

Judiciary Times

The newsletter of the New Jersey Judiciary

Winner of the Gold Astra Award for Newsletter
Writing from the N.J. Communications, Advertising and
Marketing Association

Atlantic City: A Day in the Life of One Of New Jersey's Busiest Municipal Courts

Justice is serious business at one of New Jersey's busiest municipal courts.

The largest of 21 municipal courts in Atlantic County, Atlantic City Municipal Court heard 51,968 cases in the 2003-2004 court year. Court cases included driving while intoxicated (DWI), non-DWI traffic, indictable first appearances and disorderly/petty disorderly offenses, local ordinances and parking.

The volume of cases in the city's court ranks 12th in the state, with DWI at fourth highest and total criminal volume at seventh highest.

According to Howard Berchtold Jr., Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage municipal division manager, the court has two full-time judges, Chief Judge Bruce F. Weekes and Judge Matthew H. Powals, with other judges brought in as needed.

Alison Kaufmann is court director. In addition to judges, the full-time staff of 32 includes a chief court administrator and five deputy administrators. The court is located on the second floor of 2715 Atlantic Ave. in the heart of one of the nation's leading casino resorts.

While it may give the impression of being larger, Atlantic City is a small city of some 39,000 people, about half the size of the state capital, Trenton. In addition to its resident population, the city attracts more than 32,000 visitors each day. The city may be famous for glitz and glamour, but a high percentage of court cases deal with routine violations, often involving visitors unfamiliar with local traffic patterns.

"About 15 to 20 percent of cases are related to the casinos in some way," noted Berchtold. "We have cases involving evictions from casinos, disorderly persons on the floor, underage gamblers. And, of course, we get to meet the occasional celebrity."

Court visitors in recent years have included Al Sharpton, Don King, the late Rodney Dangerfield, Charles Barkley and Jesse Jackson.

Berchtold and Kaufmann met with a reporter this fall to host a "day in the life" of the court for *Judiciary Times*.

"We have two courtrooms going day and night," said Kaufmann, who worked at the Egg Harbor Township Municipal Court for 19 years before join-

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Video Arraignment--Chief Judge Bruce F. Weekes presides at a video arraignment. (Photo by L. Holt)

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Tax Court Differentiated Case Management Program to be Implemented Statewide

by Lois Wamaitha
Court Services Officer Trainee

Effective Jan. 1, 2005, the Differentiated Case Management (DCM) pilot program in the Tax Court has been expanded to all 21 counties in New Jersey.

This is the final phase of the pilot program implementation that began in Bergen County by

Supreme Court Order Oct. 7, 1996, then in Hudson County following a 1999 Supreme Court Order. DCM was a result of comprehensive recommendations by members of the Supreme Court Committee on the Tax Court. The committee is made up of judges, lawyers and representatives from local and state government.

The intended outcome of this program was to enable the Tax Court to maximize judicial resources by reserving judges' time for functions requiring a judge's effort. With DCM, tasks that were previously performed by a judge's staff are centralized at the Management Office ensuring uniformity of standards and practices in the Tax Court.

Under DCM, local property tax cases are separated into five separate tracks: the standard track, which is the largest, farmland/exemption, expedited, small claims and complex tracks. Each has specific timetables for discovery, settlement conferences

and trial. This tracking provides litigants more time to prepare their cases, while expediting settlements when possible.

In preparation of the statewide implementation, the Tax Court Management Office has upgraded computer hardware and software that will maintain the necessary data. The Management Office has an in-house software developer who has enhanced and created new functionalities for the Tax Court system that will aid in the management the tracked cases.

To date the program has been well received by judges, lawyers and the Management Office; and, it is anticipated that this comprehensive management approach will result in more timely resolution of cases.

The rules governing DCM can be found in the appendix of the New Jersey Rules of Court; Thomson/West edition. They continue to be separated from the regular Tax Court rules until the committee has reviewed the impact of DCM statewide and recommends elimination of the program's "pilot" designation.

Judiciary Times is prepared by Communication Services, Office of Communications, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) for employees of the Judiciary and volunteers who work with the court system.

The Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court is Deborah T. Poritz. The Acting Administrative Director of the Courts is Judge Philip S. Carchman.

Please e-mail short news articles saved as Word documents in plain text without formatting, as well as photos and/or suggestions to: *Linda.Holt@judiciary.state.nj.us* or send disk, photos and paper copy to: Editor, *Judiciary Times*, Office of Communications, PO Box 037, Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex, Trenton NJ 08625-0037. Submissions are subject to editing, and not all can be published.

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CASA of Camden County Moves to a New Office

The Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Camden County Inc. celebrated its move to 216 Haddon Ave., Haddon Township, on Nov. 20. Judiciary staff and volunteers, elected officials and other supporters attended the grand reopening ceremony.

CASA of Camden County's former office occupied a single room in the Parkade

Building in Camden. In its new facility, CASA provided space for 20 volunteers providing service for 33 children in December 2004.

CASA of Camden County Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization committed to advocating for the best interest of children in out-of-home-placement under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Family Court.

VCPO John Higgins Receives State Corrections Award

John Higgins, vicinage chief probation officer (VCPO) with the Hunterdon/Somerset/Warren vicinage, received the Award of Excellence presented by the New Jersey Chapter of the American Correctional Association. The award was presented Oct. 7 in Atlantic City.

“John is a leader who is respected by his colleagues,” said Mary DeLeo, assistant director of Probation Services. “He embraces the principles of quality probation work and generates new ideas for the conference to consider to improve delivery of service or enhance officers’ ability to better supervise their cases.”

