

JUDICIARY TIMES

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Public can rely on courts during the pandemic

By Judge Glenn A. Grant
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts



Judge
Glenn A. Grant

The following is an excerpt from Judge Grant's remarks to the Senate Budget Committee on April 13, 2021. The full text of his remarks can be viewed on www.njcourts.gov.

On behalf of Chief Justice Stuart Rabner and the Justices of the Supreme Court, and on behalf of all of our judges and Administrative Office of the Courts staff, it is my privilege to speak to you today regarding Judiciary operations for the upcoming fiscal year. This is my 13th budget cycle as Administrative Director – and never have I been prouder of the level of commitment and dedication shown by the men and women who make up our organization. Since the Coronavirus first began to impact New Jersey in early 2020,

New Jersey's courts have continued to serve the public, not just for emergencies but for events in all areas.

In the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, New Jersey's courts remain a place where citizens can go to resolve disputes, where families and victims in crisis can go to seek help, and where the State and defendants can go to seek justice. And we have done that while continuing to serve as prudent stewards of state dollars, instituting a hiring freeze and other cost containment measures.

There are, of course, some notable court events for which dispositions are delayed. Criminal jury trials, which must be conducted in person to protect the constitutional rights of defendants, are once again delayed until it is safe to bring judges, jurors, defendants, attorneys, and witnesses into our courthouse. However, our justices, judges, and staff have continued to be productive. Since March 16, 2020, New Jersey courts have held more than 156,000 remote events with more than two million participants.

In our Superior Courts, judges in the criminal division have handled hundreds of in-person sentencings, and judges in the family, civil, municipal and tax courts have conducted and completed thousands of motions, conferences, and hearings through virtual platforms.

Statewide, virtual grand juries have returned more than 5,200 indictments plus numerous partial and full no bills. Civil judges have overseen the settlement of hundreds of civil cases that had been noticed for trial dates. We also are starting to recommence civil jury trials, utilizing either an all-virtual jury process or a hybrid process where attorneys and witnesses may be in the courthouse.

Within our courthouse walls, court staff continue to handle child support payments and domestic violence orders, and many other matters. Joyous occasions such as adoptions and weddings continue virtually. Probation staff have supervised clients throughout the pandemic, often using court events to connect families to critical local resources, such as employment training or health care options. Drug court sessions, made even more important in stressful times, continue to be held, and hundreds of participants graduated from the program this past year in virtual ceremonies. In fact, graduations occurred at roughly the same rate as they did in the year before the pandemic.

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New Jersey Supreme Court order authorizes start of remote civil trials

By Peter McAleer and MaryAnn Spoto
Office of Communications and Community Relations
Administrative Office of the Courts

Civil jury trials will return in a virtual format on a limited and temporary basis under a Supreme Court order issued on Jan. 7. The Court's order directs virtual civil trials to begin on or after Feb. 1 in eight of New Jersey's 21 counties. Initial trials require consent of both parties and involve straightforward, single-witness cases that can be completed within a few weeks. Virtual jury trials will expand statewide on or after April 5, with consent from the parties no longer required because of the expected length of the continued health threat posed by COVID-19.

Civil trials had been delayed in New Jersey since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, leaving countless civil litigants unable to resolve important disputes. The order, signed by Chief Justice Stuart Rabner, states: "Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Judiciary has been committed to provide a forum for the fair adjudication of disputes and to safeguard public health. The pandemic required the court system to consider new ways to respond to the needs of the public and administer justice.

The Supreme Court's response has included temporarily authorizing virtual formats for various court events that cannot safely be conducted in person at this time."

The order acts on a report issued in November by the Judiciary's Post-Pandemic Planning Committee on Resuming Jury Trials, which sought advance input from the New Jersey State Bar Association, the New Jersey Association for Justice, the New Jersey Defense Association, the state Department of Law and Public Safety, and other stakeholders.

The Court received and considered 45 public comments in response to the Committee's proposal and incorporated some of those suggestions into its order. The order establishes two phases for the resumption of jury trials in all civil case types. In the first phase, civil jury trials will be conducted remotely in the vicinages of Atlantic/Cape May, Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem, Monmouth, Passaic, and Union. To the extent possible, virtual civil jury trials will begin with cases involving a single plaintiff, a single defendant, a limited number of issues in dispute, and a modest number of live witnesses. Consent to proceed in a virtual format may be withdrawn no later than the 10th day before jury selection in a given matter.

The second phase, expanding virtual civil jury trials statewide, will continue for as long as necessary based on

the Covid-19 pandemic. The order establishes standards for how trials should be conducted. Pretrial conferences will address whether the judge, attorneys, and parties will be present in a courtroom or whether any or all of them will participate remotely. It also will address methods for presenting evidence. Jurors will participate remotely during trial. An accompanying directive issued by Judge Glenn A. Grant, acting administrative director, provides additional guidance on electronic evidence.

To minimize public health risks, jurors are not brought into the courthouse for the in-person phase of selection. Judges will be encouraged to be more permissive in allowing attorneys to participate during virtual voir dire.

Additional alternate jurors also will be chosen – beyond the number ordinarily selected for a jury trial conducted in person. The Judiciary will provide standard technology and technical assistance, as needed, to jurors summoned for the selection process and to all empaneled jurors.

The Court may modify the protocols for conducting virtual civil jury trials based on updated public health recommendations, including recommended changes in occupancy limits for indoor gatherings. Health-related factors will be considered in scheduling cases for trial dates.

Cases involving healthcare professionals who are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic will not proceed. Jurors who supply a doctor's note substantiating that they are unable to serve based on an ongoing medical condition will be excused before reporting for virtual selection, just as they were pre-pandemic.

Public access to the first virtual civil jury trials are provided by live broadcast without showing images of jurors. Access to later trials will be provided through other means.

Since March 16, 2020, judges at all levels of the New Jersey courts have conducted more than 120,000 remote court events involving more than 1.45 million participants.

During the same period, attorneys have developed expertise in participating in virtual proceedings. In addition, with training and support from the Judiciary, more than 500 New Jersey residents have served as jurors in hybrid trials and virtual grand jury panels, using their own technology or technology provided by the courts.

Black History Month traditions, celebrations continue virtually during pandemic

Burlington

The Burlington Vicinage EEO/AA Advisory Committee/ Black History Month Subcommittee provided excellent programming for the vicinage, highlighting this year's theme *The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity*.

The vicinage began its celebration recognizing the rich history of the village of Timbuctoo in Westampton Township, which was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Timbuctoo was formed in 1826 when four escaped slaves from Maryland purchased land from a Quaker businessman.

