

# Judiciary Times

Winter 2022 / Spring 2023 Edition  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
Communications and Community Relations

## WAINER APTER AND FASCIALE



Chief Justice Stuart Rabner on Oct. 20 administered the oath to Rachel Wainer Apter (L) and Douglas M. Fasciale, the two newest associate justices of the New Jersey Supreme Court.

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## Judge Thomas W. Sumners Jr. designated as chief judge of Appellate Division

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner has designated Superior Court Judge Thomas W. Sumners Jr. as the chief judge of the Appellate Division, effective May 23.

Judge Sumners succeeds Chief Judge Carmen Messano, who retires after more than 25 years on the bench, including 10 years as the chief judge. Appellate Judge Heidi W. Currier has been designated the acting deputy presiding judge for administration for the Appellate Division.

“Judge Messano is one of the giants of the Judiciary, and the Appellate Division has benefited greatly from his steady leadership and wise counsel,” Chief Justice Rabner said. “We also are fortunate to have a strong bench with Judges Sumners and Currier, and I am confident they will continue the tradition of excellence for which the Appellate Division is widely known.”

The chief judge of the Appellate Division works closely with the Appellate Division Clerk’s Office to manage the work of the

division. Judge Messano was named presiding judge for administration on June 26, 2013. The title was changed to chief judge last year. He has been assisted by Judge Sumners, who served as the division’s acting deputy presiding judge for administration while Judge Jack Sabatino has been assigned temporarily to the Supreme Court.

“It has been a privilege and honor to serve as a Superior Court judge for more than 25 years, and, in particular, to have served as chief judge of the Appellate Division for more than a decade,” Judge Messano said. “I thank Chief Justice Rabner for the trust he placed in me, and Administrative Director Glenn Grant for his stewardship of the finest judiciary in the country. I also thank my

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## Inside this issue



### IT: The Evolution to a Virtual Court System

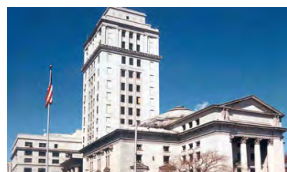
Over nearly 40 years, the New Jersey Judiciary has built one of the most comprehensive judicial information systems in the country.

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### A client finds meaningful employment through JOBS

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### Spotlight: Union County Courthouse

The story is the 19<sup>th</sup> in a series detailing the rich histories of New Jersey courthouses.

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## MAJOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MILESTONES



**1985**

The Integrated Database Management System, which addressed the need to efficiently manage, store, protect and access data, was created. Automated systems for each case type evolved



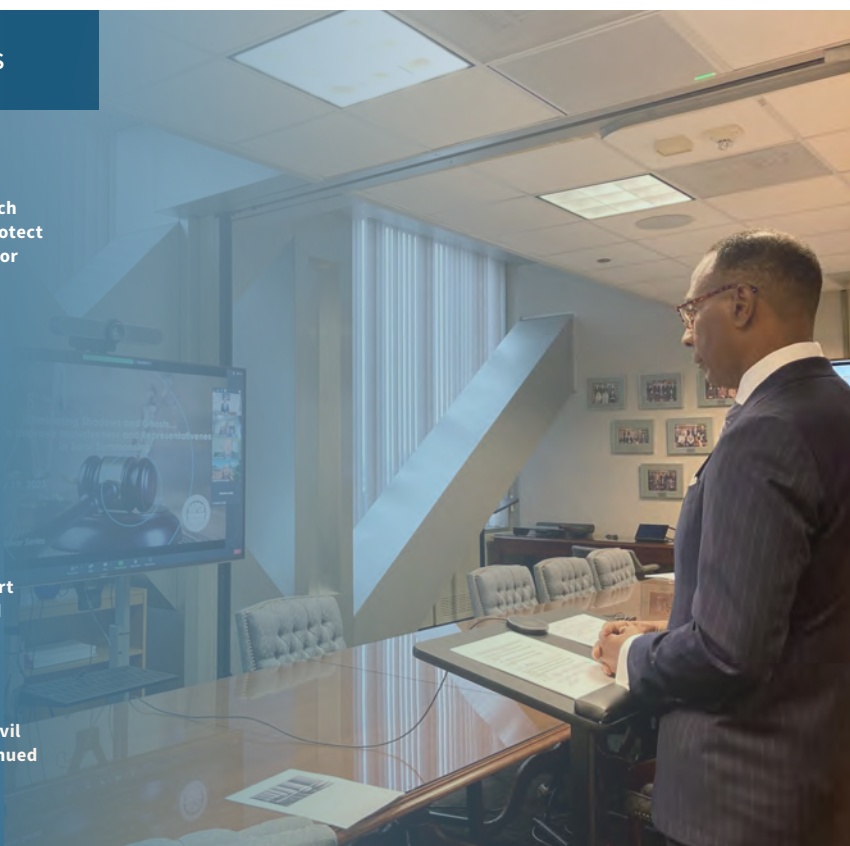
**2008**

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner forms Information Technology Advisory Committee



**2020**

The Judiciary launches an expanded electronic court filing system to better accommodate attorneys and self-represented litigants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Judiciary Electronic Document Submission (JEDS) system allows attorneys and self-represented litigants to submit their filings electronically in most areas of family and special Civil parts as well as general equity. The Judiciary continued to add case types as the system developed further.



**GLENN A. GRANT**  
Administrative Director of the Courts

# THE EVOLUTION OF COURT TECHNOLOGY



As pervasive as technology is in our lives, most of us don't give it a second thought. We wake up to a sound on our phones instead of a clock radio. We have calendars on our phones that remind of us of appointments, meetings and activities. And we listen to music and podcasts and stream movies on our phones. We would be lost without our cellphones.

**The oldest among us know that this jump in technology didn't happen overnight. It took years of investment, experimentation, and patience before it could be brought to market and become the critical part of our lives.**

The story of how the New Jersey Courts moved from an institution reliant on hundreds of people moving and filing paperwork to an almost fully electronic system has taken decades to achieve.

Over the last 40 years, we have built an information technology infrastructure

that has given attorneys and self-represented litigants the ability to file cases without driving to a courthouse, while at the same time making court records more accessible and secure.

This infrastructure allowed us to transition to a fully virtual operation within days of the start of the pandemic. Technology also has changed how we communicate with the public.

Judges, staff and courts users can sign up for text alerts to learn when courthouses are closed. We have emerged as a leader among court

systems with our use of social media to publicize news and events. We have a strong cybersecurity team, which stays ahead of potential attacks on our systems and regularly educates our judges and staff about ongoing threats.