Higgins has served as VCPO for 12 years and previously served as Hunterdon’s chief probation officer for 10 years. He is chair of the Conference of Vicinage Chief Probation Officers and previously served as chair of the conference’s Strategic Planning Committee. He has been an advocate for training probation officers, improving the child support program, providing high-quality customer service, and establishing and implementing statewide standards. He served on the visitation team for the southern part of the state and on numerous other committees and working groups. Currently he supervises 91 probation staff members in the three counties.

“Probation touches a lot of people’s lives,” Higgins noted. “It benefits the communities and makes them safer. The work that probation officers do is very important, whether in helping probationers change their lives or in helping to make victims whole.”

Staff who have worked with Higgins for years praise him for his inclusiveness and emphasis on cooperation.

“He is truly dedicated, committed and never asks anyone to do something that he himself would not be willing to do,” noted Mary Kate Soriano, an administrative supervisor 2 in the vicinage. “Above all, he is very down-to-earth and never looks for recognition.”

On a personal note, he is often teased about his bad handwriting and penchant for whistling Christmas carols at any time of the year.

“John is a true ambassador for the division and finds a way to add humor to a hard day’s work,” noted

DeLeo. “He often suggests successful approaches to the challenges that face the division. He is a pleasure to partner with in leading the division.”

The New Jersey Chapter of the American Correctional Association is a non-profit professional organization that has served as a forum for corrections in New Jersey since 1983. Membership includes employees from probation, parole, institutions, community-based facilities, treatment centers, schools, law enforcement and related governmental and private agencies.

The chapter’s mission is to shape public policy and provide information, training and networking opportunities, promoting professional growth and organizational effectiveness in New Jersey’s criminal/juvenile justice system. In addition to the award for probation, the chapter also presented awards for excellence in corrections and parole.



John Higgins speaks after receiving the Award of Excellence from the N.J. Chapter of the American Correctional Association

Essex Vicinage Dedicates Chancery Courtrooms to Three Esteemed Judges

by Judge Kenneth S. Levy, P.J.Ch., and Shazeeda Samsudeen, Ombudsman

Essex Superior Court dedicated three Chancery Division courtrooms in the Wilentz Justice Complex in Newark Sept. 22 in memory of the late Judges Murray G. Simon, Harry A. Margolis and Peter B. Cooper.

Judges Simon, Margolis and Cooper were each honored for their individual contributions to the Chancery Court and for their dedication and commitment to the New Jersey Judiciary. Their

About the judges

Judge Murray G. Simon (1920 – 2001) served as presiding judge of the Essex Vicinage Chancery Division from 1984 to 1990. Born in Newark, Judge Simon received his law degree from Rutgers University School of Law in 1948. His notable military career included serving in the South Pacific during World War II. His bravery as a captain of infantry earned him the

Law in 1953. He initially practiced in the areas of commercial litigation and real estate law, then became a West Orange town attorney and later a municipal prosecutor. Gov. William Cahill appointed him to the bench in 1972. During his time as a judge, he was instrumental in the development of the Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. Inn of Court, a mentoring program for newly admitted attorneys. Judge Margolis also served on various Supreme Court Committees including the Committee on Professional Ethics, the Committee on Model Civil Jury Charges, the Committee on Judicial Seminars and the Committee on Relations with the Medical Profession.

Judge Peter B. Cooper (1929 – 2003) was born in Jersey City and received his law degree from Rutgers University School of Law in 1953. After serving on active military duty for the U.S. Naval Reserve, Judge Cooper worked as a private practitioner. Prior to his appointment to the bench by Gov. Thomas Kean in 1984, Judge Cooper worked as an attorney for the Livingston zoning board of adjustment, the Livingston planning board and the Essex County Joint Council of Municipal Planning Boards. He was also a councilman and deputy mayor for Livingston, serving later as the mayor in 1967 and 1971. Judge Cooper was assigned to the Chancery Division, Probate Part in 1998 after having sat in the Civil, Criminal and Family Parts. Judge Cooper was held in high esteem and regarded by his colleagues to be an expert in the area of probate law.



Portraits depicting (left to right) Judge Simon, Judge Margolis and Judge Cooper

unique vision and achievements during the course of their careers earned them the respect and admiration of fellow jurists as well as the legal community at large.

Brian Stellar, immediate past president of the Essex County Bar Association, hosted the ceremony and gave opening remarks. Assignment Judge Patricia K. Costello, Judge R. Benjamin Cohen, retired Judges Paul Thompson and Carol Ferentz, as well as Leonard Rosenstein, an attorney, all spoke in tribute to the three judges.

Family members of Judges Simon, Margolis and Cooper unveiled portraits and plaques that are now displayed in the courtrooms to commemorate the late judges.

Purple Heart, the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantry Badge. He served as president of the Essex County Bar Association from 1970 to 1971 and was appointed by Gov. Brendan Byrne to the bench in 1974. His career as a Superior Court Judge spanned 25 years. Judge Simon also served on the Supreme Court Ethics Committee and Judicial Selection Committee. During his time on the bench, Judge Simon earned a reputation for being a calm, compassionate and highly competent jurist.

Judge Harry A. Margolis (1928 – 2002) served as presiding judge of the Chancery Division, General Equity Part from 1990 to 1998. Judge Margolis graduated from Rutgers University School of

Bias Crime Program in Monmouth Vicinage Helps Young Probationers Learn Tolerance

by Theresa Romano
Administrative Specialist 4
Monmouth Vicinage

Seven juvenile probationers from the Monmouth Vicinage recently graduated from a Juvenile Bias Crime Offenders Program, facilitated by The Center for Holocaust Studies at Brookdale Community College.

