



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION FOR COURT MANAGEMENT

REFLECTIONS

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September through December 2010

REFLECTIONS FROM MULTI-COUNTY COURT ADMINISTRATORS *by Vicky Carlson, Carver County Court Administrator*

Since the transition to state funding, court administrators have seen many changes within the Judicial Branch. One of the most significant changes has been the elimination and combination of court administrator positions across the state. Some of these eliminated positions were the result of budget cuts while others were an initiative to improve the way some courts do business.

There are currently 21 multi-county court administrators serving a total of 51 counties. Twelve administrators cover two counties. While nine cover three counties. It is expected that the first four-county administrator will take effect sometime in January, 2011.

Many of us across the state have been curious about how the transition to multi-county court administrator has been for those administrators who assume this role daily. All 21 multi-county

administrators were asked for feedback for the article and responded to a number of questions such as: benefits, advantages, challenges, and how the expectations have changed for themselves, judges, and staff.

There were definitely similar themes that surfaced on both the benefits and the challenges of the Multi-County Court Administrator position.

The benefits of combining court administrators positions goes beyond the obvious ability of the district to save money during these difficult times. More overwhelmingly, court administrators said the new challenges of being a multi-county court administrator was a good change.

Administrators have been able to expand their experiences and knowledge and apply their skills in managing another court. Applying consistency and uniformity of processes amongst court locations has been an added bonus for not only the administrator but, judges and court staff who may work across county lines. Several court administrators said they were able to see new and better ways to handle



Court Administrators: Connie Belgard (Martin & Jackson County); Carol Melick (Brown, Nicollet & Watonwan County); Sandra Hensley (Rock & Nobles County)

different processes and procedures and implement those in both counties. Another advantage is the ability to move people and work easier across county lines.

One of the major advantages according to Karen Messner, Sibley and McLeod County Court Administrator, "...the change has allowed me to bring the judges closer together and get some consistencies from them between counties."

The top challenges that echoed across all of the interviews were building and maintaining relationships, holding meetings, prioritizing work, and communication. These are challenges inherent in any executive or administrator position. However, they are multiplied when you are managing multiple counties

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that have different justice partners, judges, staff, public and locations. The inherent culture of each location takes some getting used to and making any changes can be difficult to implement.

The most significant challenge echoed for some administrators has been establishing long term working relationships when the administrator may only be in a location on a part time basis, sometimes only one day a week.

Most administrators previously felt they had very good working relationships with their county administrator, department heads, county board, staff, judges and other agencies. These relationships were possible to maintain and nurture as a result of being in that location daily. However, some feel that they just don't have the time to nurture these very important relationships that lead to gaining trust and problem solving. Unfortunately, most say it is impossible to get to know everyone, including their staff, like they want to because there isn't enough time in the day or work week.

As a result, administrators must rely more on others, especially their supervisors, if they are fortunate enough to have one in each county. Some staff have felt brushed to the side and feel sometimes like their administrator no longer has a commitment

to their county.

Holding meetings is another challenge for most of the administrators that responded. There are multiple sets of partners and it can be a challenge to find a day when all stakeholders are available and when the administrator will be in that particular county for a meeting to take place. The stars must align. While it can be frustrating for the administrator to hold the same staff meeting multiple times in separate locations, likewise it can be challenging just finding a day that will work.



Some find the ability to stay organized is "scattered" but have found ways to work differently as a result. Most court administrators have had to "let go" of certain things and realize that they no longer have the ability to know what is happening in each county on a daily basis. Other work must be prioritized. However, some feel pressures that they may no longer be as timely as they used to be in responding

to others or in getting work done. Some days the demands can be "overwhelming"

For staff and judges, the adjustments have been great. The court administrator is no longer available in person on a daily basis. Supervisors and lead workers with multi-county administrators find that they must take on increased responsibilities and find new ways to communicate with the court administrator. Where some staff might have gone to the court administrator in certain circumstances, they must now go to the supervisor or wait until the court administrator returns.

In effect, and not necessarily a negative thing, staff have had to adjust by becoming more self sufficient. Judges have realized that requests for action aren't acted on as quickly as in the past and have had to adjust to this change.

For some court administrators, this equates to a "juggling act." There are expectations by staff and judges that you can still address their concerns since all they have to do is email you. But a multi-county administrator must try to focus on the county they are in that day and address non-emergency matters in the other counties on the days they are there. However, there may not be

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enough time to really delve into anything since you may not be in the same county two days in a row.

Trying to juggle meetings, discipline issues, communications, and judge and staff concerns can be just that, “a juggle.”

Communication is very important to the multi-court administrator. Because the court administrator might not always be in the same county for more than a day in a row, they can sometimes feel like they are kept out of the loop. While an expectation is that the court administrator doesn't necessarily need to know about everything going on, that's not really realistic. “The big concern lies in not knowing what is going on when approached by someone.” The administrator can't successfully run each county when they are not in the loop on important issues when they arise.