None of this would be possible without the vision of those who preceded us. To be sure, we are not finished. We continue to explore ways in which we can leverage existing and emerging technologies to better serve our citizens.

# Newest trial court administrators



**Jill Houck**  
Atlantic / Cape May Vicinage

Houck's appointment was effective on Oct. 1, 2022.

Houck served as the vicinage's assistant trial court administrator and the operations division manager since 2018. She served as the criminal division manager the previous three years.

Houck began her career with the Judiciary in 2005 as a probation officer in Cumberland County, where she also worked as a team leader in the criminal division for six years before being named assistant criminal division manager in the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage in 2012.

"Ms. Houck has been very involved in the management of the vicinage. With her great talent and energy, she is well positioned to build on the accomplishments of her predecessors," Director Grant said.



**Kimberly Cicala**  
Hudson Vicinage

Cicala's appointment was effective on Aug. 1, 2022.

Cicala has served as the vicinage's operations division manager since 2021. She served as the ombudsman in the Union Vicinage the previous year.

Cicala began her career with the Judiciary in 2003 in the Essex Vicinage, where she held several positions, including criminal division team leader and ombudsman. In 2014, she moved to the Hudson Vicinage, serving as assistant chief probation officer in the child support enforcement unit for two years before becoming chief probation officer there.

Cicala earned a bachelor's degree from Boston College and her law degree from Villanova University School of Law.

**The trial court administrator is the highest-ranking staff executive in the vicinage in charge of all court operations, including financial management, human resources, and case flow management.**



**Edward D. Wingren III**  
Essex Vicinage

Wingren's appointment was effective in July 2022.

Wingren, who had been trial court administrator for the Mercer Vicinage since 2021, had previously served as assistant trial court administrator for the Essex Vicinage for four years.

Wingren was assistant trial court administrator to DePaul from 2017 to 2021. He joined the Judiciary in 2005 as a team leader in the Union Vicinage's criminal division and moved to the Passaic Vicinage in 2013 to serve as criminal division manager for four years.

Wingren earned his bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and a master's degree in education from Harvard University. He earned his law degree from Rutgers School of Law - Newark.



**Richelle Coleman**  
Mercer Vicinage

Coleman's appointment was effective on Oct. 8, 2022.

Coleman had served as the Burlington Vicinage's family division manager since 2018. She joined the Judiciary in 2000, working in the Monmouth Vicinage's probation division for the Child Support Enforcement and the Juvenile and Community Service Collections units. She eventually served as assistant chief probation officer in both units.

Coleman moved from the probation division in 2010 to become the Monmouth Vicinage's assistant family division manager, a position she held for five years before becoming the Burlington Vicinage's assistant chief probation officer for child support enforcement. She was promoted to family division manager three years later.

**Under New Jersey court rules, the administrative director of the courts appoints the trial court administrator in each vicinage. Director Grant named all of them based on the recommendations by the vicinages respective assignment judges.**





**Carol Novey Catuogno**  
Served as a criminal division judge  
Bergen Vicinage

# Novey Catuogno to lead Bergen Vicinage

Superior Court Judge Carol Novey Catuogno will lead the Bergen Vicinage, effective, May 1, Chief Justice Stuart Rabner, announced. Judge Novey Catuogno succeeds Assignment Judge Bonnie J. Mizdol, who is retiring after more than 17 years on the bench, nearly eight as assignment judge.

"Judge Mizdol set a high standard for professionalism and leadership and demonstrated an unwavering commitment to justice and fairness as the assignment judge," Chief Justice Rabner said. "Judge Novey Catuogno brings vast experience to her new role from an extensive career in public service. I have every confidence in her ability to lead the Bergen Vicinage." Judge Novey Catuogno was appointed to the bench in 2018 by Gov. Chris Christie. She was assigned to the family division before being moved to the criminal division in 2019.

Prior to joining the bench, Judge Novey Catuogno was an assistant prosecutor in the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office for approximately 20 years, where she served as the longtime deputy chief/chief of the domestic violence squad, as the trial section chief, and as the executive assistant.

From 1991 to 1998, she was an assistant district attorney for the Richmond County District Attorney's Office in Staten Island, New York. "I am humbled by, and grateful for, the confidence that Chief Justice Rabner has shown in me, and I thank him for the opportunity to continue my career in public service as assignment judge of the Bergen Vicinage," Judge Novey Catuogno said. "I am also thankful for the exceptional leadership provided by Judge Mizdol and I know she will be greatly missed. I look forward to working in collaboration with judges, staff, and the bar to ensure the citizens of Bergen County continued justice, fairness, and equity from our courts."

Judge Novey Catuogno earned her bachelor's degree from State University of New York at Binghamton and a law degree from Boston University School of Law.



**Francis R. Hodgson Jr.**  
Served as presiding general equity judge  
Ocean Vicinage

# Hodgson selected to lead Ocean Vicinage

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner on Jan. 10 announced that Superior Court Judge Francis R. Hodgson Jr. will lead the Ocean Vicinage, effective Feb. 1. Judge Hodgson will succeed Assignment Judge Marlene Lynch Ford, who is retiring after more than 24 years on the bench, seven as assignment judge. "We congratulate Judge Ford on a remarkable career that encompassed all three branches of government, culminating with her impressive contributions to the Judiciary.

Judge Hodgson is an exemplary judge with broad experience who is poised to continue the tradition of excellent leadership in the Ocean Vicinage," Chief Justice Rabner said. Judge Hodgson was appointed to the bench by Gov. Jon Corzine in 2007. In 2014, Gov. Chris Christie renominated him to the Superior Court. He first served in the family division before moving to the criminal division in 2008. He served in the criminal division until 2015, when he was named presiding judge of General Equity.

"I am honored to have this opportunity to lead the hard-working staff and judges of the Ocean Vicinage and am grateful for Chief Justice Rabner's confidence in my ability to continue to uphold the exceptional reputation of the Judiciary," Judge Hodgson said.

Judge Hodgson earned his bachelor's degree from Stockton State College and a master's degree from Monmouth University. He received his law degree from Villanova University. He worked as a law clerk to Ocean Vicinage Civil Presiding Judge Frank R. Buczynski and was in private practice for a year before joining the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office in 1997.



# Bergen's new highest executive



**Kerri Lynn Walsh-Wood**

Bergen Vicinage

Walsh-Wood's appointment was effective on April 8, 2023.