The vicinage also recognized the significance of traveling with the Green Book for Black families during the Jim Crow era. The presentation included related video materials such as the video *What was it Like Traveling during the Jim Crow Era* and the PBS special *Driving While Black: Race, Space and Mobility in America*.

The vicinage concluded its celebration with a lunchtime virtual presentation, *The Black Family Reunion: Tracing Your Genealogy*. Samuel C. Still III, chairman of the Dr. James Still Education Center in Medford, led the discussion. Dr. James Still, a mostly self-educated herbal doctor, was born in into poverty in 1812 to two former enslaved Africans living in Indian Mills, Burlington County. He became one of the wealthiest men in Burlington County.

Using personal experience, Mr. Still, a descendent of Dr. Still, provided the rich history of the Still family in Burlington County dating back to the late 1700s and in Philadelphia. He also discussed the tools needed to effectively trace family origins and the importance of understanding family history.

Camden

The Camden Vicinage celebrated Black History Month by highlighting its community partners, Diversity, Inclusion, & Community Engagement and the Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy.

The vicinage began the month with a video of last year's in-house celebration. The courthouse was decorated with kente cloth and artifacts loaned from judges, managers, and staff. A jazz band and choir provided music. Staff penned and recited poetry and made food.

The vicinage compiled a video in which each participant responded to the question "What does Black History Month mean to you?" and included the Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy's Concert Choir singing *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. Each participant eloquently spoke on the subject matter in a personal way. Behind each speaker was a

beautiful piece of African artwork, and an African proverb was used as a segue between each speaker. The vicinage ended its celebration with a snippet of the Creative Arts Morgan Village Academy's virtual Black History Month presentation.

Essex

The Essex Vicinage celebrated Black History Month with a series of events throughout February. The theme for this year's celebration, *The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity*, was established by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. The theme recognized the fact that the Black family has been a topic of study in many disciplines—history, literature, the visual arts and film studies, sociology, anthropology, and social policy.

The EEO Advisory Committee, planned and coordinated events linked to the theme. A virtual forum that posed questions related to the theme was prerecorded and shared with staff. The forum's invited panelists included Assignment Judge Sheila Venable, Judge Harold Fullilove Jr. and Finance Division Manager Carol Lyew-Giles. Judge Venable shared her thoughts on being the first Black female assignment judge in Essex Vicinage.

A second forum featured Princess A. Hairston, an Emmy-nominated filmmaker and editor. Her presentation, *Tracing the Hairstons*, focused on her upcoming feature-length documentary that explores the journey of the Hairstons, one of America's largest slave holding families, from both the Black and White perspective.

Employees were encouraged to submit essays or poems in a contest related to the Black History Month theme. Probation Officer Keyana Jones was chosen as the winner with the submission *From the Roots to the Branches*.

Monmouth

The Monmouth Vicinage commemorated Black History Month on Feb. 24 with a virtual program, *The Black Family: Honoring Five Generations of the Gould Family from Slavery to the Present*. The program, focused on the Gould family and their ancestor, escaped slave and naval hero William B. Gould, as presented by his descendants William B. Gould IV and son William B. Gould V.

Based on extensive research, they described Gould's brave escape from slavery, his unique service in the Union Navy during the Civil War, and his post-war life and legacy. A diary discovered in 1958 by family members William Gould III and William Gould IV, covered his life from 1862 to 1865 and his related his experiences aboard two Naval ships.

The diary is a powerful, eloquent story, written at a time

when Blacks were forbidden to learn to read or write, and it is one of few remaining diaries written by a former slave during the Civil War. William Gould IV edited the diary into a book published in 2002, *Diary of a Contraband: The Civil War Passage of a Black Sailor*.

Fascinating historical items were displayed during the program, including archival family photographs, maps recreating Gould's escape and Navy voyages and excerpts from his diary. The life of William B. Gould III also was discussed, including his move from Massachusetts to Long Branch, where he worked for 29 years at Fort Monmouth as a civilian engineer. William Gould III directed research on the application of radio and radar in meteorology and made great contributions in wartime America, notably his work in installing early warning radar on the West Coast during World War II.

William Gould IV is a professor emeritus and was the first Black law professor at Stanford Law School. He served as chairman of the National Labor Relations Board and is the recipient of five honorary doctorates for his contributions to the fields of labor law and labor relations. William B. Gould V is an adjunct lecturer at the University of Southern California and a community relations officer at First 5LA, an agency devoted to programs and services for children.

Assignment Judge Lisa P. Thornton opened the program. Closing remarks were delivered by Judge Mara Zazzali-Hogan, chair of the Advisory Committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement. The program was very well-received by more than 175 attendees statewide, including many students. It was sponsored by the vicinage's EEO/AA Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement.

Morris/Sussex

The Morris/Sussex Vicinage welcomed a special guest, Bob Battle, retired chief EEO/AA officer, on Feb. 10. In his virtual presentation, Battle gave an overview of Black history in America and shared personal stories with more than 80 participants. The group learned of Battle's experiences growing up as a Black male in a segregated America under Jim Crow. Battle walked three miles each way to a segregated one-room schoolhouse in rural North Carolina while White students were bused to a nearby school. The White students yelled and threw things at him and other students, Battle recalled.

Battle's mother passed when he was nine years as a result of discriminatory practices. She was not permitted to receive a blood transfusion from the White supply because "they didn't believe in mixing blood." His father's success in finding a donor arrived too late to save her. Battle said his father promised his wife that he would keep their eight children together and worked day-and-night to support his family. Encouraged by a high school teacher and with a scholarship, Battle enrolled at North Carolina A&T State

University in September 1959. He was the first in his family to attend college. Assigned to the same dormitory as the Greensboro Four, Battle was encouraged by his friend Joe McNeil to join the Woolworth lunch counter sit-in. He joined on the fourth day.

In 1963, Battle participated in the March on Washington. Battle noted that in 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act that created the EEOC, but Jim Crow "died a slow death." When Battle served in U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War, he became aware of "exported racism" and was assigned to address the problem. He flew aircraft armed with heavy guns at night and investigated discrimination allegations by day.

He started the race relation education program for the Air Force. His next assignment was at McGuire Air Force Base, where he successfully implemented similar programs. Battle served in the Air Force for 28 years, retiring as a full colonel at a time when few Blacks could pass the rank of major.

Battle then served as the Judiciary's Chief EEO/AA Officer for 23 years.