Finally administrators were asked about their satisfaction level. While most administrators would agree it depends on the day, they also agree that the variety and different people they work with has helped to increase their satisfaction level. However, some say it at times becomes so overwhelming that things that should be addressed immediately are pushed aside because there aren't enough hours in the day. There are some days that some don't feel that they

are doing justice to the position, to staff, to the judges, and to the public.

Many administrators have had to adjust their management style and delegate much more work than they used to or are really feel comfortable with. Most are trying to do the best job they can. However, some days they feel like they



are falling short of the mark.

Some court administrators feel like they have lost the personal connections that were so inherent and important in being a court administrator.

Tim Roberts, Benton and Stearns County Court Administrator shared this, “I feel less connected to my staff [as a multi-county ad-

ministrator]. I always saw my role as a mentor, leader and coach for those that worked with me. The only way I know how to accomplish [the above] is with a physical presence with them every single day. Without that, I can say the words but it just isn't the same. Personnel management is still the best part of what I do but it has changed for me and is just not the same and I miss that part of my job.”

Administrators have found that email has become their number one communication tool. Gone are the days of not checking email constantly. In the life of a multi-court administrator, it is a necessity to have a blackberry or other means of communicating while at meetings and when they are in a constant travel mode going from one court to the next.

Teresa Fredrickson, Meeker, Swift & Kandiyohi Counties had this response when asked if the satisfaction level of the position has changed, “I enjoy my work no matter the assignment. I try to keep a good perspective, stay organized, and be realistic with ex-



Tis the Season

by George Locke, Becker, Mille Lacs County Court Administrator

October 2006.

Dear Santa,

My kids still insist you do not exist, but I know that can't be true – who else would my internet Santa Tracker be tracking across the globe on Christmas Eve. Wow, they can be silly at times. Anyway, this year I am going to keep my list short on account of the size of my request. It's a tall order I know, but I have made special efforts to be good this past year, (and if I am really honest in recent years I have kept my requests to small ticket items in anticipation).

Please, can I have a new courthouse preferably with four new courtrooms and judges' chambers and lots more space for court administration.

Thanks. George.

November 2006.

Dear George,

I will see what I can do, but your kids are definitely out of luck.

Santa.

Coincidence that the building committee that had met on and



off, in one guise or another, for more than ten years prior to 2006, was reinvigorated in early 2007? I think not. Work by that committee over the next few months prompted the County Board to invest in a formal space needs study that would evaluate the need for additional space and if that additional space should take the form of a remodel or new building.

The existing Courthouse had been erected in 1923 and although it had served the citizens of Mille Lacs County very well for over 80 years, it was increasingly apparent that it could no longer function as an effective courthouse. The effective administration of justice requires an appropriate physical and increasingly technical environment. The present courthouse lacked even sufficient sockets to support technology in the courtrooms.

I remember being perplexed as to why, even after several reminders, a couple computers were shut down at the end of the day and not restarted, even though staff insisted that they had selected the restart option. It turned out two computers were wired into the light switch and were being turned off at the end of the day when the cleaner went home.

The building itself was extremely inefficient with court administration in the basement and the

courts two stories above. It also lacked sufficient security with inmates, jurors, staff judges and witnesses all sharing the same elevator. On several occasions we even had to transport trials to a neighboring county because the facilities could not accommodate two jury trials.

Offices designed for six accommodated twelve staff. The vast majority of our files could not be stored in the office and were housed outside our office creating inefficiencies for staff and the public. The acoustics in the courtrooms were hampered by the plywood doors providing no sound barrier to hallway conversations that were picked up on the sound system. In short it was time for a change and after representations to that effect from the Building Committee the County Board in May 2008 voted to construct a new 40,000 square foot building facility with a budget of \$10 million dollars.

In the next few months, financing was secured and despite the ominous coincidence that we broke ground just as the financial system broke in October of 2008, the County pushed forward undeterred. After eighteen months of what felt like living on the set of Home Makeover (the Extreme



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Tis the Season - Continued from page 4

edition), the Mille Lacs County Justice Center opened for business. It was April 12th 2010.

The project was on time, and under budget, no doubt in part due to low bids and available labor in a rapidly slowing economy. Even if the economy had not been tanking quicker than the Viking's 2011 Super bowl aspirations, no one was anticipating an extravagant facility. The Commissioners made it clear with their directive to avoid top-shelf products that function needs to outweigh style. A perfectly appropriate view, provided it recognizes the business of the courts needs to be conducted in a dignified environment and not a glorified romper room. That said it is a wonderful facility that the residents of Mille Lacs can feel proud of.

The county struck the right balance by providing a courthouse that was functional but also complimented and reflected the import of the judicial business conducted here on a daily basis.

At the open house in June 2010 which formally recognized the opening of the facility, there were over three hundred people in attendance (although that was based on the pieces of cake they distributed and so they probably counted me three times). Public reception for the building was positive and affirmed the stewardship of public funds in the hands of the Mille Lacs County board. I did not hear any grumbling that the facility was a waste of money or unnecessary, instead I heard positive remarks that the commissioners had got their "bang for their buck".

The new facility houses court services (probation), the county attorney's office, court administration, four courtrooms, four judges chambers, three jury deliberation/conference rooms and a purpose built law library. It is a two story building with a secure tunnel link to the Mille Lacs County jail.