Assignment Judge Bonnie Mizdol of the Bergen Vicinage announced today the appointment of Kerri Lynn Walsh-Wood as trial court administrator, effective April 8. Walsh-Wood, who has served as acting trial court administrator since October, succeeds Laura Simoldoni, who retires April 1.

"With 30 years of service to the court system, Ms. Walsh-Wood has extensive managerial experience that will ensure a seamless transition, particularly as Judge Carol Novey Catuogno prepares to become the new assignment judge for the Bergen Vicinage," said Glenn A. Grant, administrative director of the courts. "I am confident Ms. Walsh-Wood's leadership skills will allow her to continue the level of excellence that the Bergen Vicinage has shown over the years."

Walsh-Wood began her career with the Judiciary in 1992 as an investigator in the family division of the Bergen Vicinage. During her 26 years in the family division, she held various positions, including 13 years in the Morris/Sussex Vicinage as assistant division manager from 2005 to 2011 and manager from 2011 to 2018. Walsh-Wood held the position of operations division manager for the Morris/Sussex Vicinage for nearly four years before she was selected in October to serve as acting trial court administrator in the Bergen Vicinage.

"I am thrilled to be back in Bergen, collaborating with the dedicated and hard-working judges, managers, and staff. I am truly honored to accept the position of trial court administrator for the Bergen Vicinage, and I look forward to working under the leadership of Judge Mizdol and Judge Catuogno. I am committed to doing all I can to support the excellence that Bergen is known for," Walsh-Wood said. Walsh-Wood earned her bachelor's degree from Montclair State College.

The trial court administrator is the highest ranking staff executive in the vicinage in charge of all court operations, including financial management, human resources, and case flow management.

## Lisa R. Burke Named Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Program officer



**Lisa R. Burke**

DI & CE Program Officer

Lisa R. Burke will serve as the Judiciary's Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Program officer, Glenn A. Grant, administrative director of the courts, said.

Burke succeeds Yolande P. Marlow, who retired after more than 30 years with the Judiciary.

"Lisa Burke has spent almost two decades working with her predecessor and has been intimately involved in all of the Judiciary's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in our court system. She is highly regarded within our organization and has a well-deserved reputation

for the knowledge and expertise she brings to this important work both locally and nationally," Director Grant said.

Burke previously served as the Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement (DI&CE) program coordinator, a position she held since joining the Judiciary in 2004.

In addition to her work within the Office of Communications and Community Relations, Burke serves as staff to the Supreme Court Committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement and is a member of the Supreme Court Committee on Access and Fairness. She also serves on the advisory board of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts and participates in several other national organizations.

The DI&CE program examines how the Judiciary can best assure fairness, impartiality, and equal access across diverse communities, provides guidance to vicinages, and coordinates Court-approved studies and other research related to diversity, inclusion, and community engagement.

Burke earned an undergraduate degree from New Jersey City University, a graduate degree from Columbia University, and is in the process of completing a certification in cross-cultural dispute resolution at Washington University in St. Louis School of Law.

## Construction Corner

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

### **New Salem County Courthouse:**

Work continues on this \$36.1 million project. The project is scheduled for completion in March 2024.

### **Essex County Family Courthouse:**

Bids for construction have been received. This project is projected to be finished by March 2025.

### **New Ocean County Justice Complex:**

This project is scheduled to start in late 2023 and is projected to be completed in 2025.

### **New Hudson County Courthouse:**

Construction is continuing on this \$317 million project, which is scheduled to be completed in late 2024.

# New leaders selected at AOC's Office of Probation Services



**Brenda Beacham**  
Director  
Office of Probation Services

Beacham's appointment was effective on Sept. 1, 2022.

Brenda Beacham was named director of the Office of Probation Services in the Administrative Office of the Courts effective Sept. 1, 2022. Glenn A. Grant, administrative director of the courts, announced. Beacham succeeds Rashad Shabaka-Burns, who has served as the first director of the Office of Probation Services since it was created in 2017 to provide guidance and oversight to probation officers across the state. He is retiring after 32 years with the Judiciary.

"Rashad's leadership of an entirely new office with a new mission allowed the Judiciary to work even more closely with clients to provide the services they need to successfully complete their term. Brenda's breadth of experience makes her well-positioned to build on that important mission as the office continues to reform its approach to probation services," Director Grant said.

Beacham has served as assistant director of probation services since 2017 and spent the previous three years as chief of the Judiciary's Child Support Enforcement Unit. She began her career as a probation officer in Hunterdon County in 1984 and was promoted to senior probation officer, supervising probation officer, and assistant division manager. She was assistant chief probation officer in the Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage before heading the unit that oversees the collection of child support.

"I am honored to continue advancing the exciting new initiatives of the Office of Probation Services, which help clients develop better life skills, support their families, and make positive contributions to the community," Beacham said. Beacham earned her bachelor's degree from Moravian College and holds a master's degree from Rutgers University.

**The Office of Probation Services, created in 2017, includes critical programs such as the Intensive Supervision Program, recovery court, and child support collections.**

Larry Ashbridge has been named assistant director in the Office of Probation Services, effective Oct. 22, 2022.

Ashbridge leads the supervision and monitoring of adult and juvenile offenders sentenced to terms of probation. He also will have operational oversight of the state's supervision services program and child support services.

Ashbridge succeeds Brenda Beacham, who was promoted to director last summer.

Ashbridge has been chief to the Judiciary's Child Support Enforcement Unit since 2018.

He began his career with the Judiciary in 2010 as a probation officer in Bridgeton, Cumberland County and later served as a court services supervisor 2 and vicinage assistant chief probation officer in the Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem Vicinage.

"Larry brings a depth of knowledge that allows the Judiciary to continue focusing strategically on the needs of probationers in order to help them make a successful return to society," said Glenn A. Grant, administrative director of the courts.

He is a graduate of West Virginia University, where he received a bachelor's degree in criminology and investigations.



**Larry Ashbridge**  
Assistant Director  
Office of Probation Services

Ashbridge's appointment was effective in Oct. 22, 2022.



# CYBERSECURITY IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Because New Jersey Judiciary judges and staff handle sensitive, personal information in their daily work, they are aware of importance of being information security aware all the time. There are several ways this is accomplished.

**“Cybersecurity is all about preparation and vigilance, planning for a potential breach before it occurs and reacting appropriately.”**

- Judiciary's Chief Information Security Officer Sajed Naseem

They include the scheduled changing of passwords on Judiciary-owned devices, implementing two-factor authentication for devices, regularly acknowledging policies regarding the safeguarding of personal information, and continuing education that includes in-person and virtual trainings and a monthly video series that addresses issues such as phishing, online scams and cybercrime.

