



**Inside this Issue:**

Chief Justice’s Budget Remarks Before Joint Finance Committee	2
Chief Justice One of Most Influential Persons in Business Ethics	3
Seminars Help Family Court Litigants	4
Seminar by National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in Delaware	4
Racial & Ethnic Fairness Initiative	5
Court of Chancery—Guardianship Monitor Position	5
E-Filing Expands Docket	6
Superior Court Creates Mortgage Foreclosure Dormant Docket	7
Supreme Court Conference on Business Courts	7
Delaware Judiciary Recognized	8
Update on CASA Program	10
Governors Team Excellence Award	11
JP Court Consolidations	12

## DELAWARE SUPREME COURT’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE/MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

Delaware has been selected through a competitive process to be one of four states to participate in a Criminal Justice/Mental Health Initiative. The Initiative is a national project designed to assist state Supreme Court Chief Justices to spearhead task forces of state leaders in the mental health and the criminal justice fields and to develop strategic plans to improve responses to people with mental illnesses involved in the criminal justice system. Chief Justice Myron T. Steele designated Justice Henry duPont Ridgely as the chair of this project due to his extensive experience with criminal justice and mental health issues. The Delaware task force includes representatives from all branches of government, as well as outside experts in the mental health field, and receives funding and technical assistance from the Council for State Governments Justice Center and the National GAINS Center, two nonprofit organizations coordinating the initiative.

Under Justice Ridgely’s leadership, the task force is forging ahead. A committee of the task force, including the chairs of each of the task force’s subcommittees (communication, collaboration, and resource allocation; identification, assessment and treatment; mental health courts; and education, prevention and victims’ rights) participated in a Council of State Governments Justice Center-convened policy forum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in January 2009, along with their counterparts from the other three states.

**According to Justice Ridgely:**

*“The frequency with which people with mental illnesses enter our courts, jails and prisons remains a critical problem. This task force will greatly enhance our understanding of the problems that individuals with mental illnesses face, enable us to identify specific gaps in resources, including improvements to treatment options, as well as steps to take, when appropriate, to help individuals with mental illnesses avoid contact with the criminal justice system. . . . Delaware has already initiated substantial efforts to divert those with mental illnesses from the criminal justice system, including the establishment of pilot mental health courts in the Superior Court, Family Court and Court of Common Pleas. Through the Initiative, we look forward to the opportunity to support and expand these initiatives, and to explore new ways to improve the treatment of the mentally ill within Delaware’s criminal justice system. The task force has the goals of improving the quality of life for those with mental illnesses in Delaware, increasing public safety, and ensuring that state funds directed toward mental health issues are being used most cost-effectively.”*

*“To address this complex issue, there must be extensive collaboration among a state’s systems. The Supreme Court is often uniquely positioned to convene key leaders to develop bipartisan, coordinated strategies,”* said Presiding Judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and Council for State Governments Justice Center board chair Sharon Keller. *“I look forward to seeing what the Delaware Supreme Court’s task force will accomplish in the coming year.”*

## EXCERPTS FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE’S BUDGET REMARKS BEFORE THE JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE

On February 11, 2009, Chief Justice Myron T. Steele presented the Judicial Branch’s budgetary needs for Fiscal Year 2010 (July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010) to the Joint Finance Committee of the General Assembly. Because of the State’s current severe fiscal problems, Chief Justice Steele stated that the Judicial Branch has adopted a three-pronged approach to addressing the budget situation, including implementation of: 1) cutbacks in non-fixed costs, 2) a hiring freeze, and 3) creative options for enhancing revenues.

First, he noted that non-fixed costs represent only a small fraction (approximately 8%) of the total Judicial Branch budget. Cuts already taken in FY 2009 total more than \$1 million, with an additional \$1.85 million proposed in reductions and strategic reductions/revenue enhancements in the Governor’s Recommended Budget for FY 2010. These severe cuts “represent a drop of more than one-half of the Judicial Branch’s total FY 2010 non-fixed costs budget.”