The Center for Holocaust Studies, founded in 1979, falls under the auspices of Brookdale's Division of Outreach, Business and Community Development. The center is dedicated to providing

information about the Holocaust and other genocides.

The juveniles, ranging in age from 12-16, were charged with committing bias crimes in Monmouth County. The crimes varied from painting swastikas to violating houses of worship. As part of their sentence, the juveniles were ordered by the court to attend the educational program.

The program is a multi-agency collaboration between the court, prosecutor's office and the center. The center worked closely with the vicinage's Probation Division-Juvenile Unit to create a program

that was not only educational but also tailored to the type of bias crimes that were committed.

The juveniles attended 12 ninety-minute classes. Course objectives included: educating the juveniles on the Holocaust as a model for recognizing the consequences of hate; addressing bullying and its relationship to hate and bias; and teaching the student refusal skills that may prevent future involvement in risky behavior. The intent of the program is to provide relevant information to the juveniles so they can make better choices if confronted with a similar situation and ensure that the juveniles understand the impact of their choices on the community.

The program applied strict guidelines on the offenders. If a juvenile missed a class, and the absence was valid, the time and work had to be made up. In addition, juveniles were required to attend the opening and closing sessions with their parent(s). The classes included visits from Holocaust survivors, gay and lesbian students from Brookdale Community College and representatives of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The probation officers joined in many of the activities offered to the students, including a trip to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York.

Based on the feedback of participants and probation officers, the program continues to be modified. Currently, the program is being conducted for the second time for juvenile offenders from Ocean and Middlesex Counties.

Morris/Sussex Court Staff Join Festival on the Green

by Cassandra Winnett
Administrative Specialist
Morris/Sussex Vicinage

For the first time, staff from the Morris/Sussex Vicinage participated in Morristown's popular community event, Festival on the Green on Sept. 26.

More than 50,000 people attended this year's event, which has been called a "huge block party." The past year represented the 10th annual fall festival on the town's historic square.

"The festival was a unique opportunity to showcase all the positive things going on in the Judiciary," said Kim Daniels Walsh, the Morris/Sussex ombudsman and EEO/AA officer who coordinated the vicinage's participation. "We distributed a

number of materials about the Judiciary, including some in Spanish. A bilingual employee also was available for questions."

Representatives from Human Resources and the Criminal Division also attended and fielded questions. They explained the various processes involved in applying for a job at the Judiciary, including civil service tests, and received resumes on site.

Charles Johnson, vicinage drug court coordinator, told a large number of people about the program. "It was a great opportunity to dispel some misconceptions and spread the word about how the program benefits the entire community," he said.

Judiciary's Parents' Education Program Celebrates Five Successful Years

by Kimberly Jenkins
Statewide Parent Education Coordinator
AOC Family Division

In January 2005, the Judiciary's Parents' Education Program is celebrating its fifth anniversary. The Judiciary administers the program statewide under the Parent Education Act which became effective Nov. 15, 1999.

The act requires all parties who have filed an action for divorce, nullity or separate maintenance where the custody, visitation or support of the minor child(ren) is an issue, to attend a "Parents' Education Program" and pay a \$25 registration fee. The goal of the Parents' Education Program is to promote cooperation between the parties and to assist parents in resolving issues that may arise during the divorce or separation process.

The program is administered through a series of workshops available in each county and uniform throughout the state. To develop and implement the program, the governor appointed an advisory committee consisting of a Family Court judge, a family law attorney, mental health professionals, mediators and Family Court staff. The committee recommended the curriculum that was then approved by the administrative director of the courts. This curriculum became part of the Parent Education Best Practices Manual.

Workshop sessions include information on the divorce process, available resources, communication skills between parents, how to tell children about the divorce/separation, financial responsibilities and the effect of divorce on children.

Some workshops provide additional information on the mediation process. In an effort to assist parents, some workshop sessions are offered at night and on weekends. Some vicinages also provide programs for children while their parents attend the session.

The workshops are led by presenters that have been certified through training conducted by Rutgers University's School of Social Work in conjunction with the Judiciary. Approximately 100 presenters have been certified through this training. The presenters must also have a minimum of two years of professional family-related experience and complete training on presentation skills.

Since its implementation in January 2000, the Parents' Education Program has been functioning with great success. Since its statewide implementation in 2000, a total of 37,928 parents attended 1,493 education sessions. In written evaluations of the session, participants provided comments that were overwhelmingly positive. When participants were asked the most important thing learned from the program, responses included:

- "keep the children first,"
- "how to talk to the children about divorce,"
- "how to have a relationship with my child after divorce,"
- "mediation services are available,"
- "the divorce process is long and how to keep us all sane,"
- "that I am only divorcing my wife, not the children."
- "presenters were very helpful and knowledgeable,"
- "everyone should attend this session,"
- "I wish I had known this information before," and
- "great resource for all parents."

For additional information, please visit njcourtsonline.com and search for Parents' Education Program.



Judge Renee Jones Weeks Receives Alumnae Award

Judge Weeks

Judge Renee Jones Weeks of the Essex Vicinage recently received the Ursuline College Alumnae Association's Amadeus

Rappe Award. Judge Weeks received the bachelor of arts degree in history from Ursuline in 1970 and a law degree from Rutgers University in 1973. She currently serves in the General Equity and Probate Part of the Chancery Division. Judge Weeks was appointed to the bench in 1989 and has served various divisions of the court. Prior to her appointment, she was an assistant general counsel for Prudential and an acting Newark Municipal Court judge. She is also a former state deputy attorney general.