Judiciary leaders recognized the importance of cybersecurity more than a decade ago, when they created a position of information security officer separate from the courts' Office of Information Technology.

“A lot of our information security efforts at this point is showing people potential scams or things people can use to break into our computers,” said Sajed Naseem, the Judiciary's Chief Information Security Officer. Naseem, who has been with the Judiciary since 2017, said his primary focus has been emphasizing the importance of protecting the public's confidential information.

While cybersecurity has always been at the forefront of the minds of Judiciary leaders and staff, it took on added importance in March 2020, when the start of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the courts to transition nearly all of its operations online. The organization embraced the concept of zero-trust architecture, a framework that requires users in and outside of an organization to be authenticated, authorized, and continuously validated before being granted access to applications and data. New Jersey Judiciary Chief Information Officer Jack McCarthy told *Government Technology* that zero trust allows the Judiciary to safeguard remote and hybrid operations and limits the damage a hacker could do if they breach the many

layers of security.

“[Zero trust has an] ability to kind of limit things jumping laterally — if one device got hit, it doesn't mean everything should get hit,” McCarthy told the magazine in its February 2022 issue. Such demand for both on-premises and remote operations emphasized that the Judiciary needed a security approach that could be applied consistently, he said.

“Our understanding that it was going to be an unpredictable environment to us. (That led us to say,) ‘Let's not look at what we're doing remote or on-prem, let's just do everything in the same building, in the same manner, in the same way we were doing it,’” McCarthy told the magazine.

Constantly aware of current threats to its infrastructure, the Judiciary earlier this year temporarily barred access to court records to those outside the United States. The move was not based on any imminent threat to the courts computer system. “The Judiciary is blocking all internet traffic from outside the country to ensure the security of our data. This includes access to all of our websites, applications, and other services,” the courts said in statement. “We are also blocking all email traffic to and from all sites outside the U.S.”

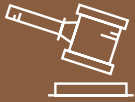
Cybersecurity is all about preparation and vigilance, planning for a potential breach before it occurs and reacting appropriately, Naseem said. “We definitely have cybersecurity awareness, but we also have what I call cybersecurity readiness and performance,” he told *Government Technology* magazine in its October/November 2020 edition. “To me, awareness is knowing something, and readiness and performance is having the right amount of knowledge and the right amount of training to be able to act on a problem.



# History of eCourts

19  
95

Court users begin e-filing with Judiciary Electronic Filing Imaging System (JEFIS).



20  
08

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner forms Information Technology Advisory Committee.



20  
09

Special committee on e-filing issues report on how to proceed with eCourts.



20  
16

E-filing of civil, special civil, probation, archived divorce, and foreclosure cases begins.



20  
17

E-filing of Supreme Court, small claims, landlord tenant, civil Law Division, municipal, and Children in Court cases begins along with e-filing for Criminal Justice Reform.



20  
19

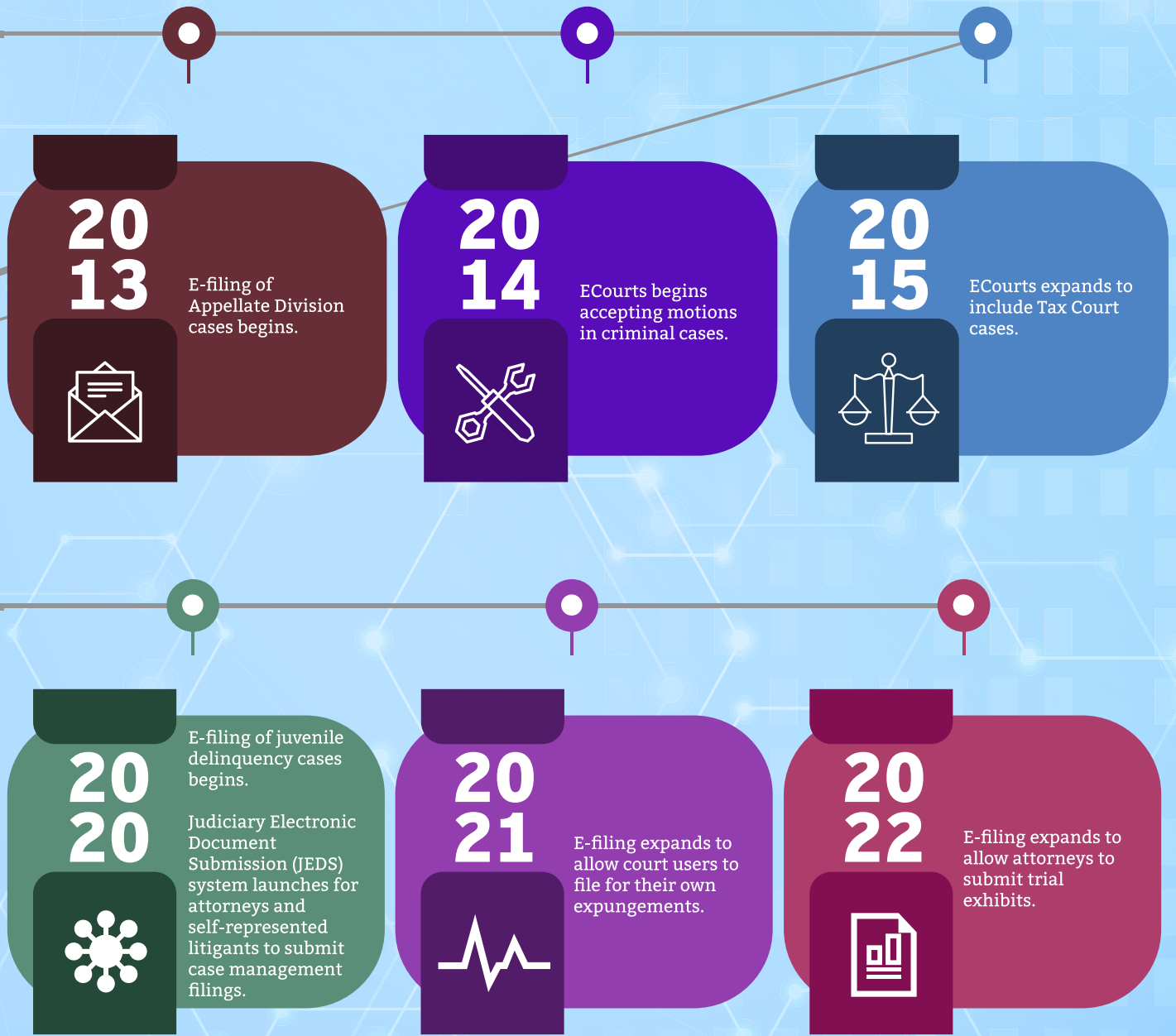
E-filing of child support, custody, and visitation cases begins.