Second, the Chief Justice focused on the Judicial Branch’s efforts to control personnel costs by implementing a hiring freeze in March 2008, which has continued without interruption and has precluded the filling of all but the most critical vacant positions related to security and case processing. With a growing number of core service positions, such as clerical case processors, remaining unfilled for months, the impact of the hiring freeze on day-to-day court operations has affected the courts’ ability to meet the public’s needs. At the same time, the Chief Justice noted, the difficult

economic times are placing more demands on the courts. As he explained, “more debt collection actions are being filed because of unemployment and resulting increased litigation – even for small amounts of money. FY 2008 overall case filings are up in the courts by 3.3% compared to FY 2007.”

Third, the Chief Justice discussed the Judicial Branch’s creative approaches to revenue enhancements, through fee increases and other sources, which are projected to increase revenues by close to \$2.2 million in FY 2009, and \$2.8 million in FY 2010.

The Chief Justice concluded that:

*“The level of cutbacks that the Judicial Branch has already experienced will severely impact core functions and impede our ability to meet our constitutional obligations. Any further cuts, to be undertaken as a part of the strategic reduction/investment target for FY 2010, will have grave repercussions for the public, state agencies, such as the Department of Correction, and law enforcement agencies. They will experience increasing court delays and rising costs in their operations because of those delays. We are at the point where the strain that any more cuts would place on the court system is likely to take the justice system*

*over the edge. As a consequence, we ask that other means for addressing the budget shortfalls be sought. Further revenue increases, even if painful, should be explored, instead of additional across-the-board reductions which do not discriminate between mandatory, core services and less necessary, although worthy, services. . . Despite efforts to minimize the impact of cutbacks on court operations, I can see, however, the Delaware Judiciary's reputation beginning to suffer as the Courts fail to obtain the necessary material and personnel resources to accomplish our mandated mission. Many have worked tirelessly over long years to build the Delaware Courts' strong standing. The cost to the State of Delaware, financially and otherwise, if the Courts' reputation is diminished, will be devastating."*



Chief Justice Myron T. Steele, with State Court Administrator Patricia W. Griffin, at the Joint Finance Committee Hearing on February 11, 2009

For further information, contact [Patricia.Griffin@state.de.us](mailto:Patricia.Griffin@state.de.us)

## DELAWARE CHIEF JUSTICE MYRON STEELE NAMED ONE OF MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSONS IN BUSINESS ETHICS IN 2008

Ethisphere Magazine recently named Chief Justice Myron T. Steele of the Delaware Supreme Court as ninth in their list of the 100 most influential persons in business ethics for 2008. Chief Justice Steele was named for the second year in



a row in the top ten of the most influential persons in business ethics by Ethisphere Magazine, a publication of the research-based Ethisphere Institute, which is dedicated to the research, creation, and sharing of best practices in ethics, compliance and corporate governance. The list was compiled to honor leaders in business ethics throughout the world and was compiled by an advisory panel composed of experts from major universities and institutions. Chief Justice Steele was named for his

impact on government rules and enforcement trends.

Others named to the top of the list included such luminaries as Liu Gi, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 2008 Olympics; Neelie Kroes, European Commissioner for Competition; and President Barack Obama.

In naming Chief Justice Steele, the advisory board, comprised of notable business school professors from across the country, noted:

"Delaware remains one of the best places to incorporate your business, due in no small part to Chief Justice Steele. Public outrage over the poor corporate governance in some companies has moved Congress to suggest a federal incorporations law. However, to the foreseeable future, Steele's opinions as the Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court will continue to resonate very far."

## NEW SEMINARS HELP FAMILY COURT LITIGANTS

With more than three-quarters of Family Court litigants representing themselves, there is a tremendous need for information to assist them in navigating the court system. Recently introduced self-help seminars held by the Court are providing another resource to help these litigants. Seminars on child custody, entitled "The ABC's of Custody" are being held both in the New Castle County Courthouse and at various community locations, including libraries. In addition, new seminars to assist persons filing guardianships will begin in February.