Innovative Japanese Judge Program Fosters East-West Understanding

It may be more than 6,500 miles from Tokyo to Trenton, but the relationship between the New Jersey Judiciary and Japan grows closer each year through the Japanese Judge Visitation Program which started more than 32 years ago.

Each year since 1972, a Japanese judge has visited the Garden State to learn about the New Jersey justice system. The program was initiated during the tenure of then-Chief Justice Richard J. Hughes and continues today under the leadership of Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz.



Paulette Davis and Donald F. Phelan

“The program has had two very significant impacts on Japan,” noted Donald F. Phelan, clerk of Superior Court which administers the program. “One is that the civil procedures of the courts of Japan are fashioned after New Jersey’s civil practice rules. The other is that Japan will move to jury trials in a few years.”

The visiting judge during the current court year is Judge Masaharu Nakanishi, judge of Tokyo District Court. Like visiting judges

before him, Judge Nakanishi resides in a condominium unit in Edison, N.J., during his stay.

The judges speak English to varying degrees, and all can drive or take the train to get around the state and nearby states. The wives of married judges are welcome to spend the year with their husbands, but in fact, most of the visiting judges have been single.

“The judges are offered a full program which includes learning about our judicial system from the inside,” said Paulette Davis, coordinator of the program. This involves courtroom and chamber practices, the role of the judge in settlement, bias in the judicial system and other topics. According to Davis, the visiting judges are eager to visit and study state and federal courts.

“The judges have a specific mission and concentrate in one or two areas,” said Phelan. “The area may be civil, jury trials, criminal or perhaps an administrative process. One of the requirements of the visit is that the judge must write a paper on areas under consideration by the Supreme Court of Japan and to report back to them.” Topics have included civil procedures, jury trials and wire-tapping, among others.

In addition to a thorough overview of the New Jersey Judiciary, the judges visit the U.S. Supreme Court where they observe oral arguments, meet with at least one justice and tour the U.S. Courthouse and other sites in Washington, D.C.

But the rigorous schedule of meetings and tours does allow some time for relaxation, such



Judge Keisuke Masuda and Yukie Masuda join Donald F. Phelan, Superior Court clerk, in this photo from the 1996-1997 court year.

as attending a baseball game in Trenton’s Waterfront Park.

“The Japanese Supreme Court lets Paulette tailor the program to the judges’ particular interests,” Phelan said.

In addition to the yearly visit, the Japanese Supreme Court also may send a group of judges from time to time to visit on a specific issue.

“The whole legal community is involved in the annual visits,” said Phelan.

When asked to provide feedback, the judges usually tell Davis that they would like to have spent more time in the program. “When the program began, it ran from November to May,” she said. “Now it runs from September to May.”

“Judges in Japan have a high opinion of our program,” noted Phelan. “Of all the placements in the United States, New Jersey is the premier spot to be!”

Njcourtsonline.com Named Best Official New Jersey Site

The Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ) has named the Judiciary's Internet site, *njcourtsonline.com*, "The Best Official New Jersey Web Site" in 2004. The association promotes the use of and access to government publications in libraries throughout New Jersey.

In 1998, the State Documents Interest Group created a category for an "Internet Site of the Year Award." According to the group's Web site, the intent of this award is:

- "to draw attention to the many documents and other publications now available from the state's home page;
- "to recognize those sites that librarians find particularly valuable; and
- "to honor the New Jersey departments which have developed useful or imaginative sites which enhance the dissemination of information. The

Judiciary HR Brochure Wins Silver Jasper Award

The Judiciary Human Resources brochure, "Make a Difference," received the Silver Jasper Award in the annual Jersey Shore Public Relations and Advertising Association competition in 2004.

Human Resources and the Office of Communications developed the brochure to inform the public about employment opportunities in the Judiciary. The brochure is distributed at college and employment fairs and is available from the Central Office and vicinage Human Resources offices.

Founded in 1965, the Jersey Shore Public Relations & Advertising Association seeks to establish the highest standards of excellence in communications throughout the state for professionals in the field. Leading advertising, public relations and marketing agencies compete for the Jasper Awards, which are presented during an awards dinner in the fall in Holmdel.

The Human Resources Conference initiated and developed the concept for the Judiciary Human Resources brochure. Linda Brown Holt, manager of communication services, and Christina Yuncze, a freelance artist, designed and completed the publication.

nomination and judging criteria are similar to the criteria for a printed document with changes to reflect the electronic format."

The award is based on the following criteria:

- contribution to the expansion of knowledge, evidence of innovation in presentation, or demonstration of creativity;
- relevance for New Jersey's citizens;
- enhancement of the quality of life for New Jersey's citizens;
- contribution to the understanding of state or local government processes or functions;
- the title reflects actual contents, the site achieves its intended purpose, and the format is appropriate to the contents;
- information available is written in a lucid style comprehensible to nonspecialists;
- ease of navigation and/or presence of a search engine;
- physical appearance, layout, organization, use of color, or ease of use;
- use of electronic enhancements such as hypertext links and thumbnail graphics.

In 2003, the Judiciary Web site was named the best state Internet site and one of the 10 best court-related Web sites in the world by the firm, Justice Served. The New Jersey Judiciary also took first place in the Top Ten Court Web Site competition at the 2003 National Center for State Courts' Technology Conference.



The Best Official New Jersey Web Site Award for 2004

Candid Moments... from the 2004 Judicial College



*Photos by
Judge George F. Rohde, Jr.*



Greetings and Remarks--Above, Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz greets former Gov. Thomas Kean; Justice Jaynee LaVecchia at the podium; former Gov. Brendan T. Byrne; and below, Judge Richard M. Freid and Judge Stephen H. Womack.