Battle said he found his name symbolic of all the battles he would fight for fairness. "African Americans have broken a lot of racial barriers in many areas in the past, yet the fight is still on to eradicate the adverse effects of racism and injustice," Battle said. "We have made great progress as a people and as a nation. Today, as we apply ourselves and take advantage of the opportunities available to us, we can achieve our dreams and goals in life... It has been a long and slow struggle to get where we are today."

Probation Services

For many years, during the month of February, Probation Services has celebrated Black History Month. This year, a group of volunteers met virtually to make certain this year would be no different.

A planning committee came together with ideas to shape an interactive program to engage and connect employees regardless of their location. In their attempts to celebrate past historical events, committee members also were making history. As one presenter said, "History is present tense."

Colleagues connected with the help of technology. Black history is American history. Celebrating Black History Month was paramount despite the ever-changing work environment.

As Carter Woodson, father of Black studies once said, "Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history."

CEP: 25 years of serving the public

By Attiyah Kaid and Mike Mathis
Assistant Chief, CEP and Judiciary Times Editor
Office of Probation Services

It's about rehabilitation, not just payment.

In January 1995, then-Gov. Christie Whitman signed legislation creating the Comprehensive Enforcement Program (CEP) so that hearing officers could develop a reasonable plan for those who owe money for court-imposed fines or community service.

Meanwhile, as the focus of New Jersey's probation program has changed, so has CEP. Clients are still held accountable, but there is more of a focus on connecting clients to resources so they can meet their obligations. CEP assists individuals who have fallen behind on their court-ordered obligations, sets payment plans that individualize clients' needs based on their ability to pay, makes referrals to employment and educational resources, and assists each vicinage with gaining payment cooperation of all court orders that impose community service hours, fees, fines, and other court-ordered financial assessments.

The collection rate has increased dramatically since the inception of CEP. The monthly collection rate was 17 percent for the court year ending June 30, 1990; it was 52 percent for the court year ending June 30, 2019, according to statistics.

"The Comprehensive Enforcement Program has journeyed from enforcement to evidence-based practices that place the client at the forefront," said Brenda Beacham, assistant director of the Office of Probation Services at the Administrative Office of the Courts.

"Rather than focus on enforcement measures, CEP's focus is to support clients in the successful completion of their probation term," Beacham said.

In October 1993, the Governor's Management Review

Commission reported that the state was owed more than \$160 million in criminal debt. As the number of fines increased and as state agencies found it increasingly difficult to keep pace with collections, the amount of outstanding criminal debt grew. The law creating CEP authorized the Supreme Court to establish a comprehensive enforcement court to increase the collection of judicially imposed financial obligations and to improve the enforcement of court orders.

Three hearing officers were first assigned to CEP, one each in the north, central and south regions of the state. Today there are six officers assigned throughout the state. Those who do not meet their obligations are required to attend a CEP hearing. A CEP hearing gives people who have not met their court-ordered financial obligations or community service requirements a chance to establish a reasonable plan to meet their conditions. CEP can assist clients by making job and/or educational referrals, reducing non-mandatory penalties and assigning credit for drug enforcement and demand reduction penalties.

Hearing officer recommendations could include, but are not limited to, payment plan adjustments, job searches or educational referrals, wage garnishment, increased reporting, civil judgment/lien, relisted court date for cooperation and referral to a Superior Court judge.

If an agreement is reached, the hearing officer's recommendation will be sent to a Superior Court judge for approval, modification or denial. Once the judge signs the recommendation, the agreement becomes an official court order to which the litigant is bound. CEP schedules one to four hearings a month, during which 30 to 40 cases are heard. The appearance rate for each hearing exceeds 85 percent. "Probation's goal is to promote positive behavioral change, and CEP is an integral part of that process," Beacham said.

Chief Justice: Retired attorneys can work pro bono without jeopardizing status

In a Supreme Court order signed Dec. 10, 2020, Chief Justice Stuart Rabner, formally established that retired attorneys can provide pro bono legal services without jeopardizing their retired status. "Retired attorneys bring valued expertise and experience to the practice of law. The Court's order serves as a reminder that they are permitted and encouraged to volunteer their services during this time of great need," Chief Justice Rabner said.

In New Jersey, retired attorneys are eligible to claim exemptions from annual assessment fees and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) requirements if their only participation in any legal practice is as a volunteer for Legal Services of New Jersey or another certified organization. A retired attorney who seeks to claim those exemptions must complete and submit a required form to the Judiciary. Retired attorneys were first made eligible for exemptions from fees and CLE requirements in 2010 through a notice to the bar. The order formalizes that exemption in a court rule.

Construction Corner

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

The following are updates on some of the construction programs around the state.

Bergen

Renovate Main Courthouse - Renovation work continues. The first phase is complete; the second phase is out to bid.

Essex

New Space for General Equity & Tax Court- Preliminary schedule has move-in by May 2021. A site visits for two of the Tax Court judges and tax Court Clerk Cheryl Ryan was held in December. General Equity and Tax Court will occupy their new courtrooms and chambers in July 2021.

Salem

Space for New Courthouse - The development design drawings are ongoing. Construction drawings are out for pricing.

Monmouth

New Security Entrance - The estimated completion of this project is winter 2022.

Passaic

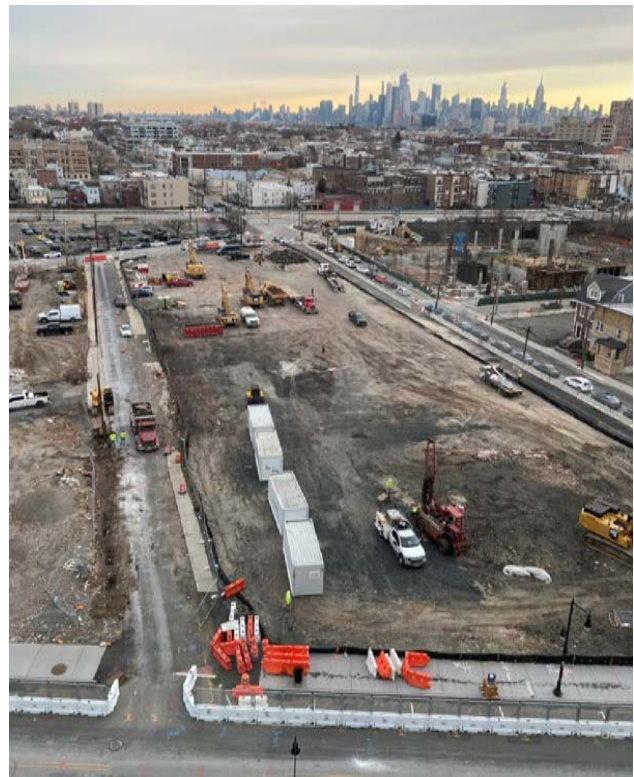
Renovation of Annex Building - Move-in has been delayed until February due to security and camera installations. Move-in is now scheduled for May 2021.