The seminars join an existing set of tools to help self-represented Family Court litigants, including instructional packets and forms, frequently asked questions, a website, and a self-help center as well as a limited *pro bono* assistance program in New Castle County. While these tools are extremely valuable, the seminars provide an important additional dimension. Jody Huber, Director of Pro Se Services for Family Court, explains that "while our existing materials and website are very helpful, some individuals gain a greater understanding from a seminar setting such as this. Particularly in the

area of family law, which often involves highly emotional cases, receiving in-person explanations of procedure and law can significantly reduce anxiety." The seminars use the existing self-help materials as a resource and also review relevant statutes, court rules, and case law to provide litigants with as much information as possible while avoiding giving legal advice or discussing individual cases. Although they are currently taught solely by Ms. Huber, she is interested in finding ways to incorporate volunteer attorneys into the seminars, and perhaps use videos to reach a larger audience.

In addition to assisting litigants, the seminars also help the Court since, according to Ms. Huber, "better prepared litigants mean better use of judicial resources and better presentation of the merits of cases." The seminars, which are free of charge, are generally limited to 10 persons in order to allow for questions and discussion. Interested persons are encouraged to sign up for sessions in advance by contacting the self-help center or sending an e-mail through the Court's website.

*For further information, contact [Jody.Huber@state.de.us](mailto:Jody.Huber@state.de.us)*

## SEMINAR SPONSORED BY NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES HELD IN DELAWARE

Judge John E. Henriksen of the Family Court was the host judge for a seminar about "Understanding and Responding to the Sexual Behavior of Adolescents" held in April 2008 by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, of which Judge Henriksen is a member. The key speaker was Dr. Robert Kinscherff, Esquire, who is the Director of Clinical Services for Easter Seals in New Hampshire. Dr. Kinscherff's multidisciplinary presentation was enjoyed by over 130 participants composed of Family Court Judges, Children's Department heads and workers, state and private social workers and clinicians, CASA volunteers, police officers, nurses, attorneys, and school representatives. Dr. Kinscherff, a forensic psychologist and attorney who holds teaching appointments at Harvard Medical School, Boston University School of Law, and Massachusetts School of Psychology, is a leading authority and speaks nationwide on the evaluation and treatment of juvenile sex offenders.



From left are Family Court Judge Henriksen; Carlyse Giddons, director of Child Family Services; Susan Cycyk, director of Child Mental Health; NJCFCJ program coordinator Ian Curley; Dr. Robert Kinscherff; Dr. Teresa Dunbar of Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services; Martha Gregor, of DYRS director of Drug and Alcohol Services and member of the Delaware Sex Registration Management Board; Family Court Director of Special Services Andrea Mills; and Christina Harrison, state CASA director.

## SUPREME COURT RACIAL AND ETHNIC FAIRNESS INITIATIVE SPONSORS EVENTS FOR STUDENTS, COURT STAFF AND JUDGES

Twenty-five students from Bayard Middle School in Wilmington recently spent the morning in the New Castle County Courthouse attending a Youth Forum to learn more about the court system and careers in the law. The sixth through eighth grade students started their visit with a tour of the courthouse and an introduction to the new technologies used in the courtroom. Members of the Judiciary, along with representatives of the Attorney General's Office and the Office of the Public Defender participated in a discussion with the students about their jobs and what it took to become a lawyer and judge. "You have the power to do whatever you want in life if you are willing to work hard" was the message sent by the speakers, many of whom discussed their own paths in becoming attorneys. "Know what you want and stick with it. Don't let others get you on the wrong path" several speakers emphasized. Students also had an opportunity to get more of a taste of the legal profession as they participated in a mock trial as a prosecutor, defense attorney, witness, judge or juror. The morning was "awesome" according to numerous comments by



Honorable Mary Johnston discussing the mock trial presentation with the Bayard Middle School students during the Youth Forum

the students.