Scenes from the Judicial College Nov. 22-24, 2004-- Above (clockwise) are: Judge Philip H. Mizzone Jr. and Judge Raymond A. Reddin (foreground) with Judge Edward V. Gannon (second row); Judge Philip S. Carchman, acting administrative director of the courts; Judge Roberto Alcazar and Judge Estela M. De La Cruz; and (outside) Judge Thomas F. Brogan.



Vicinages Hold First Annual Diversity Celebrations

Contributing to this article were: Bernadette Fiore, Essex Vicinage Family Division manager; Judith Irizarry, Mercer Vicinage EEO/AA officer and ombudsman; Lilia L. López, Ocean Vicinage EEO/AA officer; Sharon Kinney, Passaic Vicinage EEO/AA officer; and Gretchen King, Union Vicinage EEO/AA officer and ombudsman.

The Essex, Mercer, Ocean, Passaic and Union Vicinages were among counties that held their first annual diversity events last year with international cuisine, dancing and cultural displays. The events were part of a statewide celebration of diversity in the workplace.



Diversity Day display in Passaic

On Dec. 3, the Essex Vicinage Family Division held its first heritage luncheon. The event was designed to gather colleagues in the division over a lunch of diverse ethnic cuisine. Some 50 employees attended the event, which was presented by staff who volunteered. Each employee volunteer made an ethnic dish and provided the recipe.

The menu included Spanish, African, Filipino, Italian and Irish dishes among others. At the end of the lunch, staff took turns talking about their ethnic backgrounds and what they most cherished about their heritage.

The Mercer Vicinage celebrated Diversity Day on Oct. 15 with the theme, Celebrating Our Similarities

During the opening part of the program in the ceremonial courtroom, Assignment Judge Linda R. Feinberg spoke on the importance of diversity, fairness and its significance in the work of the courts. She also expressed her appreciation to the EEO/AA Advisory Committee for organizing the event.

“These kinds of events bring all of us, individually and as an organization, closer together and more equipped to address the diverse needs of the Judiciary,” she said. Jude Del Preore, who served as Mercer’s trial court administrator for eight years, focused on the importance of working together, stating, “Although we came on different ships, we are now on the same boat.”

Following the ceremony, all employees were invited to a buffet and art gallery style exhibit in the jury assembly room. The room was decorated with flags and posters providing geographical, cultural and population information for over 40 countries around the world.

Approximately 200 Mercer Vicinage participants enjoyed “a little taste of the world” with appetizers, warm dishes and desserts, while reading about the foods and gathering recipes. The gallery style exhibit included paintings, books, hand crafted artifacts, dresses, musical instruments, coins and other cultural depictions representative of Mercer Vicinage’s diverse community. Musical presenta-

tions and recitations by staff enriched the program.

EEO/AA Advisory Committee Chair Louis Narvaez thanked committee members and diversity day coordinators for their creativity, originality, determination and enthusiasm in providing a quality program that inspired all participants. Encouraged by the success of its first Diversity Day, the committee looks forward to organizing the event again next year. The Ocean Vicinage celebrated Diversity Month from Aug. 15 through Sept. 15 with an employee photo display in the main lobby of the justice complex in Toms River. Each employee who wished to participate was individually photographed for the project.

Photos of some 90 employees were taken by Lilia L. López, EEO/AA officer; members of the vicinage EEO/AA Advisory Council; and Charles Pafites, a judicial volunteer and retired photographer. In the spirit of diversity, Ocean Vicinage staff plan to celebrate Diversity Month with a different twist next year.

In Passaic, the Vicinage EEO/AA Advisory Committee sponsored Diver-

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Enjoyable Lessons in Diversity--Liz Domingo, Union Vicinage trial court administrator (left), samples cuisines from several countries. Dancers (right) provide entertainment with a message in the Passaic Vicinage.

Vicinages Hold First Annual Diversity Celebrations

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sity Day on Oct. 1, with participation from the vicinage Minority Concerns Committee. More than 300 participants attended a celebration in which more than 150 volunteers contributed to the success of the program by preparing and serving nearly 100 international food dishes representing the Caribbean, North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

In the Union Vicinage, 480 employees celebrated Diversity Day on Nov. 10. Staff prepared a variety of international dishes for the lunchtime event. Among the cultures represented were India, Italy, France, England, Ukraine, Greece, Ghana, Philippines, Cuba, Ireland, Lithuania, Puerto Rico, Scotland, Spain, Jamaica, Peru, Poland and Portugal.

A display of flags and cultural artifacts was on view during the event. Following the success of this year's celebration, the vicinage is already planning for next year's event which will be moved up to September.

During the event, Trial Court Administrator Elizabeth Domingo thanked all of the volunteers who worked on this event. Nancy Spano Yurek, Sharon Cosby, Jennifer Lescano and Gretchen King planned the celebration.

Entertainment for both the Passaic and Union celebrations was provided by Eddie Melendez and Chandra Beckman and Senior Probation Officer Amanda Cabrera-Biscaia. Melendez is a professional dancer with his own company, E Muzic, who along with Beckman, performed the cha cha and the salsa. He is the son of Probation Investigator Millie Melendez. Dressed in a colorful, flowing gown, Cabrera-Biscaia performed a dance from Colombia, her native country.

Music from various cultures played throughout the luncheon. In the Passaic Vicinage, Assignment Judge Robert J. Passero offered welcoming remarks to the attendees and spoke about the Equal Employment Opportunity/ Affirmative Action program in the vicinage. Judge Stephen H. Womack, chairperson of the Minority Concerns Committee, followed up with some comments about the committee and the importance of diversity in the workplace.