Ocean County Justice Complex

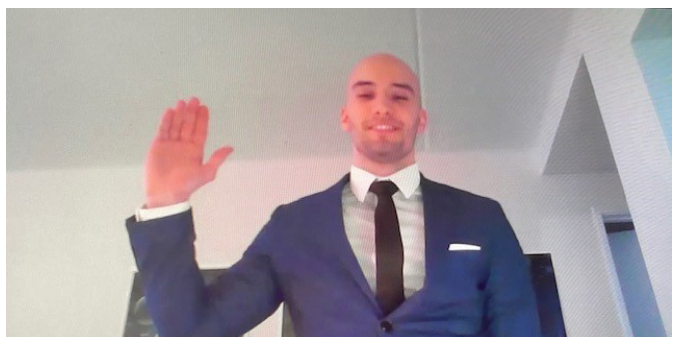
The project involves renovating two existing courtrooms at the Ocean County Justice Complex for criminal courtrooms. Ocean County Commissioners are planning to construct a new family building at a projected cost of \$50 million.

Hudson

Land has been cleared for construction of a new courthouse in Jersey City (pictured at right). Meanwhile, work continues on the construction of two courtrooms in the Brennan Courthouse. Site work has begun for the Guarini Justice Complex and the 450 car parking structure.



New attorneys take oath in Camden



Camden Vicinage Assignment Judge Deborah Silverman Katz swore in new attorneys during a virtual ceremony on Jan. 28. Although it was primarily a virtual event, the vicinage retained some of its usual ceremony. Among the group of new attorneys was Jens Defoor, Judge Silverman Katz's law clerk.

Assignment Judge Sallyanne Floria retires after 22 years on the bench

By Paulyn Holandez
EEO/AA Officer

Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage

Judge Sallyanne Floria retired from the top judicial position in the state's largest vicinage, Essex, on Feb. 1. After graduating from Fordham University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science in 1974, Judge Floria worked for a utility company. She recalled seeing the company's advertisement in the newspaper, which sought out "girls" with college degrees. The job paid \$174.50 per week. She answered the ad and was one of 26 women hired.

Judge Floria climbed ladders, traced telephone lines, and became part of the cutting edge of fiber optic cable. She excelled at the company and was promoted to a management position, which she retained while she attended Seton Hall University School of Law. Throughout her legal career, those who worked with Judge Floria also had the opportunity to witness her dedication to detail, her uncompromising work ethic, and perhaps her most enduring legacy: her contributions to family law.

In 2005, Judge Floria conceptualized the Post-Termination Project in Essex County to bring greater oversight and attention to the plight of "legal orphans" and to expedite permanency for children whose parents' rights had been terminated.

In 2008, she published an article in the *National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, "More Good than Harm: Legal Orphans and the New Jersey Post-Termination Project." This project became a statewide initiative. Moreover, Judge Floria's review of children freed for adoption led to another major innovation in child welfare – the creation of the Aging-Out Conferences. Those conferences were designed to help prepare teenagers who would be leaving the system without being adopted to live independently. Judge Floria's work in ensuring that those teenagers received life skills and attended an annual aging out conference, where they would interact with potential employers, college admission representatives and speakers serving as role models led to the statewide model of Aging-Out Conferences.

In 2010, she published the article, "Aging Out Seminars: Addressing the Needs of Young Adults Leaving Foster Care" in the *Juvenile & Family Justice Today* publication of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Floria's legal career began in criminal law as an assistant prosecutor in the Essex County Prosecutor's Office. She then started a law partnership, Floria and Callori, where she specialized in criminal matters.

Judge Floria's focus on criminal law continued when she was appointed to the bench on July 27, 1998 by Gov. Christie Whitman. She sat in the criminal division of Essex Vicinage until 2000, when she moved to the family division. The transfer initially came as a surprise to Judge Floria when



Assignment Judge Sallyanne Floria

then-Assignment Judge Joseph A. Falcone told her. She was assigned to the Children in Court docket. She was told it would only be for a short time.

"I never expected that's where my career would take me," she recalled. That career would spearhead remarkable changes in the family division and in the child welfare system on the state and national level. While in the family division, Judge Floria enjoyed the ability to impact families and the opportunity "some days to make a difference for the good." Her work, particularly regarding children in the courts, affected countless individual lives for the better.

According to current Essex Vicinage Presiding Family Judge David B. Katz, Judge Floria's work set national standards. Judge Katz said that in the early 2000s, the Judiciary's system was not able to track every child who was free for adoptions. "I understand that back then we weren't able to identify the exact number of legal orphans in our system waiting for adoption," Judge Katz said. "For instance, not every child has his or her own FC number -- we would have one FC number for a guardianship order with multiple children."

That all changed with Judge Floria, Katz said, "reviewing the 10 oldest files, and then the next 10 oldest files, and then the next 10 oldest files and so on and so on." "So began the statewide model that she developed known as the post-termination project," said Judge Katz. "Those batches of 10 children at a

time have resulted in Judge Floria reviewing and monitoring over 5,019 children and has led to 4,014 adoptions." Judge Floria said that the best part of the CIC docket was reuniting families.

"We celebrate adoptions, but we forget to celebrate the families that already existed but needed help." She recalled presiding over a case where the mother was separated from her two young boys. The mother, Judge Floria said, worked very hard and eventually was reunited with her sons. After the case ended, the mother told Judge Floria, "I never liked you, but you always made me do what I had to do." Years later, that mother became a counselor. Judge Floria was named presiding family judge in 2008, succeeding Judge Glenn A. Grant, who became acting administrative director of the courts.

Expecting the best and calling others to task was an approach Judge Floria continued as assignment judge. She returned to her criminal law roots and began the pre-indictment list to

address the cases in backlog. Just as she had tackled the CIC docket one case at a time, she methodically addressed each backlogged pre-indictment matter. Just as she did not permit the CIC cases to linger unnoticed, she focused her attention on the pre-indictment list.

Each case was more than a docket number. It represented individual persons and individual lives. Her concern, once again, was to ensure individual rights remained paramount and that everyone had the opportunity to be heard. After her first full court year as assignment judge, the number of pre-indictment cases in backlog decreased by 67 percent, from 1,482 cases in June 2015 to 496 in June 2016. Judge Floria's ability to get along and listen was key when balancing the interests of numerous stakeholders. She said her best experiences as assignment judge included meeting more vicinage employees, meeting with representatives from every municipality in Essex County and working closely with the Essex County Bar Association on projects such as the annual memorial service.