The Youth Forum was sponsored by the Delaware Supreme Court and staffed by the Administrative Office of the Courts as part of its racial and ethnic fairness initiative which is co-chaired by Justice Henry duPont Ridgely of the Supreme Court and Chief Judge Alex J. Smalls of the Court of Common Pleas. Another effort undertaken as part of this initiative has been staff training on diversity issues. Six sessions throughout

the state for court employees emphasizing how cultural differences can affect the perception of court system fairness were conducted by Ed Justinianno of Amigo Consulting and additional training is being planned.

In addition, the racial and ethnic fairness initiative sponsored a presentation at the annual Judicial Conference held in September 2008, including Wayne McKenzie of the Vera Institute and John T. Chisholm, District Attorney for Milwaukee, discussing racial justice issues.

*For further information, contact [Stephanie.Symons@state.de.us](mailto:Stephanie.Symons@state.de.us)*

## NEW GUARDIANSHIP MONITOR POSITION IN THE COURT OF CHANCERY

The Court of Chancery is pleased to announce the addition of a guardianship monitor position within the Court of Chancery. Sherri J. Harmer, a current judicial case manager with the Court of Chancery, has been selected to fill the position and will assist the Court in developing and implementing new services that will be available to all appointed guardians. Guidance for the appointed guardians in seeking the appropriate available services needed for the disabled person, review of the care being provided to the disabled person, the creation of a volunteer program, and oversight of a guardian's compliance with the Court's orders, are a few of the services available.

The Court of Chancery would like to thank the Administrative Office of the Courts for its help in establishing this new position.



Sherri J. Harmer, Guardianship Monitoring Program Director for the Court of Chancery, discussing services available

## USE OF E-FILING EXPANDS

The use of e-filing in Delaware Courts continues to grow. As a part of the new COTS integrated case management system project, e-filing became available through the “eFlex” system in the Justice of the Peace Court through a pilot project involving a limited number of filers in July 2007. The e-filing initiative was gradually expanded to all of the civil Justice of the Peace Courts and made mandatory for certain filers. On November 1, 2008, e-filing was made mandatory for all attorneys filing in the Justice of the Peace Court and as of December 1, 2008 e-filing was also required for certain other multiple filers and for State agencies. Concurrently with the COTS project implementation, e-filing was implemented in the Sussex County Court of Common Pleas in June 2008, and was expanded to New Castle County and Kent County Court of Common Pleas on November 3, 2008. Filing fees can be paid on eFlex, either by setting up a Court Debit Account from which fees can be deducted or by using a credit card.

Carole Kirshner, Court of Common Pleas Court Administrator, spoke of the significant benefits that have resulted from the availability of e-filing in that Court. She said: “The Court of Common Pleas has seen that a large proportion of its civil cases (approximately 90%) are being e-filed since the implementation of COTS and the e-filing system, which supports the Court’s efforts to process cases as quickly and efficiently as possible.” According to Frank Mroz, an Application Support Project Leader with the Judicial Information Center, “Attorneys and paralegals using the system seem pleased to be able to e-file and have commented on the eFlex system’s ease of use and low cost.” To support

filers using eFlex, the Judicial Information Center has dedicated a new e-Filing Help-Desk phone number with calls being answered by Core Team staff trained on the eFlex system. All new eFlex users are required to attend training sessions. Information on the sessions is available on the Court of Common Pleas and Justice of the Peace Court websites.

Delaware Courts have a long legacy of leadership in e-filing starting with the Superior Court’s Complex Litigation Automated Docket (CLAD) system which was the first electronic docketing and filing system in the nation when it was introduced in 1991. In 2003, the existing CLAD cases were converted to the LexisNexis File & Serve e-filing system, and since that time, the system has expanded to additional categories of civil cases.