 NEW JERSEY  
eCourts

DID  
YOU  
KNOW





Development of the first electronic filing systems started in the late 1990's and took 10 years to get adopted. Now systems are built and rolled out in several months. Meanwhile, the widespread use of cell phones morphed into the development of smartphones, which gave users the literal world at their fingertips. The use of messaging, emails and content creation exploded. At the same time, houses got wired at network speed through cable and other internet providers. People had the capacity to do more and technologies involving video and sound made their way into homes and the workplace. Technologies involving recording the events of the court in audio and presenting the court digitally began.

The final thing that happened was computer processing power achieved rates that allowed people to process enormous amounts of information quickly. Tasks that took hours now took seconds. "People didn't need to go to the basement to find the folder or spend hours looking up cases, McCarthy said. "Databases could be swept, and using probabilistic data matching algorithms, data could be provided to decision makers making decisions in real time."

# A Landmark ceremony

Two new associate justices took their oaths and were seated on the New Jersey Supreme Court in October. Chief Justice Stuart Rabner administered the oaths to Justice Rachel Wainer Apter and Justice Douglas M. Fasciale during a morning ceremony attended by family, friends and colleagues at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton on Oct. 21, 2022.

**It was the first time since Oct. 26, 2006, when James Zazzali was sworn-in as chief justice and Helen Hoens was sworn in as an associate justice, that two justices were sworn in on the same day.**

Gov. Phil Murphy, who attended the swearing-in ceremony, nominated Justices Wainer Apter and Fasciale.

Justice Wainer Apter graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and received her law degree from Harvard Law School. After law school, she served as a law clerk for U.S. District Judge Jed Rakoff, U.S. Circuit Judge Robert Katzmann, and U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

At the time of her appointment to the Court, Justice Wainer Apter was serving as director of the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights. She previously served as counsel to the New Jersey Attorney General and assistant attorney general.

Before joining the Attorney General's Office, Justice Wainer Apter worked as a senior staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and in the Supreme Court and Appellate practice at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe.

Justice Fasciale received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Seton Hall University in 1982. In 1986, he received his law degree from Seton Hall University School of Law. He immediately served his judicial clerkship with Judge John E. Keefe, who served in the Superior Court and in the Appellate

**As his first official act as a new member of the Court, Justice Fasciale administered the oath of office today to his son Michael Fasciale, who had recently passed the bar.**

Division, and then practiced law as a trial attorney for approximately 17 years. In 2000, he became a Certified Civil Trial Attorney by the New Jersey Supreme Court, a designation that was held by fewer than 3 percent of New Jersey attorneys.

In 2004, Gov. James McGreevey appointed Justice Fasciale to the Superior Court for a 7-year term. In 2011, Gov. Chris Christie re-appointed him to the Superior Court, where he served as a tenured judge. Chief Justice Stuart Rabner temporarily assigned Justice Fasciale to the Supreme Court effective September 2022.

At the trial level, Justice Fasciale served in the civil, criminal, and family parts of the Superior Court. Before elevation to the appellate court, Chief Justice Rabner designated him presiding judge of the civil and criminal parts. He also served as a recovery court judge.

In May 2010, Chief Justice Rabner elevated Justice Fasciale to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court, where he served as a presiding judge before becoming a member of the Supreme Court. Justice Fasciale is an elected member of the American Law Institute. He is currently a student at Duke University School of Law, pursuing a Masters of Judicial Studies degree that he expects to complete in May 2023.

## Sumners named chief judge of Appellate Division

Continued from Page 1



**Carmen Messano**

**Appellate Division Chief Presiding Judge**

colleagues on the Appellate Division, whose intellect, integrity, and dedication taught me something new all the time, even though I have been a member of the bar for 46 years."

Judge Sumners was nominated by Gov. Jon Corzine and joined the bench in May 2008. He was assigned to the civil division in the Mercer Vicinage, a position he held for three years until being transferred to the criminal division. He moved to the Appellate Division in 2014.

Judge Sumners received his bachelor's degree from Lafayette College and earned his law degree from Rutgers Law School - Newark. "I would like to thank Chief Justice Rabner for having the confidence in me to appoint me to this position. Outstanding individuals have served in this position in the past, including Judge Carmen Messano, and they have led our court in becoming among the most respected appellate courts in the country. I look forward to working with our court's exceptional judges and excellent administration and staff to continue our fine tradition," Judge Sumners said.



**Thomas W. Sumners Jr**

**Appellate Division Judge**

Judge Currier, who currently serves as presiding judge for Part B of the Appellate Division, was nominated by Gov. Jim McGreevey and appointed to the bench in January 2004. She was assigned to the civil division in the Middlesex Vicinage for eight months before moving to the family division, where she served for four years before returning to the civil division in 2008. She was appointed to the Appellate Division in August 2015. A graduate of Smith College, Judge Currier earned her law degree from Rutgers Law School - Camden.

The Appellate Division is the state's intermediate appellate court. Its judges are named by the chief justice from among the Superior Court judges. The Appellate Division issues more than 3,000 opinions and decides more than 9,000 motions each court year. Over the past two years, the Judiciary has advanced all the items in the first two installments of the Action Plan for Equal Justice, achieving measurable results such as connecting individuals to mental health resources and employment opportunities, and reforming jury selection practices to reduce the effect of bias.

## Jennifer L. Morris named assistant director of support services



Jennifer L. Morris was named assistant director of support services for the New Jersey Judiciary, effective Sept. 10, Glenn A. Grant, administrative director of the courts, announced.

As assistant director, Morris is responsible for the daily operations of the support services division within the Office of Management and Administrative Services. She oversees management of all Judiciary facilities, emergency planning and response, health and safety audits and issues, ADA accommodations, and several statewide programs, including jury management, interpreting services, fleet management, and volunteer services.

Morris, chief of programs and procedures since 2016, joined the Judiciary in 2001 as a probation officer in the adult and juvenile sections in Salem County for four years and was a supervisor in the child support section for Salem and Cumberland counties for seven years. She also worked as a supervisor in the support services unit at the Judiciary's central office in Trenton and as an assistant chief probation officer for the Camden Vicinage.