Chief Justice names Judge Sheila A. Venable to lead Essex Vicinage

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner has named Superior Court Judge Sheila A. Venable to lead the Essex Vicinage, effective Feb. 1, 2021. Judge Venable succeeds Judge Sallyanne Floria, who retired after 22 years on the bench and more than five years as assignment judge.

"Judge Venable's distinguished career has been marked by excellence, strong leadership, and empathy – qualities that will serve the State's largest vicinage and the public well. Essex County, and the Judiciary as a whole, are fortunate to have such a gifted jurist continue to maintain the highest standards Judge Floria exemplified," Chief Justice Stuart Rabner said.

Judge Venable served as the presiding judge of the criminal division in the Hudson Vicinage from 2008 to 2018 and served as a drug court judge there. She was appointed to the bench on Jan. 20, 2005 by Gov. Richard J. Codey, serving first in the family division and then moving to the criminal division later that year. She was reappointed by Gov. Chris Christie and received tenure in December 2011.

"I would like to thank Chief Justice Rabner for his confidence in my ability to serve as the assignment judge in Essex County. Judge Floria has set a strong example to follow. I am humbled and honored to have been chosen and I feel privileged to be a part of this independent judiciary," Judge Venable said.



Assignment Judge Sheila A. Venable

Prior to her judicial career, Judge Venable served from 1986 to 1988 as designated counsel on behalf of the State Public Defender's Office at the Department of Public Advocate. During the same period, Judge Venable served as public defender for Jersey City.

Judge Venable then served as assistant prosecutor in Jersey City and, in 1991, became Jersey City's chief municipal prosecutor. She served as a municipal court judge in Jersey City from 1993 to 2005. Prior to her judicial career,

Judge Venable earned her bachelor's degree in political science, with an emphasis in public administration, at California State University Northridge. She later received her law degree at the University of Santa Clara. The Essex Vicinage is the largest of New Jersey's 15 court vicinages with 811 employees

Chief Justice names Judge Jeffrey R. Jablonski to lead Hudson Vicinage

By MaryAnn Spoto
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner has announced that Superior Court Judge Jeffrey R. Jablonski will lead the Hudson Vicinage, effective April 1, 2021. Judge Jablonski will succeed Judge Peter F. Bariso Jr., who is retiring after 16 years on the bench, the last nine as assignment judge.

"Judge Jablonski is a wise and thoughtful jurist who is poised to continue the culture of excellence in the Hudson Vicinage fostered under Judge Bariso's leadership. I am confident that Hudson County, and the Judiciary as a whole, will be well served under his stewardship," Chief Justice Rabner said.

Judge Jablonski has served as the presiding judge of the chancery division in the Hudson Vicinage since 2018. He was appointed to the bench on March 5, 2013, by Gov. Chris Christie, serving first in the civil division, where he was supervising judge of the special civil part before being selected as the complex litigation judge. He was reappointed by Gov. Phil Murphy and received tenure on Feb. 13, 2020.

Prior to his judicial career, Judge Jablonski was in private practice from 1997 to 2013, focusing on family law, real estate, civil litigation, as well as criminal trial and appellate defense.

He worked for the Office of the Public Defender from 1998 and was a municipal public defender for the town of Kearny from 2001, leaving both positions when he joined the bench in 2013.



Assignment Judge Jeffrey R. Jobalonski

He began his law career as a clerk for Hudson County Superior Court Judge John A. McLaughlin.

He earned his bachelor's degree from College of the Holy Cross and his law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School at Western Michigan University.

"I want to express my sincere gratitude to Chief Justice Rabner for placing his confidence in me to lead the Hudson Vicinage. I look forward to continuing Judge Bariso's legacy and to working with all of the outstanding judges and staff for the residents of Hudson County," Judge Jablonski said.

Camden Vicinage holds Virtual Diversity Day

By Vanessa Ravenelle
Ombudsman
Camden Vicinage

The annual Diversity Day celebration in the Camden Vicinage is not just an event that is a joy to be part of, but a joy to plan.

It is a morale booster filled with warmth and comradery.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has changed how the court conducts business, it also has altered how the Judiciary celebrates annual observances such as Diversity Day.

Camden Vicinage's Diversity Day, which has been held for 13 years, took place virtually this year.

The celebration consisted of a Diversity Day cookbook, videos of staff preparing dishes, cultural storytelling videos, a calendar, and stories of random acts of kindness.

While judges and staff could not spend a few hours together embracing and sharing in person, they created a virtual program that provided peace, comfort, and enjoyment.

Working in pretrial services during COVID

By Diana Fonseca
Court Services Supervisor 2
Morris/Sussex Vicinage

The Morris/Sussex Pretrial Unit opened its doors – its virtually doors - in December 2020. From 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day, every member of the team is in a Zoom meeting in what they like to call the “virtual pretrial office.” The virtual office was created to mimic the actual office that was abruptly vacated in March of last year, an office that welcomed pretrial clients reporting or checking in after court.

The pretrial unit is meeting with about 80 percent of its clients in the virtual office. Here’s how it works: Clients are provided with the Zoom meeting ID and password. The local county correctional facility also provides the client with an information sheet at the time of release explaining how the virtual office works. The Zoom link also is emailed and texted to the client later for ease of use.

The client connects into the virtual office and is immediately greeted by the designated host. The client is then asked to join a breakout room, where they meet with their pretrial officer/investigator. If the assigned officer is unavailable, another staff member meets with the client. A client is never turned away. There always is someone available to check them in and answer their questions.

Compliance has improved, as clients have a consistent and quick way to check-in. The clients love the virtual office because it allows them the flexibility to check-in as their schedule permits. Most clients check-in on work breaks or on their lunch hours, which they could not do when the brick and mortar office was open.