In 2003, the Court of Chancery became the first statewide court in the country to adopt e-filing for its entire civil docket while the Delaware Supreme Court became the first appellate court in the nation to use e-filing when it began its first implementation phase in 2005. With the implementation of its final phase of e-filing in December 2006, the Supreme Court became the first appellate court in the nation to require all appeals to be filed electronically using the LexisNexis File & Serve system.

There have been numerous benefits to e-filing both for the Delaware Courts and their users. E-filing has reduced dependency on paper documents and enhanced case processing efficiencies, saving time and money for the public, litigants, and the courts.



E-filing training session at the New Castle County Courthouse with David Taffet, a member of the COTS Training Team

Class was taught by Michael VonReider of the Judicial Information Center (not pictured)

## SUPERIOR COURT CREATES MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE DORMANT DOCKET

With mortgage foreclosures increasing dramatically, the Superior Court has created new procedures for such cases which allow for time for parties, who so choose, to engage in negotiations and cure the default. Normally, civil actions in the Superior Court are dismissed, following notification to the parties, if there has been no action in the case for a six month period of time. However, the newly created mortgage foreclosure dormant docket permits the plaintiff to request that a mortgage foreclosure action be moved from the active docket to the mortgage foreclosure dormant docket where it may remain for up to twenty-four months. This is helpful because it frequently takes a substantial period of time for the process of negotiating and performing agreements under which the property owner may cure the alleged default and prevent foreclosure.

At any time while an action is on the dormant docket, any party may request that the action be

moved back to the active docket. After an action has been pending twenty-four months on the dormant docket, it will be dismissed without further notice, without prejudice, unless prior to that a party seeks to extend the twenty-four month period for good cause shown. If an action is moved from the dormant docket to the active docket, it may not be removed again unless approved by the Court upon good cause shown and upon such terms and conditions as the Court may establish.

The mortgage foreclosure docket was created by an administrative directive issued by President Judge James T. Vaughn, Jr. on October 27, 2008 and applies to all actions pending as of that date or filed thereafter. The Directive will expire after five years, unless extended, or sooner if rescinded.

---

## SUPREME COURT CO-SPONSORS CONFERENCE ON BUSINESS COURTS

With more than 60 percent of the nation's Fortune 500 companies incorporated in Delaware, Delaware's Supreme Court, Court of Chancery and Superior Court have long been recognized as model forums for corporate and commercial cases, providing an efficient and sophisticated resolution of such disputes. Due to its preeminence in these areas, Delaware was chosen to host a recent Mid-Atlantic regional meeting of the Conference of Chief Justices designed to explore the benefits and requirements of specialized business courts. The conference, entitled Business Courts – What Works Best, was held October 27-28, 2008 at the University of Delaware and was co-sponsored by the Delaware Supreme Court, the Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance of the University of Delaware and the National Center for State Courts.

Designed to assist jurisdictions considering establishing or improving a business court, topics covered included the appropriate scope of business

court jurisdiction, factors that make a business court work well, the use of alternative dispute resolution in business courts, performance standards for business courts, and how jurisdictions can proceed in setting up business courts.

Several members of the Delaware Judiciary joined jurists from other states and attorneys prominent in the corporate and commercial spheres as speakers or panelists. Chief Justice Myron T. Steele of the Delaware Supreme Court, along with Professor Charles Elson, Director of the John L. Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance of the University of Delaware, spoke at the opening dinner on the importance of handling business litigation well. In addition, Justice Randy J. Holland of the Supreme Court as well as Chancellor William B. Chandler III and Vice Chancellor Donald Parsons of the Court of Chancery, were featured participants.

## DELAWARE JUDICIARY RECOGNIZED

**Chief Justice Myron T. Steele** of the Supreme Court and **Chancellor William B. Chandler, III and Vice Chancellor Leo E. Strine, Jr.** of the Court of Chancery were named on the 2008 list of the most influential people on corporate governance by *Directorship Magazine*.