Morris earned her bachelor's degree from Richard Stockton College and her master's degree from Seton Hall University.



# A client finds **meaningful employment** through JOBS

For more information about the JOBS program, go to page 13.

## I started working in the collection unit in the Camden Vicinage Probation Division in December 2021 when my supervisor asked me to make some phone calls about job opportunities for probation clients.

By **Heather Varanyak**  
**Probation Officer**  
**Camden Vicinage**

The probation division joined with Cooper University Hospital to offer probation clients a great employment opportunity. I took this task not knowing what a rewarding experience watching our clients grow and prosper would be.

Probation Officer Eloiza Jimenez contacted me in May 2022 seeking assistance for one of her clients, who seemed to be a perfect fit for Cooper. The client, Lisa Brown, had a background working in kitchens, but more importantly, she had the drive and the willingness to work hard.

After completing the interview process, background checks and orientations, Brown began working as a chef in the cafeteria at Cooper on Aug. 8. I had been in contact with her throughout the process, and I was excited to finally meet her in-person and hear about her new position.

Brown said she earned her culinary arts certificate and worked in kitchens her entire career and loves her work. She said she became involved in the court system more than 10 years ago and that she was released from prison in 2009. She said she found it hard to find a job because of her background.

Brown worked at the Sterling Manor Nursing Home in Mount Laurel from 2015 to 2022 but was later denied other jobs. Frustrated and discouraged, she finally found a job in the kitchen at Homewood Suites in Mount Laurel. Brown has had to rely on public transportation to get to work because she does not have a driver's license or vehicle.

When she worked in Mount Laurel, she would leave her home at 4 a.m., board a bus to the transportation center in Camden, and then wait an additional 45 minutes to catch the bus that would take her from Camden to the Moorestown Mall. She then had to walk several miles to work and often would be 30 minutes late. Brown said she grew tired of the commute and feared for her safety. However, she was grateful to have a job.

Once the opportunity with Cooper arose, she pursued it immediately, as she knew that was closer to home and a better fit. Brown arrives at the hospital 30 minutes early each day. She prepares lunch and dinner for the staff and hospital patients from 5 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. She said the head chef sees her potential and anticipates her assuming more responsibilities.

Meanwhile, Brown still works at Homeward Suites on Wednesdays. She said she leaves Cooper at 1:30 p.m., boards a bus in Camden, travels 45 minutes to Moorestown and then walks from the mall to Homeward Suites. She said she still works there because she loves the guests and cooking for them.

Brown has four grandchildren, two boys and two girls, who mean the world to her, and she does whatever it takes to support them and her children. She hopes to one day get her driver's license and a car so she can spend more time with her grandchildren. She said she is looking forward to that day, knowing that having a car signifies that she put in the work that was needed to realize her aspirations. Brown said everyone makes mistakes and that she would love to see the stigma of having a criminal background change so that others like her are given a chance to succeed.



Lisa Brown

# IT Initiatives

Over nearly 40 years, the New Jersey Judiciary has built one of the most comprehensive judicial information systems in the country.

Every court case type is automated. The automated systems establish the official court records and dockets for more than seven million cases per year. The Judiciary has incorporated legislative and court rule changes, interacted with law enforcement and other government agencies, and enabled the legal community, media and many others to access its information online.

The constant move toward modernization and applying changes and upgrades to hardware and software has enabled the Judiciary to do its work and meet challenges as they arise, including moving to nearly all virtual court proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding its presence on social media and maintaining on constant vigilance on cybersecurity threats, said Jack McCarthy, the Judiciary's chief information officer.

Keeping court records prior to the mid-1980s was tedious and labor intensive.

Before the 1970s, everything was kept in docket books, which included every piece of information about a case. In fact, the docket books used in 1870 were the same used in 1970.

People put more data in docket books because they often couldn't see the case jacket stored in a courthouse basement.

The computer systems of the 1970's and 1980's replaced those docket books. Because people couldn't see the file in a basement, the systems were data intensive and required tremendous amounts of data entry by staff.

In effect, the docket books and the early systems tried to paint the picture of what was in all the filings.

The year 1985 marked the beginning of the Judiciary's transition from an organization that relied heavily on paper to one that will soon become entirely paperless, resulting in time and cost savings by streamlining resources.

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The Integrated Database Management System, which addressed the need to efficiently manage, store, protect and access data, was created. Automated systems for each case type evolved.

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The New Jersey Supreme Court approves the first Judiciary Information Technology Strategic Plan. The plan addressed the information technology "must haves" of the Court at that time, and it laid the foundation for the Judiciary's future approach to the design, development and implementation of emerging computer and web-based technologies.

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Chief Justice Stuart Rabner forms Information Technology Advisory Committee chaired by Glenn A. Grant, administrative director of the courts. The Special Committee on Electronic Filing issues report on how to proceed with eCourts.

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The Judiciary's eCourts system was launched to accept motions and accompanying documents filed online; provide real-time remote access to electronic case filings to judges, attorneys, and court staff simultaneously; and to store and retrieve electronic documents after the case has concluded.

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Advancements in the Judiciary's information technology that enabled systems to communicate across various government agencies and hold court proceedings via videoconferencing allows the Judiciary to implement Criminal Justice Reform.

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Those advances enables the Judiciary to quickly switch to a nearly entirely virtual court system when the COVID-19 pandemic forces the closure of courthouses in March. The Judiciary also has developed and continues to improve an enhanced security infrastructure to protect the integrity its information systems and prevent unauthorized access

# Judiciary helps identify reduction in gun violence

The Judiciary's Reduction of Gun Violence Initiative is a combined effort of the courts, community stakeholders and resource providers to address reducing gun violence and other weapon-related violence committed by those on probation. The initiative is designed to encourage positive behavioral change using evidence-based practices.

Ten of the Judiciary's 15 vicinages are participating in the initiative, which serves those on probation supervision who are at moderate to high risk of reoffending and who have a current, weapon-related offense. The participating vicinages are Atlantic/Cape May, Burlington, Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Passaic and Union. To date, more than 100 probation clients have been referred to the initiative.

The program works when the probation division reviews

eligible cases for presentation to the Gun Violence Reduction Initiative Advisory Board, which is composed of mayors, business administrators, an assemblyman and state senators. The board evaluates client information such as age, marital status, number of children, charges, arrests, education level, employment status, drug use history, gang affiliation and the reason for the referral, and makes recommendations for services, treatment providers and/or intervention. The board recommends counseling, mentoring programs, job training, education and other community-based services based on the individual's needs. This collaboration aims to provide needed services to participants to reduce recidivism and future criminal involvement.