Three courtrooms are large enough to accommodate felony jury trials and the fourth courtroom is designed as a hearing room for traffic court, child support matters and ITV hearings. There are secure corridors for judicial and court staff and separate elevator entrances to ensure in-custody defendants are transported from the jail to the holding cells sandwiched between the courtrooms without fear of the public, staff or judges entering the elevator at the same time.

In terms of square footage the courts and court administration have seen their space almost quadrupled. The courtrooms are wired to accommodate all available technologies currently anticipated (and some that are not anticipated). And to cap it all off there is not a hint of an institutional grey and white color scheme.

Of course there are still gremlins lurking around. I sat in Court One flicking the light switch on and

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Tis the Season - Continued from page 5

by George Locke, Becker, Mille Lacs County Court Administrator



off, and on and off and on and off, to confirm it was not working.

Later that day, a judge appeared in my office to inform me that there is something wrong with the lights in Court 2 as they keep switching themselves on and off. Notwithstanding some of the teething problems, the service that we are now able to provide is much improved. No longer do we have to herd people into a little room in the basement as they wait for their files to be processed, no longer do we lose people as they travel between the floors and just walk out of the building without completing their paperwork and no longer do we have to rely on other courts to provide court space for jury trials and have jurors report to a different county seat.

Last month the Judicial Council came to Mille Lacs County Jus-

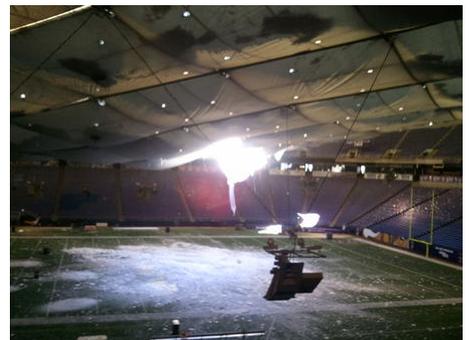
tice Center to present a plaque to the County Board "in recognition of their dedicated service to the construction of the Mille Lacs County Justice Center".

At a luncheon hosted by Chief Justice Gildea, the Chief Justice remarked that the completion of this "magnificent new facility is a demonstration of the American spirit". Furthermore, this new facility will stand "as a place for the basic principles of what it means to be an American and what it means to be a Minnesotan". Such Justice Centers like the one in Mille Lacs, she continued, represent both a promise and a partnership; the promise that government will keep the people secure, work for their benefit and work to protect them, and a partnership between state and local government to keep that promise.

As we approach our first Christ-

mas in the new facility, I am excited that not only can we fit a Christmas tree into our office this year, I also do not have to wire it up through the light switch.

So what's on my Christmas list this year? Let's just say that if Santa pulls this one off you will not be travelling to Los Angeles or the Mall of America Field to see the Vikings next year. Peace and goodwill to all.



September 24, 2010 Changed our lives forever

by Beverly Snow, FMJ Problem Solving Court Coordinator

With the Flood of 2010, many people in several little city's were devastated when the flood raged through on September 24, 2010. This nasty flood took so much away from so many; it ruined homes - turned our jewels to ruins. There was nothing any of us



Our front yard

could do, but wait and then wait some more. When the rains finally ended, our city, Hammond, Minnesota, had not only been basically tossed like a salad, shaken like a rattle, but we were also taken over by strangers.

We were escorted to the outskirts of the city limits, some gathered on the west end, some gathered on the east end. All of us wanted the same thing - to see our homes, to be allowed in our city, to know everyone was okay and to let everyone know we were okay.

Over the past forty-seven days, we have all attempted to salvage whatever we could from the 'Muck' that was left throughout the city. We all waited to learn, if our homes would be deemed livable, repairable or condemned. We met daily, in the beginning; the crowd was large, many people looking for answers. Day after day we were told we had to wait. Wait some more.

Many organizations and teams moved into our

city. We had emergency teams, repair teams, and volunteers. Some carried hammers, crowbars, garbage bags, brooms, masks or just a smile as they entered into our lives and were welcomed into our



The belongings in our garage - tossed like a salad

homes, to throw away our belongings, some of which seemed priceless to us on September 23, but today there was no doubt, they no longer retained the same value, be it sentimental or profitable. The value was lost in the Flood of 2010.

We are a strong community. Hammond will be back. Some may choose to move on and start over. Many will return. Several are ready to come home, but they must wait.....

As of this writing we know that our home in Hammond has been condemned and deemed uninhabitable. Waiting now for the DNR buy out! Total loss for us including house, garages, collectable cars, motorcycles, my Harley and tools etc. over \$150,000.

The other home we own and reside in, outside of Hammond, was left unharmed by the flood although the garage and yard were heavily damaged.