Checking-in with pretrial then was a time-consuming process that often cost clients money for parking or to pay

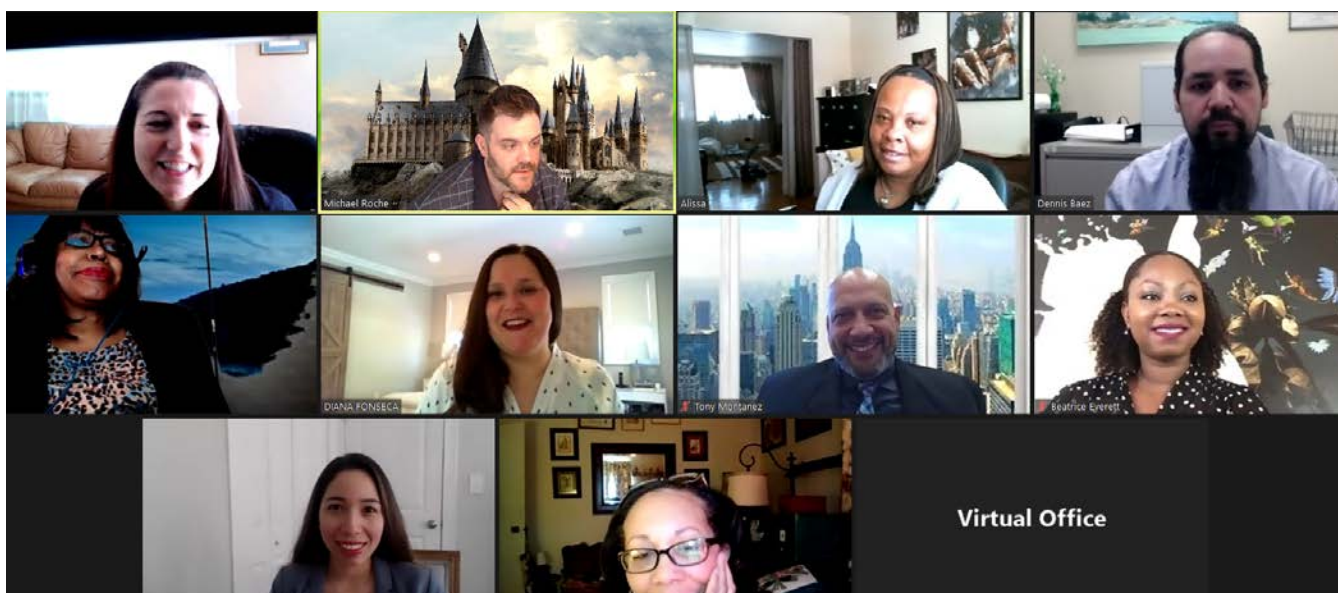
a rideshare. The virtual office is free and readily accessible, making the reporting process simple, while retaining the effectiveness of a face-to-face meeting. In an effort to further assist clients, the virtual office hosts a weekly community outreach provider, STARS. Representatives from STARS meet with clients and help them with services such as housing, food and temporary assistance.

The services are free. In one trip into the virtual office, clients can check-in with pretrial and get help from STARS. The clients are gracious. Most did not know where to seek this help during this pandemic. The virtual office also has boosted the camaraderie of the staff.

Before the virtual office, the pretrial team met regularly on Teams but was missing the human connection, the banter that turns co-workers into an extended part of the family. Each team member logs into Zoom at 8:30 a.m., and for the first half hour of each day, discusses the plans for the day. For the duration of the day, the unit is in the virtual office with cameras off and microphones muted, waiting for clients to join at 9 a.m.

If a team member has a question, they unmute themselves and ask it. There is instant access to every team member all day, every day. Private questions can be asked and answered in breakout rooms. Fewer emails are sent between team members, and they don’t have to wait for return calls.

The virtual office also has allowed staff to celebrate milestones such as a baby’s first steps or to console co-workers who are experiencing a loss or hardship. They said they are connected to each another in a way that have not been since March 2020. More importantly, they don’t feel alone.



In Burlington Vicinage, Adoption Day includes virtual proceedings, celebration

By Brooke Larney
Court Services Supervisor 2, Children in Court
Burlington Vicinage

The Burlington Vicinage celebrated its 14th annual National Adoption Day ceremony virtually on, Nov. 20, 2020. It was the first time the vicinage held the ceremony virtually via Zoom. Following opening remarks from Assignment Judge Jeanne T. Covert and lead Children in Court Judge John J. Burke III, as well as New Jersey Department of Child Protection and Permanency Area Director Amanda Hammond, Superior Court Judges John J. Burke III and John L. Call Jr. finalized the adoptions of 13 children.

While the celebration was not as large as in the past, it was a joyous and memorable day for those who participated. Judges Burke and Call put their individual touches on the finalizations to make the day special, given the unique circumstances. Judge Call decorated his courtroom with stuffed animals, while Judge Burke ended each adoption

with a group dance and cheer. Adopting families watched a video about why adoption is important. The video was produced by the Administrative Office of the Court's Office of Communication and Community Relations. The celebration was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP), the Court Appointed Special Advocates program, and the Burlington County Surrogate's Office.

Families received balloons and edible arrangements from DCPP and toy bears from the Burlington County Bar Foundation. Through the efforts of court staff and staff from DCPP, all families, including one family living out of state, received their gifts in time to celebrate on National Adoption Day.

Instant family: An employee's personal story

By Janet Cangialosi
Court Services Supervisor 2
Hudson Vicinage

The comedy *Instant Family* starring Mark Wahlberg brings me to tears every time I watch it. The premise is that a couple wants to adopt a baby. Instead, they end up fostering a teenager and her two younger siblings. The movie highlights the lack of foster and adoptive families for teenagers and sibling groups. When I was a kid, I would joke that I wanted to adopt a 17-year-old, then send them off to college. Little did I know that I was truly putting that out to the universe.

In 2004, after working in the juvenile probation supervision unit for 11 years, I decided to become a foster parent. My motivation came from several different sources. Having worked with juveniles, I knew that many of them just needed a better support system to get on the right track.

I noticed that some of my clients who were placed in the foster care system started participating in more pro-social activities such as going to school every day, avoiding delinquent activities, and even obtaining employment. Some other inspirations were a co-worker who had taken in her nephews and a high school friend who had been "adopted" by a nurse who had cared for her.

My first foster daughter was 11 years old. She spoke limited English, and I have limited understanding of Spanish. We played a lot of charades to figure out what the other



From left: Janet's Fiancé Phil, son Adam, Janet and daughter Cassie.

wanted. However, it ended up being a good experience for us both.

My next foster daughters were Karen, a 15-year-old, and her 2-year-old daughter. They lived with me for about 1 ½ years, until they returned to live with Karen's biological mother. Karen is now 31 years old, and we are still in touch.

In February 2007, the supervisor from the foster care unit called me. A family court judge in Bergen County had directed the state Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) to move Cassie, a 14-year-old, out of

the Conklin shelter and place her in a foster home. I was told that it would only be for a few months as her biological mother was “doing everything to get her and her brother back.”