Passaic Trial Court Administrator Richard M. Centanni complimented the EEO/AA Advisory Committee and all of the volunteers on all of their hard work and enthusiasm. Mike E. Taylor, the vicinage media specialist, videotaped the event, while Vivian



Mercer's Art Display--From left to right, Judith Irizarry, EEO/AA officer, Judge Audrey Peyton-Blackburn, co-chair, Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns; and Bobby Battle, chief of the AOC EEO Unit enjoy the Diversity Day Art Gallery Display presented by Mercer Vicinage employees.

Oliver, information systems technician, took candid photos.

Anna Abate, Lyn Clarkson, Rosa Guardiola, Dorothy Howell, Amin Jihad, Ying-Lan Ho, Fatima Manesse, Renita McKinney, Vivian Oliver, Millie Santiago, Kira Struble, Larry Walker and Denice Werner organized the Passaic event.

Other vicinages which reported observing Diversity Day this year included Bergen, Camden, Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem, Hudson, Middlesex and Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren.

Participants in Essex Diversity Training Take a Tasty Route to Understanding

Tomatoes, cheese and chocolate may sound like the makings of a delicious meal, but in the Essex Vicinage, they are also the cornerstone of an innovative approach to diversity training called, "What We Eat."

Last June, Tina Matos, the Essex Vicinage EEO/AA officer, and staff from the training unit launched a 13-part diversity training series using food to get people talking about culture and

diversity. The programs are held during lunchtime with various dishes provided by employee volunteers.

According to Matos, the purpose of the series is threefold:

1. to increase the appreciation for diversity among employees using food as a metaphor;
2. to let employees teach and learn about their own culture and that of their co-workers through the language, enjoyment and history of food; and

3. to demonstrate that diversity is less about tension and conflict than about enrichment, enjoyment and creativity.

"It's an enjoyable way to learn," said Matos. "We bring all voices to the table, recognizing what we have in common and learning to understand the reasons behind our differences."

"Ketchup" time

The initial session started off with a brief film "A Time to Play

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Atlantic City: A Day in the Life of One of...

Continued from page 1

ing the Atlantic City staff five years ago.

The court has financial, jail, traffic, criminal and bail units and is open seven days a week, with three shifts on weekdays. In addition to two full-time judges, the court has 32 staff who are cross-trained to perform a variety of responsibilities.

Physically, the court occupies the second floor of the city's public safety building constructed in 1998. The still-new courtrooms, judges' chambers and administrative offices create a pleasant and attractive environment for court business.

The court also has the added advantage of being physically located over the city police department.

"While there is a clear separation between the courts and law enforcement, we have an excellent relationship with the police department," said Kaufmann in her airy, well-lit office overlooking the neighborhood. A side benefit of the proximity is a special elevator which whisks prisoners from



Wedding Day in Court--Oscar Torres places a wedding ring on the hand of Erna Gonzales as Judge Matthew H. Powals looks on.



Window #2--Court customers are served in an orderly, efficient manner when they make arrangements to pay fines or complete paperwork.

the police station to a holding area between the two courtrooms.

Kaufmann chuckled when asked how life in ACMC compares with her previous experience in Egg Harbor Township.

"Egg Harbor Township was certainly quieter," she said. "This place rolls!"

Berchtold pointed out that while court is very busy, there is limited backlog, especially in DWI. There are as many as 80 DWI cases per month in Atlantic City.

One of the first with video arraignments

Atlantic City Municipal Court has been a leader in several innovative court procedures, including video arraignments and a partnership with the public school system in a highly effective truancy mediation program.

A reporter sat in on a recent video arraignment in Judge Weekes' courtroom.

Wearing an orange prison uniform, Robert Blaine was "live" from the Atlantic County Justice Facility (jail) on a video screen before Judge Weekes and Kelley Blanchet, prosecutor.

"Mr. Blaine, I see you were charged with leaving the scene of an accident, no driver's license, no registration," noted Judge Weekes. "There's also a criminal charge, resisting arrest..."

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...New Jersey's Busiest Municipal Courts

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"Judge," said Blaine, "I didn't resist, I just kinda tripped..."

"...and driving while intoxicated..."

"I was having a bad day, judge."

"Mr. Blaine, you're not being held on the traffic violations, just the criminal charges. We'll bring you here on Friday to see Judge Powals on the traffic charges before your extradition on the criminal charges. Thank you."

But while the court conducts the serious business of justice 24/7, there are lighter, human-interest stories unfolding every day. Take weddings, for example:

"Oscar Torres, do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

Mr. Torres looked tenderly at the woman beside him.

"I do!" he said softly.

"Erna Gonzales, do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?"

Ms. Gonzales smiled and nodded her head as a little boy squealed with joy in the background.

"I do!"

"I pronounce you husband and wife," said Judge Matthew H. Powals of Atlantic City Municipal Court. "You may now kiss the bride!"

A small group of guests and onlookers burst into applause as the newlyweds kissed and began their first moments of life together as a married couple.

"Weddings are one of the best parts of this job," confided Judge Powals later. "But everything about municipal court is rewarding. I think of the people who come here as customers in my store, and try to treat everyone with the respect and attention they deserve."

From traffic tickets to truancy

A little later, Judge Powals was in the traffic courtroom a few doors away. About 20 litigants, some with attorneys or family members, sat on benches waiting their turn.

"Molly Burn, it looks as though your child, D.B., was absent 22 days and tardy 24 days this year," he said. "And your child M.B. was absent 7 and tardy 13 days. Is that right, Mr. Russo?" he asked the city's truancy officer, who nodded assent. Judge Powals read further from the case document. "And a third

child, L.M., absent 33 days. Ms. Burn, how do you plead?"