MACM EXECUTIVE BOARD UPDATES

by Susan Love, MACM President



Susan Love: President

With 2011 only one day away, I wanted to take this opportunity to provide MACM members with a summary of the Executive Board's

Strategic Planning Session on October 18, 2010. During the Strategic Planning Session, Board members were asked to provide the MACM Committees with initiatives to consider and adopt for the upcoming two years. Below are the top priorities the Board identified for each of the respective committees:

1) Legislative Committee: Schedule a 2011 MACM Day at the Capitol where members can learn best practices for scheduling and meeting with legislators (*this session may be recorded for viewing via WebEx*);

2) Education Committee: Focus on how to manage more with less at the 2011 MACM Summer Conference;

3) Membership Services Committee: Continue to support and develop the MACM Newsletter, Masterful Mentoring Program, Website and solicit new members.

In 2011-2012, MACM is committed to continuing to serve it's members through creating learning opportunities, celebrating each others' accomplishments, and supporting court leaders throughout Minnesota.

Have a Happy New Year.

MACM LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATES

by Wayne Minske, MACM Legislative Chair



Wayne Minske: First Vice President, and Legislative Chair

We officially have a new governor, Mark Dayton, and 60 newly elected legislators; 24 new senators and 36 new representatives.

Hopefully, all of the counties have at least sent out congratulatory letters to the new and returning senators and representatives.

Developing and maintaining these

professional relationships with legislators are very important as we get closer to the start of the legislative session. I know that some counties have already held meetings with legislators at their courthouse.

The MACM Legislative Committee has updated their brochure. You should hand it out to legislators as you meet with them. It contains our branch strategic priorities, 2011 legislative session challenges, a relevant quote from Chief Justice Gildea, and contact information. You can find it on the MACM website.

Each county should have a Legislative Outreach Plan. The plan will ensure that the Judicial Branch is building relationships with legis-

lators, providing timely and accurate information to legislators, maintaining clear and consistent messages, and increasing awareness and visibility of what the Judicial Branch does and its efforts to provide quality services to the five million citizens of the state of Minnesota. Get out there and work those plans!

A special thank you to Bob Langer for the many years he served on the Legislative Committee. Bob always did an excellent job representing the 3rd District and adding to the committee with his expansive court knowledge. You and your sharp wit will be missed greatly. Welcome Hans Holland who is taking his place on the committee.

MACM EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATES

by Peggy Gentiles, MACM Education Committee Chair



Peggy Gentiles: Second Vice President, and Education Chair

The Education Committee is hard at work planning the 2011 Annual Conference (details coming

soon!).

Taking the feedback from the survey so many of you took the time to fill out, we're beginning to develop content around the areas identified as the highest priorities:

- ◆ Leading People;
- ◆ Best Practices;
- ◆ Legislative Updates;
- ◆ Performance Management; and
- ◆ Technology Developments.

If you've come across any good presenters in those areas or have specific content suggestions, please pass them on to any of the Committee members.

We are working to provide a unique professional development opportunity without duplicating content available in other forums such as State Court's Education and Organizational Development Division's spring conference and the National Center for State Court's "Court Management Programs" (ICMs).

MACM MEMBERSHIP SERVICES UPDATE

by Vicky Carlson, Membership Services Chair



Vicky Carlson: Membership Services Chair

The Membership Services Committee recently awarded scholarships during the first half of fiscal year to the following MACM members: Lynn Wagner, Sarah Lindahl-Pfiefer and Vicky Carl-

son. Congratulations to these recipients.

There is another \$500 available for application in the second half of the year. Applications and instructions can be found online at <http://www.mnmacm.org/>

The Membership Services Committee will also be posting password protected committee minutes online for viewing by members. A password will be distributed under separate cover to all members.

A warm welcome goes out to the following individuals who became MACM members during the first half of fiscal year 2011.

Jennifer Miller, 4th District
 Nanette Escobedo, 3rd District
 Kim Carlson, 6th District
 Peggy Kuisle, SCAO
 Marieta Johnson, 6th District
 Chris Channing, 2nd District
 Phillis Lucia, 1854 Treaty Authority

Continue to check out the web site for the latest committee information and newsletters.

Have a great holiday season!

Minnesota State Court News From The Land of 10,000 Lakes

Second Judicial District

by Heidi Heinzl, Problem Solving Courts Coordinator

The Ramsey County Adult Substance Abuse Court (ASAC) Program was recently selected by the National Drug Court Institute as one of ten Adult Mentor Courts in the United States. The Court was awarded a plaque by Cynthia Herriott, Deputy Director of the National Drug Court Institute on September 23, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. in courtroom 131B of the Ramsey County Courthouse.

ASAC will serve as a model court program and play a significant role in drug court train-

ing, technical assistance and research.

What began as a pilot program on October 31, 2002, is now an institutionalized business practice within the court system. The program has had 338 participants and 111 graduates since it began. The Adult Substance Abuse Court has been able to successfully provide a highly structured environment to program participants which promotes sobriety, self-sufficiency and decreased criminal behaviors in a strength-based, supportive approach. By

providing this type of collaboration, intensive treatment and monitoring, we can effectively reduce recidivism and enhance public safety.