I had taken a break from foster parenting, so I wanted to meet Cassie before I decided to jump back in. At the shelter, she came down to meet me wearing her pajamas and drinking a cup of tea. She was so cute. We bonded instantly after we discovered that we had the same birthday and lived in the same town. She was placed in my home a few days later.

In October 2007, her biological 13-year-old brother Adam moved in with us. We became an instant family. The rest is history. On Oct. 15, 2009, surrounded by friends, family and co-workers at the Hudson County Family Court, Judge Salvatore Bovino made the adoption official. As I had put out the universe so many years earlier, my daughter was 17 years old on that day. She is now 28, has her master’s degree in epidemiology, and is now evaluating data on one of the COVID-19 vaccine studies. My son is 26 and is a

software engineer, working with a major aircraft builder. So many people would ask why I would take on “someone else’s burden” or why I just didn’t have my own kids. The answer is that this has always been my calling in life. I took on the responsibility as a single parent.

Fortunately, I had a great support system that included my fiancé Phil, several of my friends, family, and co-workers. Movies and TV shows often highlight the negative stereotypes of children in foster care. There are so many children who just want to be in a loving and safe environment. They want to find a forever home. It is my wish that others open their hearts and homes to older foster children and sibling groups.

Sitting on my desk is a picture of my daughter and me. The frame she made me poignantly says, “You may not have brought me into this world, but you have given me life.” My son has often said that I “saved” them. I respond that I just gave them a fresh start. Honestly, I feel that they “saved” me.

Monmouth scores Law Day activity award

The Monmouth Vicinage was selected by the American Bar Association to receive an Outstanding Law Day Activity Award for programming efforts related to the 2020 theme, Your Vote, Your Voice, Our Democracy.

The selection, announced March 3 during an ABA virtual program, was made from a competitive national pool of applicants by a committee of leaders from the legal community. The Monmouth Bar Association co-sponsored the event and is a co-recipient. This recognition follows last year’s selection of the vicinage and the bar association as winners of the ABA’s Law Day 2019 Outstanding Activity Award for Best Theme Interpretation. They were honored with this award in February 2020 at an ABA luncheon in Austin, TX.

“We are honored by this recognition and would like to congratulate and applaud the collaborative efforts of all those involved in this important educational program. Together they helped promote respect for Law Day traditions and the legal system through meaningful programming for students and the court community,” Assignment Judge Lisa P. Thornton said.

The vicinage’s 2020 Law Day activities included art, essay and poetry contests for students, and the release of online materials and educational videos as part of a virtual Law Day symposium. The winning program also was co-sponsored by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation and made possible with funding from the IOLTA Fund of the New Jersey State Bar.



Camden County Bar Foundation awards first scholarship to peer recovery specialist

By Armando L. Andujar
Drug Court Coordinator
Camden Vicinage

The inaugural Camden County Bar Foundation drug court scholarship was awarded Oct. 27, 2020 during a virtual drug court graduation. The scholarship is the first of its kind to acknowledge a successful graduate of the drug court program who proved to be an exemplary participant with a true commitment to the program and recovery.

The recipient, Earl Coxson, demonstrated a high level of dedication, vigor and sustainability during his time in the program. It was during this time that he challenged himself to pursue and complete his certification as a peer recovery specialist. Coxson hopes to become a certified drug and alcohol counselor.

The scholarship was presented by retired Superior Court Judge Stephen M. Holden and Brian Herman of the bar foundation. Coxson has overcome many obstacles during his recovery and has proven that determination and hard work can lead to success. Herman said that Coxson has been

“working tirelessly to bring himself to a better place in life.” A place where, as a peer recovery specialist, he can use his personal struggles with addiction to help those who are in similar circumstances.

Judge Holden emphasized the significance of the scholarship. “The bar association and the bar foundation have decided that along with the scholarships that it gives to high school graduates each year, we will do our best to award a scholarship to a graduate from the drug court program,” he said. Coxson expressed his appreciation to those who contributed to his success and his gratitude to the foundation for the scholarship.

The Camden Vicinage Drug Court Program is under the direction of Assignment Judge Deborah Silverman Katz, Criminal Presiding Judge Edward J. McBride Jr. and Judge Kathleen Delaney, who presides over the program.

The community can rely on the courts during COVID

Continued from page 2

Finally, our Supreme Court was among the first in the nation to offer live streaming of arguments before the court and effectively converted to virtual oral arguments in mid-March of 2020. The seven justices convene from their separate chambers and the arguments are streamed live on the Judiciary’s website. The Court heard its 100th virtual argument last month. In many ways though, COVID-19’s true impact on the court system is just beginning. The challenges in front of us are perhaps even greater than those we have confronted over the past year.

We face enormous challenges on several fronts, each of which is exacerbated by the fact that we are operating with an unprecedented amount of judicial vacancies.

First, COVID-19 has led to the delayed disposition of tens of thousands of court cases. Second, there are thousands of defendants detained in county jails right now waiting to proceed to trial. Third, we face a pending crisis once the Governor’s moratorium on evictions is lifted.

The last topic I would like to address with the Committee is the Supreme Court Action Plan for Ensuring Equal Justice, a series of reforms introduced in July 2020 that, in the Court’s words, answer the challenge of ensuring that all people, especially people of color, are offered the same

opportunity and treatment by the court system. The action plan identified nine specific reforms aimed at eliminating disparities within different areas of the court system and removing institutional obstacles to justice. I am happy to report that we have made progress on each of these reforms and have already implemented more than half of them. Additional reforms will be forthcoming. Equal justice must always serve as a bedrock principle for our court system.

Looking ahead, it is clear COVID-19 has changed our court system, and indeed our society, permanently. It has made clear what we have known all along - our courts must continue to evolve to serve the public. While we have developed many temporary solutions to the challenges created by this pandemic, in order to advance our mission, we also must carve a sustainable path forward.

In the past year, we have begun to reimagine how our courts will operate in a post-COVID-19 world. Much will change. Yet the dedication and commitment of our justices, judges and administrative staff remains focused on adhering to the principles that guide us – independence, integrity, fairness, and quality customer service. We look forward to working with all of you as we reimagine a new future for our court system.

Drug court client has urgent reason to interrupt judge during session

By **MaryAnn Spoto**
Communications Manager
Administrative Office of the Courts

A week before Christmas, Desmond Causey-Jones reported virtually for his drug court session as usual, but behind the scene an urgent event was about to unfold.

Just 10 minutes into the session, Causey-Jones interrupted Superior Court Judge Jeffrey J. Waldman with an important message, telling the judge he needed to sign off. "I apologize for interrupting, but our daughter's coming out," Causey-Jones recalled informing Judge Waldman.