Participants are assigned to a gun initiative probation officer, who supervises them and ensures compliance with recommended services. The officer also incorporates the board's recommendations into individual client case plans. The probation officer maintains a caseload of no more than 35 clients.

**As of result of this initiative to date we have 354 participants statewide, comprised of 319 males and 35 females enrolled in the Reduction of Gun Violence Initiative. The program encompasses 68 % percent black participants, 22 % white participants and 10% of participants classified as an unknown.**

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## The Judiciary's JOBS Program

The New Jersey Judiciary's Opportunities for Building Success Program (JOBS) connects private companies and non-profit organizations with successful recovery court and probation clients who want to rebuild their lives and want to work. One of the most significant barriers for recovery court and probation clients is to find stable employment, no matter what their education level or job experience. Because people on probation face added obstacles in their search for meaningful employment, the Judiciary welcomes the opportunity to work with the business community to secure stable employment for successful participants.

The JOBS program presents an exceptional opportunity for us to strengthen the collaboration between government and the business community, while giving people a chance to reclaim their lives. Accomplishing this goal is a team effort of judges, court staff, participating companies and organizations and the community.

### How does the program work?

The JOBS program is designed to connect probation clients to employment opportunities, job readiness programming and skill-building training opportunities. Probation staff are available to consult with employers during and after the

selection process. A number of employers participate in the program. These include Wakefern, Goya Foods, Inc., Atlanticare, and Stockton University, as well as Unite Here Local 54, which represents employees of the Hard Rock Café in Atlantic City. In addition, more than 200 other companies throughout the state have been identified as willing employers for this program.

### Who is eligible for the program?

To qualify for the employment program, participants must be under active probation supervision in recovery court, Intensive Supervision Program, or general community supervision. They must cooperate with probation supervision, and recovery court clients are routinely scheduled to see the recovery court judge.

### How are clients monitored?

The Judiciary works closely with companies and non-profit organizations to ensure that clients are reporting to work. The Judiciary monitors and tracks referrals and placements. This also includes a review of the effectiveness of the program, including using statistics to measure results. To learn more, go to [www.njcourts.gov](http://www.njcourts.gov) and search Judiciary Opportunities for Building Success Program or email [AOCJOBSProgram.Mailbox@njcourts.gov](mailto:AOCJOBSProgram.Mailbox@njcourts.gov).



## New Jersey judges who have been active in the NCJFCJ

- Judge Horace S. Bellfatto (Past President 1966-1967)
- Judge Robert Fall
- Judge Carmen Ferrante (Past President 1994-1995)
- Judge Sallyanne Floria (Board of Directors 2012-2015, multiple committees)
- Judge Martin Herman
- Judge David Katz (President 2022-2023, multiple committees)
- Judge B. Thomas Leahy (President 1983-1984)
- Judge Harry W. Lindeman (Past President 1956-1957)
- Judge Susan Maven (Diversity and International Committee)
- Judge Nancy Ridgway (Military Committee)
- Judge Patricia Roe (Lifetime Member, Board of Directors 2014-2018, multiple committees)
- Judge June Strelecki
- Judge Barbara Villano
- Judge Thomas Zampino (Past Trustee, Governance Committee 2011-2013)
- Judge Robert W. Page
- Judge Graham T. Ross
- Judge William J. Kearney
- Judge Vincent Segal
- Judge Linda R. Feinberg
- Judge Thomas Dilts
- Judge Lee Forrester



**Formed in 1937 and based at the University Nevada Reno**

The NCJFCJ serves an estimated 30,000 professionals in the juvenile and family justice system including judges, court administrators, social and mental health workers, police, and probation officers.

# National Family Council installs new president

Essex Vicinage Family Presiding Judge David B. Katz is the new president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ).

While the fact that Judge Katz has assumed another leadership role is noteworthy, it also marks the latest in a long and growing line of New Jersey family judges who have led or participated in the organization over nearly 70 years.

The NCJFCJ is one of the largest and oldest

judicial membership organizations in the nation. The NCJFCJ provides judges, courts, and related agencies involved with juvenile, family, and domestic violence cases with the knowledge and skills to improve the lives of the families and children involved in the court system.

**“All have made significant contributions to not only their active roles in the NJCFCJ but to improvement of the system in general.”**

**- Judge Robert Fall, who served in the family division in the Ocean Vicinage and in the Appellate Division**

New Jersey’s work in the family court system is vast and has had a lasting impact on families in the state. That work includes developing policies and practices to keep youth out of detention, the formation of local advisory committees to address racial disparities in child dependency cases, Criminal Justice Reform and domestic violence education initiatives.

Many family court proceedings transitioned to virtual during the pandemic. Other ways New Jersey’s courts have improved the lives of children and families include adopting a court rule that establishes a presumption that juveniles are not to be shackled in the courtroom during hearings and adopting a racial equity action plan.

Judge Katz also chaired a multidisciplinary committee that developed a practice guide for pro bono attorneys to represent indigent parents who contest the adoption of their children.

Changing how the family courts in New Jersey

operate began in the 1980s at the direction of Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz, who commissioned a report and committee that developed standards for implementation of a functional and user-friendly family court.

In the 1990s, that group of judges and others developed the Comprehensive Judicial Orientation Program (CJOP), which Chief Justice Deborah Poritz directed be administered to every judge newly assigned to the family division before that judge heard a case.

Similar approaches to development and education were made when the child support guidelines and domestic violence handbook were developed, the latter in concert with bar members and representatives from Providence House and the Battered Women’s Coalition.

**“All of these efforts, in my view, were designed to improve the delivery of services by the courts to family law litigants and their attorneys,” Judge Fall said.**



Morris County Courthouse in Morristown.



Sussex County Justice Center in Newton.

# A life in progress

Probation officers are extensively trained to assist clients in making positive behavior changes.

It is a simple concept but requires complex strategies and highly engaged officers. Even with our best efforts we often see resistant clients and unfortunate setbacks.

Crucially important is a high quality, professional relationship between the officer and client. Although this is happening on a regular basis, it is rarely acknowledged.

Recently, Officer Patrick Erwin of Sussex Probation, received such an acknowledgement of his efforts from one of his former clients.

She contacted Erwin to let him know about the impact he had on her through her difficult journey. Specifically, his guidance and support during difficult times.

This young lady, mother of a small child, was

asked to speak at a local overdose awareness night. She spoke of her struggles with substance abuse and her path in recovery.