The ASAC program is funded by the Legislature through State Court Administration, Federal grants, Department of Human Services and also by matches with court partners, including other criminal justice agencies, which provide staff positions. Collaboration with court partners continues to be a cost-

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Bottom L-R: Pamela McGuire (Probation Case Aide-Community Corrections); Noreen Phillips (Defense Counsel-Pro Bono); Brigid Chase (psychiatric nurse); Diane Cartony (holding the plaque Chemical Health Specialist); Cynthia Herriott (Deputy Director-National Drug Court Institute); Heidi Heinzl (program coordinator); Judge Smith
Back L-R: Michael Ronayne (Case Screener); Lisa Portinga (treatment representative); Erin Chmel (Case manager: Project Remand); Shannon Fette (probation agent: Community Corrections); Keri Zehm (research analyst); and Christopher Deutsch (Director of Communications-National Drug Court Institute).

Second Judicial District - Continued from page 10

effective strategy that utilizes budgets in a more comprehensive, cohesive manner.

A successful recovery from addiction often hinges on the ability to address many aspects of an individual's life, including mental health. A unique feature to the Ramsey County court program is the Psychiatric Court Clinic, which provides in-house mental health screening, assessment, case planning, medication management and referral to community services.

The ASAC program is currently presided over by Judge Joanne Smith, who co-chaired the Minnesota Supreme Court Chemical Dependency Task Force. In its final report, the Task Force offered recommendations to the Supreme Court and Judicial Council on how to more effectively handle cases affected by

issues related to alcohol and other drug addiction through the use of problem-solving approaches, such as drug courts.



From L-R: Cynthia Herriott (Deputy Director-National Drug Court Institute; Judge Smith; and Christopher Deutsch (Director of Communications-National Drug Court Institute)

Minnesota's courts have established specialized drug courts as a key strategy to increase public

safety, improve life outcomes for defendants, and save taxpayer dollars. Using the coercive power of the courts with appropriate treatment and monitoring services, drug courts have been found to reduce recidivism and assist offenders in finding the help they need to achieve sobriety and to get their lives back on track.

The Second Judicial District encompasses all of Ramsey County.

Third Judicial District

by Sally Cumiskey, Winona County Court Administrator

Following the statutory change that allows referees in conciliation court in all counties, Winona County set up training for interested attorneys. Shawn Bartsh, a Ramsey County referee, came to Winona and provided training for five local attorneys. CLE credits were earned. Michael Upton from Ramsey County also provided support by sharing forms, manual, and experience.

Chief Judge Robert Benson issued an order appointing the attorneys to serve as referees for a term of one year. The referees do not receive any compensation.

The Winona judges approved "Referee Standards," and the first referee calendar was held June 21, 2010. The change has been successful and has opened up judge time for other matters; and

has opened up Court Administration time as well.

The courtroom clerk takes the roll call and then leaves the courtroom. Following the session, the referee sends his/her decisions to Court Administration staff who then prepare the judgment.

Fourth Judicial District - e-Filing launched with 6 pilot law firms

by Nancy Peters

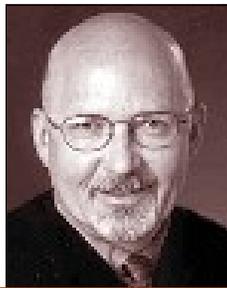
The first civil case using e-filing technology was submitted on October 25, 2010. As of November 17, 2010, a total of 27 cases from six pilot firms have been initiated and accepted by Hennepin County District Court (which included 20 default judgments, 2 Temporary Restraining Orders, personal injury, employment, receivership and contract filings).



The first phase of the pilot will last approximately 90 days and allows attorneys to e-file all of their documents and pay their e-filing fees online. Also, the Court uses e-filing to send or serve parties notices, orders and judgments. With the assistance and insightful guidance of the six pilot law firms, the pilot is leading the way for the development and implementation of processes that will be used as a model for the rest of the state. Probate, mental health, conciliation, housing, criminal, family, juvenile and existing civil cases are not included in the initial pilot. As of the date of this publication, we will have expanded the pilot to include respondent firms and new firms as part of our online registration and training outreach efforts.

A pilot check-in with the law firms on November 16, 2010 provided

valuable feedback relative to improving efficiencies for successful use of the e-filing system, known as Odyssey/MNCIS e-File and Serve. The Honorable Robert Blaeser, presiding judge over the civil court division, opened the floor for suggested enhancements, comments, and questions from the pilot firms.



Honorable Robert Blaeser

Judge Blaeser expressed the Court's strong interest to "start seeing the benefits of not filing paper soon." He explained that due to technical issues associated with the MNCIS file opening process for large electronic documents, respondent firms and new firms have not been able to participate in e-File and Serve as soon as expected. "We anticipate that MNCIS-related issues will be resolved quickly." Adding that, "It's very important to keep our momentum going."

One goal of the pilot is to figure out which technology enhancements should be added. "We want it user-friendly," explained Judge Blaeser. One suggested enhancement is to add a feature to allow

auto selection of firm addresses to reduce repetitive data entry. Several other suggestions were made to make the system easier for the firms to use.

In response to firm questions, Court staff provided a filing codes list, and do's and don'ts tips to assist with e-filing which include removing any punctuation in names; the importance of including the Certificate of Representation and Parties in the initial e-filing process; not using the e-firm's address as the plaintiff's address (leave field blank if not known); maintaining a one-inch margin at the top of each page as required by rule which will be used for the court file stamp and file number; and adding attorneys to the service list as soon as the case has been accepted.

