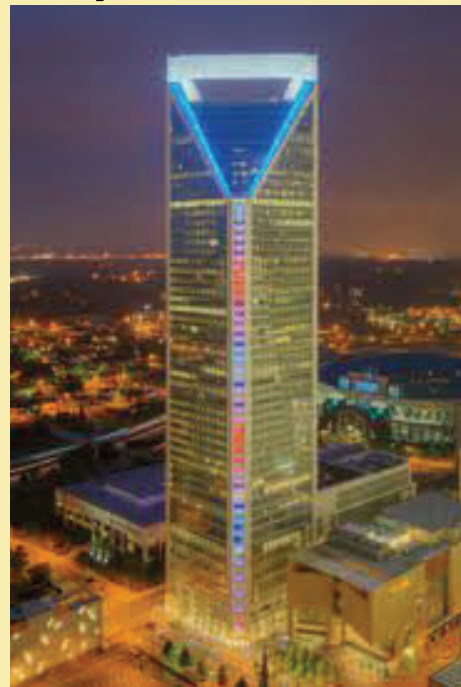
Rosalind James and Erica Hall (DTC) recently participated in The Charlotte Sports Commission's Race To The Top event held at the Duke Energy Center. This year 750 climbers had the chance to challenge themselves and race to the top of the Duke Energy Center's 50th floor, as they competed against gravity and the clock. This event was held on Saturday, March 24th, 2012 starting at 8:30 a.m. Participants raced to see who would be the fastest person to scale the 1,194 steps!

A cap of 750 Climbers was set for 2012. Participant check-in started at 7:30 a.m. at the Duke Energy Center and was staggered based off of climbers' flight time. The flight time is based off each climber's personally determined level of experience with a tower run.

Race To The Top began at 8:30 a.m. where each individual climber took off every 15 seconds from the start line. The Race To The Top is a 50-floor full climb with a total of 1,194 steps. The amount of steps per floor varies throughout the building.

Race To The Top is an individually timed event where climbers will be competing against the clock for the fastest time. There were four (4) water & rest stops as well as bailout points along the course.

When asked why she wanted to participate in this event, Rosalind James indicated, "For me it had to do with maintaining health & stepping outside of my comfort zone to accomplish something I've never done. I'm facing my fears & eliminating excuses." Erica Hall gave her reasons for participating. "This race was a challenge for me and I'm so proud of myself. Race to the top was not a physical challenge, but a mental challenge."



The Duke Energy building

## Self Serve Center Offers Free Legal Services to Public

The 26th Judicial District's SelfServe Center participated in the Mecklenburg County's Bar Centennial Celebration the week of April 9, 2012 through April 13, 2012 from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. by offering free, limited legal services to Pro Se litigants in the Center. This one-week event was the result of a partnership between the 26th Judicial District's SelfServe Center, the Mecklenburg County Bar's Centennial Program, and the Ask-A-Lawyer Program of the Mecklenburg County Bar. As part of this one-week event, members of the Mecklenburg County Bar, students from the Charlotte School of Law, and North Carolina Certified Paralegals volunteered their time to ensure the accuracy of forms completed by Pro Se litigants seeking to establish court-ordered child custody or visitation, as well as those seeking absolute divorce. Volunteers also ensured that Pro Se litigants understood the procedure for filing the forms they received and addressed any questions regarding the filing process. This service was free to the public. Over 400 citizens were assisted during the event.

# TCA BIRTHDAYS

## April

3 Daniel Coward

4 Katherine Arnette

6 Jessica Yost

11 Mohammed Kemokai

16 Vanessa Glass-Harris

22 Shawana Almendarez

26 Erin Stack

## May

7 Kym Hanson

12 Beth Karpen

24 Maura Chavez

24 Lynette Richter

## June

5 Deborah Maren

## Thank You Spring Interns!

Tommie Conklin	UNCC	PJSC
Rachel Adner	UNCC	Jury
Chelsea Ferrell	UNCC	DTC
Vaughn Higgins	UNCC	DTC
Shannon Barbee	CPC	FC
Sheryl Steele	CPC	SSC
Norman Shepherd	CPC	SSC
Stephanie Courson	CSL	FC
Sam White	UNCC	SSC
Eboni Moody	CSL	FC
Kenny Pittman	CPC	CAO

## TCA Division Codes

**FC = Family Court**

**DTC = Drug Treatment Court**

**CM = Caseflow Management**

**OP = Operations**

**JS= Judicial Support**

**CAO = Community Access & Outreach**



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