Causey-Jones had delivered his apology from the restroom of his girlfriend's hospital room at Shore Medical Center in Somers Point. Thirty-five minutes later, Jade Aaliyah Ruth Jones was born.

While nearly 800 babies have been born to drug court participants since the program's inception in 1996, little Jade's arrival during her father's session left a big impression. Judge Waldman, the recovery court judge in the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage, said he was struck by Causey-Jones' dedication.

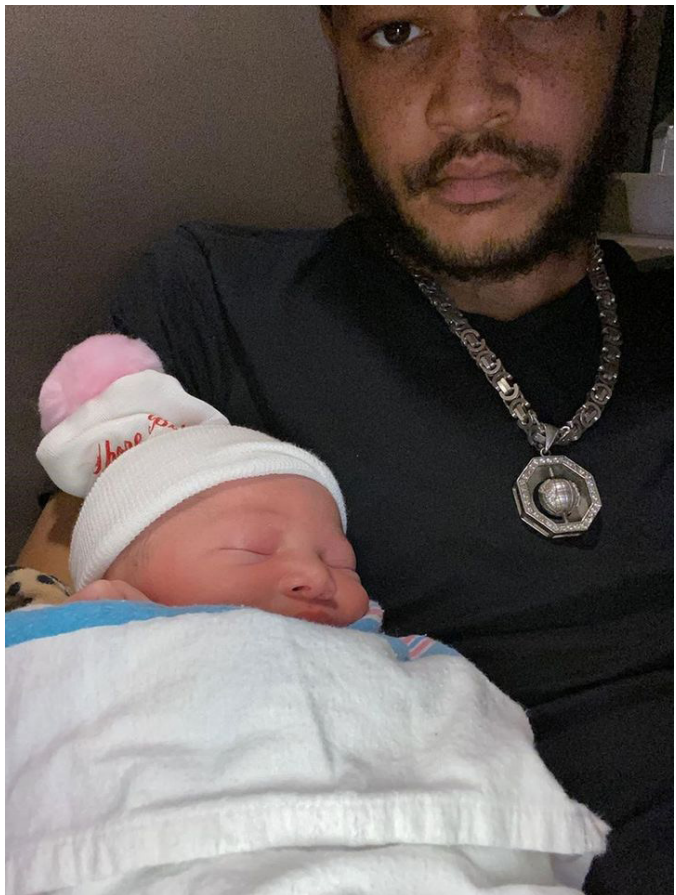
"This was meaningful on a number of levels. First, this participant has taken his recovery so seriously that when offered a pass from his court session, he decided to participate, nonetheless.

On a more personal level, we as a recovery court team are flattered that of anyone he could have possibly chosen to bring into the delivery area with him, he chose us. It was moving beyond belief to all of us who were there," Judge Waldman said.

Only Causey-Jones' probation officer knew that his girlfriend, Niciaya Jones, had been in labor for two days by the time his bi-weekly session came around on Dec. 17.

The probation officer had given him permission to skip that session. "I knew regardless I was going to go on there, just to show my face. Especially during the pandemic, you gotta show your face on there so they know you're doing alright. I enjoy going on there. You get to talk a lot and get stuff off your chest," Causey-Jones said.

Causey-Jones first got into trouble with the law as a teen. After his father was killed 13 years ago, Causey-Jones started selling drugs and became addicted to alcohol. He was arrested for possessing and distributing heroin.



Desmond Causey-Jones with newborn daughter Jade Aaliyah Ruth Jones. (Photo courtesy of Desmond Causey-Jones)

Now a father of three, Causey-Jones said it was his middle child – his 5-year-old son – who inspired him to work hard at his recovery. He said he knew he would have ended up in prison for a long time if it hadn't been for drug court.

"My son changed me because when my father got murdered, I was basically roaming the streets by myself, no guidance, nothing like that. And I don't want my son growing up without a father," Causey-Jones said.

Now sober for nearly three years, he said drug court taught him, among other things, to consider the consequences of his decisions. He wants his legacy to his children to be knowledge, not a street name or a criminal record.

"Drug court's always been on my side," Causey-Jones said. "They never gave up on me and I appreciate drug court for that."

Spotlight: Hunterdon County Courthouse

This story is the 16th in a series detailing the rich histories of New Jersey's courthouses.

By Mike Mathis
Judiciary Times Editor

Flemington is the typical New Jersey small town with old houses, a downtown business district and houses of worship that line its streets.

But the county seat in one of the state's rural counties was the focus of world attention in 1935, when media from around the globe converged on the old Hunterdon County Courthouse for the trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, who was tried, convicted and later executed for the kidnapping and murder of aviator Charles Lindbergh's infant son. The Main Street building is no longer used for court business and is only used sporadically by Hunterdon County for ceremonial events.

While Hunterdon County was established in 1714, the first courthouse in the county was built in 1793, replacing a facility that existed in Trenton. Prior to 1714, Mercer County was part of Hunterdon County.

The first courthouse was destroyed in an arson fire on Feb. 13, 1828, leaving only the stone walls standing, according to the Hunterdon County website. Also surviving on the site was a one-story brick building to the north of the courthouse. Built later than the old courthouse, the building housed the clerk's and surrogate's offices. To develop ideas for the new courthouse, the county appointed to visit courthouses in Morris, Monmouth and Warren counties and Doylestown, P.A.

It is believed that the prototype for the building was the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, which was built between 1820 and 1822 on the south side of Washington Square, the county website states. It was demolished in 1939. Construction began quickly, with the cornerstone laid on May 7, 1828. It contained copies of the Bible and



The old Hunterdon County Courthouse was built between 1828 and 1829. The building is used today for ceremonial events.

the laws of New Jersey and a brass plate with the names of the architect and the members of the building committee, according to the county website.

The Hunterdon County Board of Freeholders met for the first time in the new courthouse at the end of March 1829. The courthouse bell summoned the freeholders to return to their meeting after a lunchtime adjournment. It also was rung to announce the arrival of a verdict, and probably also at the opening of court, the county website states.

The courthouse remained in use until 1996, when the current Hunterdon County Justice Center opened. The historic courthouse was rededicated on Oct. 16, 2000 following restoration of the exterior that included repair of deteriorated stucco and masonry, roof and window restoration and site drainage improvements. Artifacts from the courthouse remain on display, including the witness chair from the Lindbergh trial and hand-carved jury chairs.



The Hunterdon County Justice Center in Flemington as it appears today.

Built between 1828-1829

Site of the "Trial of the Century" involving the kidnapping and murder of the infant son of aviator Charles Lindbergh.