Thirty-seven (37) non-pilot law firms and respondent firms have registered to receive e-filing training in November / December 2010. Training objectives include log in and navigating the e-filing web pages, entering credit card payment information, searching for e-filed cases and selecting a case, entering and managing contacts on the firm contact list, adapting to new court e-filing processes, and identifying the role and responsibilities of the e-filing firm administrator. Participants

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Fourth Judicial District - Continued from page 12

will experience using MNCIS/ Odyssey e-File and Serve for service and case filing (filing title, filing code, filing comments, reference number, filing attorney field, payment account courtesy copies, document types and envelope); sending documents only to the court; sending documents to parties on the case service list; fees and payment options; using the filing queue; viewing filing status; canceling a filing; and updating user settings and changing password.

Judge Blaeser and Anna Lamb, Senior Administrative Manager, Civil and Probate/Mental Health Divisions, were asked to address the Minnesota State Bar Association to announce the timetable for continuing to roll out e-filing over

the next 12-18 months.

[Online registration](#) is open to all law firms and initiates the opportunity for e-filing training.

Although civil cases were selected for the pilot because law firms were familiar with e-filing in Federal Court, the systems are as different as “apples and oranges,” explained Mark Twedt, Regional Project Manager, Tyler Technologies, Inc. PACER, the system used by Federal Court, provides file, serve and be served for cases they are representing. It also provides document access for a fee. Access to documents in District Court is not a part of Odyssey File & Serve at this time because the Minnesota Rules of Public Access to Records of the Judicial Branch do not allow it.

Pilot users commented that MNCIS/Odyssey e-File and Serve is, “extremely user friendly,” and “simple...loading documents is easy...one after another.”

Assistant Chief Judge Peter Cahill said, “A 90-day report, due around January 25, 2011, is required by the Supreme Court. We are confident that we will have a sufficient volume of filings by that time to make recommendations on how to expand the use of File and Serve and the barriers that must be overcome before launching statewide.”

The Fourth Judicial District encompasses all of Hennepin County.

Fifth Judicial District

by Sandra Hensley, Rock - Noble County Court Administrator

Veteran's Court Planning:

Currently there are about 39 Veterans Courts around the country and only one in Minnesota (Hennepin County).

A Veterans Court is a problem solving court that serves veterans struggling with addiction, mental illness or a combination of the two. Veterans Courts work closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs health care and benefits administration, and volunteer veteran mentors.

Judge Brad Walker, who is also a Retired Colonel, USMC, visited the Hennepin County Veterans Court in October. The Fifth District Problem Solving Courts Committee met with Rebecca Hass, Criminal Justice Outreach Specialist, U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs – Sioux Falls and she is willing to participate in the 5th District veterans court planning.

At this time we are in the early stages of gathering information regarding the potential number of

veterans who could be served through this type of court.

AFSCME Labor Management Committee: The AFSCME employees and managers of the Fifth Judicial District recently organized their District AFSCME Labor Management committee (LMC). The committee consists of five labor and five management members. It also includes as non voting members, the District Ad

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Fifth Judicial District - Continued from page 15

ministrator, Human Resources

manager (as staff), AFSCME business agent and local AF-SCME President. The first two meetings involved training on the purpose of an LMC and effective communication techniques by staff from the Bureau of Mediation Services (BMS).

We recently held our first “official” meeting where business was discussed! The vast majority of the members had never participated in a LMC previously, so it was a real learning experience. Even though the group had all participated in the joint trainings, they realized there were a lot of procedures and practices they needed to discuss and agree on – just to get the ball rolling. One of their first projects included a presentation by Kay Pedretti and Rebecca Becker which included information on how the CPC came into existence, the role of the CPC and the relationship with the local courts. They provided the members a chance for Q & A’s. The goal was for the LMC members to become more educated on the purpose, role and goals of the CPC so they could, in turn, pass along the information to the rest of the employees in the 5th Judicial District.

On behalf of the management, we felt we made great strides at our first official meetings and had

some great dialogue. We hoped to establish a common ground where all members felt comfortable in sharing and participating in the discussions. We think our LMC is off to a great start, and we hope to reach many successful compromises and agreements in the years to come!



Judge Norbert Smith with his beautiful wife and daughter

Judge Norbert Smith Retires:

Judge Norbert Smith, Blue Earth County District Judge, retired on Friday, September 11, 2010 and graciously returned on Monday, September 13, 2010 as Senior Judge to continue his duties without interruption until a new judge can be appointed.

Judge Smith was appointed to the bench on April 10, 1992. He remembers the date clearly as the next day was his birthday. He served the fifth district for eighteen years and served as Assistant Chief Judge of the District from July 1, 1997 through June 30, 2001 and Chief Judge of the district from July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2005.

He said the most enjoyable part of the job is, “adoptions, if the diapers aren’t leaking.” He also found it very satisfying and rewarding to work with all people and to assist them in developing positive changes in their lives. He found this to be especially true in

truancy and criminal court.