"I already talked to Mr. Russo, your honor," said Burn, a large woman in a football jersey and a black quilted coat, her dark hair pulled tightly back. "I plead guilty."

Judge Powals wrote down a few numbers. "That will be \$150 for each child, or \$450 total, including assessments and court costs," he said. "How would you like to pay this, Ms. Burn?"

"Forty dollars a month, your honor," the woman answered, showing no emotion.

The challenge of many languages

Another fascinating part of the Atlantic City environment is the sound of many languages spoken by visitors from throughout the world.

"We use quite a few freelance interpreters," Kaufmann noted. "In addition to Spanish, we hear a lot of Chinese dialects. There's also a high demand for Russian interpreters."

Later in the afternoon, Kaufmann found herself dashing from traffic court to criminal and back again with a Spanish interpreter in tow to help a Hispanic man charged with riding his bicycle on the boardwalk after hours.

"Interesting cases, interesting people," replied Judge Weekes when asked why he has remained an ACMC judge for nearly 20 years, 18 of which were as chief judge. "We're always looking ahead. We've hosted pilot programs for video arraignment and telephone interpreting."

But it's the people who visit the court every day who provide the most interesting stories. Some cases are tragic, but there are also light moments.

Judge Weekes recalled one defendant who didn't appear to be listening to him during an arraignment.

"I said, 'Excuse me, sir, are you listening to me?'" recalled Judge Weekes. "The defendant turned toward me very slowly and said, 'Your honor, I'm so slow it takes me an hour and a half to watch *60 Minutes!*'"

"I had to leave the bench until I stopped laughing!" said Judge Weekes.

The judges and staff of the busy court work seamlessly as an efficient team to provide services to a large number of litigants. Last year, the court heard 51,968 disputes, nearly a fifth of all municipal cases

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Atlantic City: A Day in the Life of Municipal Court

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heard in the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage during that period. That's more than one case for each of the approximately 39,000 people who live in Atlantic City.

Cotteth Stafford, the criminal bench clerk, stopped by as Berchtold, Kaufmann and other staff were having a working lunch.

"You know," she said to Berchtold, leaning over the small table in the lunchroom, "I really enjoying working here. Alison is great, and the atmosphere is relaxed. You are expected to do your job well, but no one is standing over you every minute. It's a great place to work."

In addition to great people, great technology is also transforming the life of this courthouse by the sea.

"NJMCDirect for paying traffic fines online is great, ATS/ACS is excellent," said Kaufmann, referring to the Automated Traffic System/Automated Complain System in place statewide. "Law enforcement can now do a statewide check on a person's court records to see if they have a warrant issued anywhere in the state."

Judge Powals, who has been with the court since 1988, has noticed changes in the types of cases showing up over the years.

"The biggest change I've seen is the number of

suspended drivers who keep on driving," he observed. "Another is the explosion of domestic violence reporting."

Judge Powals agreed that every case is, in essence, a personal story about an individual.

On a recent autumn afternoon, they included:

- José in the leather jacket, pleading guilty to a four-point ticket;
- Jodie brought up by the elevator in chains, only a halo of dark hair showing from the jersey hood pulled down around her face; and
- Tom, his long red hair in a ponytail, offering an exaggerated "Yes, sir!" to every question posed by Judge Weekes.

"People do make it interesting," said Judge Powals with what may have been a small sigh. "You have to look out for victims, too. You try to help people understand what they are facing and set them on the right course."

"In the end," he added with a smile, voicing a sentiment that could apply to all the judges and staff of Atlantic City Municipal Court, "I like to think I make a difference."

--Linda Brown Holt

(Note: Names of litigants have been changed in this article. Quotations from hearings have been abridged and are not verbatim transcripts of proceedings.)

West Orange Municipal Court Does More with Less in Busy Northeast

"We're a high-volume, suburban court," said Judge Harry L. Starrett, one of the two judges assigned to West Orange Municipal Court in Essex County. "We keep getting busier each year, and we take our work very, very seriously."

With some 16,000 cases in 2004, West Orange Municipal Court has two part-time judges and four full-time staff. Both appointed in 1992, Judge Starrett and Judge William F. Cuozzi Jr. share calendars, on-call time and other related duties. Edrie Daniels is the court administrator.

"We have an excellent staff," Judge Starrett said. "We have one of the best ratios of staff to cases in the county, and we run a good courtroom."

Open 8:30 to 4:30 Monday through Friday with extended hours on Tuesday, West Orange Municipal Court hears a variety of cases ranging from parking and speeding to theft, assault and shoplift-

ing. In addition, Judge Starrett hears zoning and code enforcement cases twice a month at special sessions. Like their counterparts in Atlantic City, the judges have the pleasure of officiating at marriages, but only twice a month.

There's no video conferencing or telephone interpreting yet in West Orange Municipal Court, though the court does have a Spanish interpreter present for one session a month and at other sessions as needed.

Judge Starrett said there hasn't been much change in the past 12 years in terms of case type, though cases overall are increasing as the West Orange community grows.

"I look forward to my work every day," the judge affirmed. "We try to treat everyone fairly and give them their day in court."

--LBH

Essex Hosts Court/Librarian Program

by Shazeeda Samsudeen, Essex Vicinage Ombudsman

In an effort to continue cultivating the partnership between the court and local libraries, Essex Vicinage once again hosted local librarians at its court complex on Sept. 30.

Assignment Judge Patricia K. Costello welcomed the librarians and discussed the importance of the partnership between the court and local librarians serving the Essex County community. She discussed the points of common interest regarding the types of court-related questions that librarians field from patrons and how the program would serve to answer many of those questions.