With a history of overdoses, she is now a drug-free member of the community focused on her sobriety. She made a point in her public speech to reference her experience with Officer Erwin.

“My PO [probation officer] Patrick was the first person to believe I could get better. People think of their PO’s as people looking to get them in trouble or people who don’t really care about you but that’s not the case at least not in my experience. Patrick had my back and he made sure to tell me I could do this on the regular. I don’t know if he knows how much he truly helped me.”

**This is just one example that demonstrates the crucial work probation officers conduct and the life changing impacts they have on their communities. These acknowledgements strengthen our resolve to work harder and reach more clients that deserve healthier, more stable lives as contributory members of our society.**




In 2009, the New Jersey Judiciary is one of the first court systems in the nation to embrace social media, starting a YouTube channel, starting a Facebook page and joining Twitter.



The Judiciary joins Instagram



In 2016, the Judiciary joins LinkedIn. First used exclusively as a recruitment tool by the Judiciary’s human resources division, the platform also is now used by the Office of Communications and Community Relations to announce promotions of Judiciary staff.

## Social media forward

It’s the rare person or organization that isn’t on some social media platform nowadays.

But when the New Jersey Judiciary started a Facebook group and a Twitter page in 2009, it was among some of the first court systems to use social media to keep the public informed of the latest news developments.

As more lawyers, litigants, reporters, and others turned increasingly to their cell phones or computers for information, the Judiciary responded by providing text alerts and tweets about breaking court news. The Judiciary also offered RSS feeds to deliver news releases, Notices to the Bar, and Supreme and Appellate Court opinions to subscribers. But to deliver more in-depth news and information, the Judiciary turned to Facebook, one of the first social media platforms widely embraced by the public, just six years after its launch. The Judiciary’s initial foray into Facebook involved the creation of a Facebook group where members could see press releases, court information and photos of court events.

At the same time, the Judiciary began posting videos on YouTube for court users to learn more

about the courts. Topics covered by the videos at the time included the Judiciary’s mortgage foreclosure mediation program and the Veteran’s Assistance Project. They were later followed by videos addressing volunteer opportunities and help that is available for self-represented litigants. As new social media platforms emerged, the Judiciary evaluated which would be most beneficial to expand its reach. When audiences began gravitating to Instagram, the Judiciary followed them, taking advantage of the popularity of photos and short videos on that site.

LinkedIn was different from other social media platforms when it launched in 2006. Known more as a social network for professionals, LinkedIn relied on business connections for users to seek jobs. The Judiciary primarily uses that platform to announce certain job opportunities and post news about career advancements of Judiciary employees. There wasn’t a pressing need for the Judiciary to jump onto TikTok when the app, loaded with videos of users showing off their version of the latest dance craze, first burst onto the scene in 2018. But as the platform’s users demonstrated an appetite for just about any kind of fun video-based content, the Judiciary met them on their turf. In April 2022, the Judiciary debuted its TikTok account with three videos from Take Your Child to Work Day at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton.

As long as new social media platforms continue to emerge and audiences migrate to them, the Judiciary will continue to evaluate which would best serve as a tool to for delivering information about the important services of New Jersey’s court system.

# SPOTLIGHT

## Union County Courthouse

Few people who enter the Union County Courthouse complex in Elizabeth today likely know the historical significance of the area. A government building has been located at Broad Street and Rahway Avenue in Elizabeth for more than 330 years, and the property and surrounding area are steeped in history.

In 1664, the native Americans gave a group of English settlers title to land that extended from the Raritan River and Passaic River and westward for more than 30 miles. Elizabethtown was established as the first permanent English settlement in New Jersey and became the first seat of New Jersey government. Union County was originally part of Essex County, one of the four counties established when the General Assembly divided the province of East Jersey in 1683. The other counties that comprised East Jersey were Bergen, Middlesex and Monmouth.

Over time, Newark surpassed Elizabeth in economic importance and in 1807 became the Essex County seat. Union County broke from Essex County in 1857. The Elizabethtown Meeting House was adjacent to the historic First Presbyterian Church, where many notable citizens are buried. Those interred in the church cemetery include Hannah Caldwell and her husband, Rev. James Caldwell, the "Fighting Parson," according to the Union County website.

It was Hannah Caldwell's alleged murder by British soldiers during the Revolutionary War that was the inspiration for the Union County seal, which is replicated on many brass doorknobs in the courthouse, according to the county website. It is rumored by some that Hannah Caldwell's ghost walks the area of the cemetery and courthouse on occasion. Constructed by early settlers and destroyed in a Tory raid in 1780, the meetinghouse was rebuilt in 1797 and leveled by fire in 1808. It was replaced in 1810 by a building described at the time as one of the most modern in the county.

Until Elizabeth's incorporation as a city in 1855, every voter in Elizabeth was required to cast a ballot at the courthouse. An addition to the structure was built about 1857. As Union County grew, a new county courthouse was planned and constructed. A three-story structure large enough to house all the courts and county government offices, opened in 1905. The

Classical Revival structure forms the central section of today's layout with a three bay principal facade, portico and four Corinthian columns.

Within 15 years, county government again outgrew the structure. In 1925, a seven-floor building, known as the annex, was built. The building included a Hall of Records and county jail. One of the best-known interior features of the courthouse is the rotunda. Open halls on the second and third floors view the entrance level below. Window and door openings are trimmed crafted architectural detail and classical moldings. At ceiling level, crafted gold moldings compliment the gold chandeliers that hang from the high ceilings.

In 1931, a 17-floor tower was added to the courthouse. Its steel skeleton is covered with terra cotta and finished to imitate the granite exterior of the old section of the building. The tower contains several murals that depict scenes from the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary eras. The annex contains several Dick DeGroot paintings of historical events in Elizabeth and Union County in the 18th and 19th centuries. The three-story portico on the south side, which fronts on Rahway Avenue, provides the tower with a visual base. The main building has a ground story platform with a flight of steps and four Tuscan columns.

Some courtrooms in the original building and tower addition contain the same architectural details as the rotunda. A modern, two-story entrance was opened in 2000 on Elizabethtown Plaza. A new family courthouse was built on nearby Cherry Street on May 23, 2017.

The courthouse is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. There is a Revolutionary cannon on the courthouse lawn, donated to troops from Elizabeth by George Washington after the battle of Stony Point New York in 1779.



The Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth as it appeared in the early 20th century.



The Union County Courthouse in Elizabeth as it appears today.



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