The least enjoyable part of the job in Judge Smith’s opinion is, “crunching the numbers.” However, he is proud of some of the forms and procedures he

has developed and implemented in Blue Earth County. One of these tools is the Blue Earth County Bail Guide that all of the judges in the county use on a regular basis and which has contributed to equality and fairness in assessing bail in Blue Earth County.

He states there isn’t too much he’ll miss (probably because we plan to keep him plenty busy as a Senior Judge) and he is looking forward to expanded weekends and enjoying the extra time with family, friends and hobbies.

The Fifth Judicial District encompasses Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Fairbault, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, and Watonwan counties

Sixth Judicial District

Retirements/New Appointments:

After 30 years with the court system, Cindy Stratioti retired as the St. Louis (Duluth) County Court Administrator on September 30, 2010. Cindy was quoted as saying, "I've held nearly every job in court administration in my 30 years."



Cindy Stratioti and Marieta Johnson

Marieta Johnson, who served as the Range Court Administrator, was appointed as the St. Louis County Court Administrator for Duluth, Hibbing, and Virginia on October 1, 2010.

Changes have also occurred in supervision in court administration. Kathy McFarlane, who has been serving as a Court Operations Supervisor in Duluth since September of 2009, was transferred to Carlton County court administration.

Kim Carlson was hired as a Court

Operations Supervisor in Duluth. She previously served as the Sixth District's Court Business Systems Coordinator. EOD has hired Stacy Andrews, a senior court clerk from Virginia, in that role.

Court Innovations Tour:

In cooperation with the Court Information Office of the State Court Administrator's Office, the Sixth District hosted the Courts Innovations Tour media event. Speakers at this event were: Chief Judge James Florey, Assistant Chief Judge Shaun Floerke, Judge Sally Tarnowski, Marieta Johnson, Judy Isaacson, Leanne Ventrella, and MSP Captain Steve Strombeck.

Information was shared with the media on changes and innovations the Branch has undertaken to assist us in completing our work with diminished numbers of staff.

Topics included: ENE, CAMPER, CPC, In-court updating and Versa Keyboards, and the Minnesota State Patrol e-citation pilot project in the Sixth District. This event was well attended by the local news media and resulted in positive newspaper articles, television, and radio segments for the courts.

Training Event:

There is an exciting training event coming to the Sixth District in December which is being offered to all Sixth District staff. Ted Schick will be presenting "Implementing Successful Change." Ted is an

energetic, dynamic and entertaining presenter. He is a retired naval officer who rose up from the enlisted ranks. He has over 25 years experience leading people. He is active in his community with Mentor Duluth, Spirit Mountain Ski Patrol and Animal Allies as well as being an amateur stand-up comedian, fitness instructor and triathlete. Ted's presentation will address:

- ◆ Why we inherently resist change;
- ◆ Rational versus emotional change;
- ◆ Change is inevitable—growth is optional;
- ◆ Change in a challenging economy;
- ◆ Learning from past as we prepare for the future.

Technology Implementation:

The Sixth District continues to implement new technologies related to the Centralized Processing of Citations (CPC). St. Louis County is already implemented in all phases of the CPC and in October, Lake, Cook, and Carlton Counties implemented Auto Assess and Citation Entry along with e-Charging being implemented in Carlton County. These counties are anxiously awaiting the implementation of Auto Referral.

Seventh Judicial District

by George Locke, Becker, Mille Lacs County Court Administrator

Becker County Updates: In addition to criminal and traffic case types, in-court updating was implemented on most case types. Since our facility is new and courtroom benches are big enough to accommodate a three judge panel, the Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in Becker County on April 22, July 22 and November 3, 2010.

Clay County Updates: Clay County went live on e-charging on 11-17-10. Clay is in the infant stages of implementing a Domestic Violence Court – a court docket coordinator will be hired

soon. Clay has also implemented Early Neutral Evaluation process on all dissolution cases. In addition to criminal and traffic case types, In-court updating was implemented on all case types – including printing juvenile traffic and petty offender orders in the courtroom.

Mille Lacs County Updates: Mille Lacs County hosted the November Judicial Council meeting at which the Chief Justice made a presentation to the County Board for the Mille Lacs County Justice Center which was completed earlier this year. Mille

Lacs is in the early stages of developing an Early Neutral Evaluation process.

Otter Tail County Updates: Ottertail County went live on e-charging, April 29, 2010 . In-court updating has been implemented for criminal and traffic case types. DWI Court and Family Dependency Treatment Courts are fully implemented.

The Seventh Judicial District encompasses Becker, Benton, Clay, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena counties.

MACM's MISSION:

MACM is an organization committed to the enrichment of its members through professional growth and development, opportunities, promoting advancements and innovations in court administration, and partnering with other professionals working to improve the justice system in Minnesota.



Ninth Judicial District

by Kathy Narlock, Polk County Court Administrator

As I compile the news for the Ninth Judicial District, my thoughts keep drifting back to the study conducted by NCSC entitled “Reengineering Rural Justice in Minnesota’s Eighth Judicial District, A Case Study: Improving Efficiencies, Reducing Costs, and Enhancing Operations in Rural Courts,” Final Report October 2010, and how the Ninth District has already changed the structure of court administration to almost mirror some of the recommendations in the study.