**Chief Justice Myron T. Steele** of the Supreme Court was also elected to a three year term on the Board of Directors of the Conference of Chief Justices. The Conference of Chief Justices is a national organization that serves as the primary representative of the state courts before Congress and federal agencies.

**Chief Justice Myron T. Steele, Vice Chancellor Stephen P. Lamb and Vice Chancellor Leo E. Strine, Jr.** were named among the top 500 leading lawyers in the country in the fall 2008 edition of the *Lawdragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America*. *Lawdragon*, a legal online publication, combines online balloting and legal research to select its list of the top attorneys in the country, including private attorneys, law professors, judges, among others, who have demonstrated leadership, sustained achievement in the field, and outstanding reputations.

**Justice Randy J. Holland** of the Supreme Court was appointed to the American Bar Association Presidential Commission on Fair and Impartial State Courts. The fifteen-member Commission is charged with convening a National Summit on Fair and Impartial State Courts in May 2009 to identify and meet challenges facing state courts in serving the public.

**Justice Jack B. Jacobs** of the Supreme Court delivered a paper entitled "Developing an Infrastructure for Hostile Takeovers: The Delaware Experience" at the Symposium on Hostile Takeovers in Tokyo, Japan on December 12, 2008. The paper will be published in both English and Japanese in the University of Tokyo Journal of Law. In addition, Justice Jacobs visited The Harvard Law School in the fall 2008 as the 2008 Distinguished Visiting Jurist of the Program on Corporate Governance.

**Justice Henry duPont Ridgely** of the Supreme Court was elected to the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association (ABA). The House of Delegates is the policy making body of the ABA.

**Vice-Chancellor Leo E. Strine, Jr.** of the Court of Chancery wrote an article entitled *Breaking the Corporate Governance Logjam in Washington* which was published in the August 2008 issue of the *Business Lawyer*.

**Vice-Chancellor Donald F. Parsons, Jr.** of the Court of Chancery was named President-Elect of the American College of Business Court Judges at its annual meeting. The organization consists of approximately 100 business or commercial court judges from twenty states.

**The Delaware courts, with emphasis on the Superior Court,** were ranked number one for the seventh year in a row by the Harris State Liability Systems Ranking Study for the U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform for doing the best job of "having a litigation environment perceived to be fair and reasonable in its handling of civil cases."

**Judge Susan C. Del Pesco**, who retired from the Superior Court in June 2008, was recognized by Chief Justice Myron T. Steele for her twenty years on the bench at the annual Judicial Conference meeting in September 2008.

**Judge Joseph R. Slights, III** of the Superior Court was recognized for his outstanding service to the Judiciary, his work as co-chair of the 2008 National High School Mock Trial and his work on the asbestos litigation caseload by Chief Justice Myron T. Steele at the annual Judicial Conference meeting in September 2008, where he was presented with a gift and certificate of appreciation.

**Judge Richard F. Stokes** of the Superior Court received the 2008 Distinguished Mentoring Award from the Delaware State Bar Association on October 22, 2008. This award recognizes a Delaware lawyer or judge who, by mentoring, has served as an inspiration and model.

**Master Daniel M. Kristol** of the Superior Court received the Outstanding Service to the Courts and Bar Award from the Delaware State Bar Association.

**Superior Court** welcomed new **Judge John A. Parkins, Jr.** and new **Commissioner Lynne M. Parker** to the bench.

**Judge William C. Carpenter, Jr.** of the Superior Court was recognized by the American Bar Association for two years of service on the executive board of the National Conference of State Trial Judges. He will continue as chair of the Judicial Division Membership Committee. **Judge Calvin L. Scott** of the Superior Court serves as a member of the by-laws committee of the Conference.

**Family Court** welcomed new **Commissioner Bernard Pepukayi** to the bench.



Chief Justice Myron T. Steele honored retired **Judge Susan C. Del Pesco** of the Superior Court with a gift and a certificate of appreciation at the 2008 Fall Judicial Education Conference

## UPDATE ON FAMILY COURT'S COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAM

The Delaware Family Court CASA Program, staffed by ten CASA coordinators and one support person, partners with 223 volunteers who serve as Guardians *ad Litem* to children in Delaware who have been abused and/or neglected.