This year's program sought to familiarize the librarians with the court's main customer service areas and personnel. In keeping with this theme, the librarians were given an in-depth tour that included visits to the Office of the Ombudsman and the Information and Community Relations Center, the Family Division, the Office of Jury Management and the Law Library.

Through its partnership with local libraries, Essex Vicinage continues to demonstrate its commitment to providing quality service to the community.

Tech-KNOWLEDGE-y

I'm Web Surfing: Spy Me?

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Of course, spyware doesn't have to be invited or wanted to set up shop on your PC. If you think you need protection, anti-spyware software is available from a variety of vendors.

Check out sites such as spywareinfo.com or spywareremoversreview.com.

Decide if you need this protection and which is best for you.

Remember that this protection can only protect you from known intruders.

As new bugs are discovered, your protection should be updated.

If you're already a victim, check out www.AdwareReport.com, which provides a side-by-side comparison of 10 spyware removal products.

Read articles at www.pcmag.com, spywareinfo.com and www.pestpatrol.com/pestinfo.

Delete suspicious e-mail without opening it.

You never knew your life was so interesting, did you?

Essex Takes a Tasty Route to Understanding

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Ketchup," discussing the history of tomatoes. The group learned that tomatoes were first cultivated by the native peoples of Mexico and are now produced on nearly every continent. According to the course, tomatoes did not catch on at first in Italy, where today they are a culinary mainstay, and were not popular in the U.S. until the 1900s.

The class learned that tomatoes are great sources of fiber, potassium and vitamins A and C. The class included a "tomato tasting" with dishes from Italy, Mexico, Texas and other parts of the South.

On Dec. 8, the second session, "Milk's Leap Towards Immortality," focused on cheese. According to the class, the story of cheese predates recorded history. There are records of the Sumerians making and consuming cheese in 3500 B.C. In Homer's 9th century B.C. epic, the *Odyssey*, a scene describes the Cyclops Polyphemus making cheese and pressing it into wicker baskets.

The Romans raised cheese making to an art, participants learned. They flavored their cheeses with various herbs and spices and also experimented with

vegetable extracts in place of rennet. In 59 B.C., the soldiers of Gaius Julius Caesar took cheese along on their march to what is now France, a country known for some of the finest cheeses made.

During the Middle Ages, cheese making flourished in European monasteries. Monks perfected the cheese-making process and developed some of the most famous cheeses of today.

A diverse group of about 44 employees who attended both sessions represented all the divisions and shared traditions from a number of countries. At the June session, participants sampled a variety of tomato dishes such as salsa; tomatoes stuffed with chicken salad and different pastas in tomato sauce.

Dishes contributed for the cheese session included different types of cheeses, crackers, cheese popcorn, salsa with cheese and chocolate cheesecake.

"Many of us thought that tomatoes and cheese were native to our own cultures," said Matos. "The classes helped us think about what we have in common and how our commonalities and connections can have a positive effect on the workplace."

The next session in the "What We Eat" series is the history of chocolate scheduled for Feb. 9.



Tech-KNOWLEDGE-y

I'm Web Surfing: Spy Me?

by Janet Bastien, Project Manager, Information Technology

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be one of those reality show characters, with others secretly watching your life?

Well, someone may be watching your every move, at least while you sit at your computer.

Spyware, a nefarious bug that plants itself on your PC, may be tracking your activities and gathering information about you as you go.

Jon Massey, assistant director for technical services and operations in the Information Technology Office, assures us the Judiciary is investigating the best protection for our network against intruders like spyware and spam, and you should do likewise to protect your home PC from what Spywareinfo.com calls "parasites on the body of the Internet."

Spywareinfo.com, a site recognized by PC magazine as one of the "top 100 sites you can't live without" defines spyware as "software or hardware installed on a computer without the user's knowledge which gathers information about that user for later retrieval by whomever controls the spyware."

Here are some clues you may have picked up a spy while visiting certain Web sites, clicking on pop-up ads, opening infected e-mail or downloading file-sharing services:

A new item appears in your favorites list, and you didn't put it there;

You get pop-ups that address you by name;

You even get pop-ups when your browser isn't running;

When you start your browser, the home page is changed. You change it back, but after a while it changes again.

Your system runs noticeably slower than it did before.

There may be 50 ways to leave your lover, but PestPatrol, a manufacturer of spyware remover software, reports to PC Magazine that there are more than 78,000 spyware programs ready to see what makes your heart beat and lead you to love in all the wrong places.

Do you like to shop online? Do you stop for a taste at gourmet Web sites or order vintage wine from the Napa Valley? Maybe you look for tips to improve your golf score and shop for the best deal on a new set of clubs.

With spyware surfing beside you, it's a hole in one for those monitoring your personal habits. They'll forward your cyber-activities to their partners, and even worse, may hijack your browser and lead you to undesirable sites you would never visit and certainly wouldn't want your children to be exposed to when they sit down to do their homework on the computer.

Besides your shopping habits, spyware is interested in personal information such as name, age and gender. It even gathers passwords and e-mail addresses. What's even more aggravating is that it's using your computer's resources to do its gumshoeing.

Consider this:

Don't allow sites to store your password for your "convenience." Why are they being so nice to you if they don't even know you?

When you download software to your home computer, do you breeze through all the fine print and agree to anything just to get it loaded and get on with your work (or shopping?) Imbedded in that fine print could be your consent to loading spyware on your computer. Don't agree to anything you don't want or understand.

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Mission Statement of the New Jersey Court System

We are an independent branch of government constitutionally entrusted with the fair and just resolution of disputes in order to preserve the rule of law and to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States and this State.