In 2003 there were 17 court administrators in the Ninth Judicial District, and when February of 2011 arrives, we will have achieved our current strategic plan wherein six court administrators in the Ninth Judicial District will be assigned to manage two, three, or four counties. Except for the four court administrator positions that were initially either terminated or demoted due to the 2003 budget constraints, we have been fortunate that we can accomplish the remainder of our goal through attrition.

The Counties of Itasca, Koochiching and Lake of the Woods have a new court administrator. James Vilt was appointed as court administrator in October 2010. Mr. Vilt is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and obtained his undergraduate degree in Finance from NYU, and his *juris doctorate* from California Western



James Vilt, Court Administrator

School of Law in San Diego. Shortly thereafter, James accepted a position as in-house counsel with a small casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. After roughly one year, he joined the Peace Corp where he served as an economic development advisor in Bulgaria. He returned to Las Vegas where he spent several years as the managing attorney of the legal aid’s Las Vegas office and adjunct professor at Nevada State College.

In 2008, James became the manager of the Las Vegas Justice Court’s civil division. James currently lives in Grand Rapids with his wife and three children. Mr. Vilt’s predecessors are Diane Gross, who retired as the Itasca County court administrator in October 2008, and Carol Clausen, who retired as the court administrator for the Counties of Koochiching and Lake of the Woods in May 2010.

In December 2010 Darrell Paske

will retire as the Crow Wing County court administrator. Mr. Paske began his career with the courts at the age of 20 as a court reporter for the probate and juvenile courts in Dakota County in December of 1968. His career in court administration began as a court manager for Dakota County District Court in 1986. And in 1989 Darrell was appointed the court administrator of Crow Wing County and has held that position for 21 years.



Darrell Paske, Court Administrator

Mr. Paske has been employed with the courts for a period of 42 years, and during that time has seen the many transformations of the judiciary, including the elimination of the probate and juvenile courts and most municipal courts due to the County Court Act, the creation of the court of appeals, and the consolidation of the county courts and district courts. Darrell shared that, “It has

- Continued to page 16

Ninth Judicial District - Continued from page 17

been a long and rewarding career, but it is time to move on.” After Mr. Paske’s retirement, Bonnie LeCocq will be appointed as the court administrator for the Counties of Aitkin and Crow Wing.

Darlene Gerbracht will retire as court administrator for the Counties of Clearwater and Hubbard in February 2011. Ms. Gerbracht began public employment as a secretary for the Minnesota Extension Service in Clearwater County in September of 1978. In November of 1987 Darlene joined the judicial branch as senior court clerk in Clearwater County, and in 1994 she was promoted to chief deputy and subsequently appointed as the court administrator during the same year.

In 2003 Ms. Gerbracht was one



Darlene Gerbracht, Court Administrator

of the unfortunate court administrators whose positions were terminated due to the budget deficit, however, she continued her employment with the judiciary as a senior court clerk in Beltrami County, and again was appointed as the court administrator for the Counties of Clearwater and Hubbard in 2005.

After Ms. Gerbracht’s retire-

ment in February 2011, Lori Wiebolt will be appointed as the court administrator for the Counties of Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahnomen and Norman.

Please join me in welcoming James Vilt to the Minnesota Judicial Branch, saying good-bye to our dear friends and colleagues Darrell Paske and Darlene Gerbracht, and offering our assistance and support to Bonnie LeCocq and Lori Wiebolt as their work areas expand from one to two counties and three to four counties, respectfully.

The Ninth Judicial District encompasses Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Kittson, Koochiching, Lake-Woods, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties.

MACM Welcomes New Member Kim Carlson

MACM would like to welcome Kim Carlson as a new member. Kim began her career in the court as a Senior Court Clerk in St. Louis-Virginia in January 1996.

Since April 2009, Kim has been the Court Business Systems Coordinator for the 6th District, which was a temporary mobility assignment. On Monday, No-

vember 8th, Kim began a new challenge as a Court Operations Supervisor in St. Louis-Duluth. Kim stated: “I’m very excited, but nervous!”

Kim graduated from the very first Management EDGE Program in May 2010, and she plans to keep learning and growing throughout her career in the Judicial Branch.

Kim reported: “I am also working towards a bachelor’s degree in Management through Southwest Minnesota State University.”

Kim has one son in college at Winona State, and two at home ages 12 and 17.

Please join MACM in welcoming Kim to our Association.

MACM *Reflections* Quarterly Newsletter Needs You

by Vicky Carlson

Do you like reading the interesting articles about your peers published in this newsletter?

Would you like to see the MACM Membership Services Committee continue to publish this newsletter? If so, **WE NEED YOU.**

Please send your MACM articles and pictures to Vicky Carlson, Janice Cossette or Susan Love for inclusion in the next

edition of *Reflections*. You do not have to be a member of a MACM committee to send in an article about your court or your colleagues.

We are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Warmest Regards:

Vicky Carlson, Janice Cossette
Co-Editors

Susan Love, **Publisher**