A Guardian *ad Litem* is appointed by the Court and serves as a powerful, effective and caring advocate for an abused child. Every year CASA Volunteers work to ensure that children are placed in secure, nurturing homes with hope for a positive future. In most cases, this means returning to their parents once their safety is assured. In others, it means finding other means of permanency with relatives or non relatives rather than remaining in temporary care.

The ethnic profile of the volunteers generally reflects the population of the community. Most of the volunteers are female. On the average, each active CASA is assigned to 1-2 cases and represents 2-3 children at a time. In 2008, the program served 568 children. The current CASA volunteer pool of community advocates represents a 25% increase following Family Court's implementation of its Diversity Initiative Advertisement Campaign

which was designed to raise public awareness of CASA and to attract more volunteers.

Developed and led by Family Court Senior Program Coordinator Christina Harrison, this expanded public awareness program features initiatives such as billboards posted along I-95 and ads on DART buses, on several radio stations, and in the print media. Also, evening training sessions and additional volunteer training programs have been made available to improve the public's accessibility to the initial and on-going training that is a requirement for CASA volunteers.



The Delaware Family Court CASA Program provides quality advocacy and strives to continue to grow in meeting the needs of the

most needy and vulnerable children before court proceedings. To that end, Delaware's Family Court Diversity Initiative Advertisement Campaign enables its CASA Program to provide carefully selected, thoroughly trained, and responsibly supervised Guardians *ad Litem* who represent the best interest of all abused and neglected children.

*For further information, contact [Christina.Harrison@state.de.us](mailto:Christina.Harrison@state.de.us)*



Supreme Court Justice Randy J. Holland shown with a delegation of Judges from Taiwan who were sent to Delaware by the Chief Justice of Taiwan to study Delaware's business courts to use as a model for establishing a business court system in Taiwan

## JUDICIAL BRANCH PROJECTS NAMED AS TWO OUT OF FOUR FINALISTS FOR THE GOVERNORS TEAM EXCELLENCE AWARD

A team composed of staff of the Office of State Courts Collections Enforcement, a division of the Administrative Office of the Courts, was recently named a finalist in the 2008 Governor's Team Excellence Award competition for its Supervision Fees Collection Project. The project was selected as a model of using a team approach and partnerships with other State agencies to re-engineer processes to achieve a dramatic improvement in results. Using these approaches, during FY 2008, the project increased the collection of past due supervision fees from both active and former probationers by 71%. The dollar amount collected grew from \$429,560 in FY 2007 to \$735,532 in FY 2008 and the number of offenders from whom supervision fees were collected increased from 7100 in FY 2007 to 8900 in FY 2008.

The Office of State Court Collections Enforcement, which has offices at six sites throughout the state, serves as a collection agency for criminal justice matters, handling those cases from which the courts have not been able to collect ordered fines, costs, or restitution, and from which Probation and Parole has not been able to collect statutorily mandated supervision fees.

Chief Justice Myron T. Steele presented the Governor's Team Excellence Award to team members during a special ceremony on January 23, 2009. Also in attendance was Barbara McCleary, Office of Management and Budget, who conveyed her congratulations on behalf of the 2008 Governor's Team Excellence Award Selection Committee.

Also receiving recognition as a finalist this year was the Great Expectations team, a collaborative effort of Family Court and the Division of Family Services. This team created a cultural and paradigm shift in the traditional role of judges from issuing orders in specific cases and the role of DFS caseworkers as strictly advocates to that of working collaboratively to eliminate barriers and increasing the safety, permanency, and well-being of abused and neglected children. Through the team's efforts, important changes in how business is conducted have been instituted, including increased training around best practices, and improved mental health assessment referrals.

The Great Expectations project also assists Delaware in meeting federal requirements for safety and timeliness in the placement and review of children in the foster care system by allowing the Court to participate in the creation of the program improvement plan as well as progress reports to the federal government. One important area that is improving is the time a child spends in foster care before being adopted. The federal standard for a child moving from foster care to adoption within 24 months of entering care is 36%. Through the efforts of the team, Delaware has improved from 29% of timely adoptions in federal fiscal year 2006 to 39.5% of FY 2007.

The Governor's Team Excellence Award recognizes teams of six to twenty State employees who excel in team operation and results.

Congratulations are offered to both teams for their outstanding work!



### OSCCE'S SUPERVISION FEES COLLECTION PROJECT TEAM:

Standing in back row left to right: Jason Smith, Stacy Ricks, Nina Cannata, John Foerster, Sandy Coleman, Bill Dibartola

Standing in front row left to right: Bobbie Hines, Nancy Sinex, Erica Roy-Smith, Lester Aldrich

Not pictured: Robin Jenkins, Patricia Cake, Pam List, Crystal Bennett and Suzanne Wells

## JP COURT CONSOLIDATES CIVIL COURT SITES; OFFERS PLAN FOR CONSOLIDATION OF STAFF AND SERVICES IN CRIMINAL SITES

The Justice of the Peace Court has recently completed consolidations of its civil courts in New Castle and Sussex Counties that are designed to bring new benefits to court users and greater efficiencies to the Court. In New Castle County, Courts 12 and 13 have been merged into an expanded space at the Court 13 site at 1010 Concord Avenue. In Sussex County, Courts 17 and 19 are now operating from the newly renovated Court 3/17 building in Georgetown. Court 16 in Kent County continues to be the centralized location for civil filings in that county. Each of these sites has free parking available for litigants, and the buildings and the environment immediately around these sites are well-lighted, and easily accessible.

Consolidation allows the Court to have more staff in one location, and provides the opportunity for staff to develop depth of knowledge in particular areas. Additionally, the merger will allow staff and judges to work more efficiently. Concentrating staff in one central location affords the opportunity for better

coverage of duties in event of short-term illness, annual leave, and hiring freezes, thus lessening the potential for delays in processing litigants' cases because of staffing shortages. In a court that has slightly over 50% of their 181 shifts covered with an actual security officer present at the court site, the merging of court sites with similar or the same functions, also allows the Court to focus existing security resources on fewer locations.

In addition to merging of civil courts, changes are being discussed for the consolidation of most criminal/traffic court functions/videophone functions in New Castle County. The proposed changes have the potential for enhancing round-the-clock services to the public, police agencies, attorneys, and the Department of Correction. The Court is currently in discussions with OMB and legislators to explore the benefits of proceeding with this plan which is expected to save time and money, and to provide better service.

*For further information, contact [Anna.Lewis@state.de.us](mailto:Anna.Lewis@state.de.us)*

---

We are pleased to present the Winter 2008 issue of the *Delaware Docket*, the Newsletter of the Delaware Judiciary, which is published semi-annually to provide updates on activities and events in the Judicial community. All are welcome to suggest topics, contribute articles for future editions, and provide suggestions on the newsletter. This and previous versions of the Delaware Docket are available on line at <http://courts.delaware.gov/AOC/?publications.htm>.

*Patricia Griffin, State Court Administrator and Managing Editor, [Patricia.Griffin@state.de.us](mailto:Patricia.Griffin@state.de.us)*

*Christine H. Sudell, Deputy State Court Administrator and Articles Editor, [Chris.Sudell@state.de.us](mailto:Chris.Sudell@state.de.us)*

*Connie Magee, Executive Assistant and Layout Editor, [Connie.Magee@state.de.us](mailto:Connie.Magee@state.de.us)*



**Administrative Office of the Courts**  
500 N. King Street, Suite 11600  
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

Phone: 302-255-0090

Fax: 302-255-2217

**WEBSITE:** <http://courts.delaware.gov/AOC/?publications.htm>.