

Friends OF THE COURT

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Supreme Court Justice Appointed



Justice Ron Sheffield was sworn in by Chief Justice Jim Hannah upon his appointment to the Arkansas Supreme Court by Gov. Beebe, with a formal swearing in ceremony being held February 11, 2010.

In December, William H. Bowen was appointed by Governor Mike Beebe to fill the position left vacant by Justice Annabelle Imber's early retirement. At the first of the year, it was necessary for Justice Bowen to resign due to health reasons. Ron Sheffield, was thereafter appointed by the Governor to replace Justice Bowen. Justice Sheffield worked for the Arkansas Insurance Department for 27 years and in 1999 became redistricting director of the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office. In recent years, he had been in private practice.

Justice Sheffield will serve one year of the unexpired term of Justice Imber. A special election in May will determine who serves the remainder of Justice Imber's term, which ends in 2014.

All Hot Spring County Cases Now Managed Electronically

On January 4, 2010, Hot Spring County became the first county in the State of Arkansas with both circuit and district courts using the ACS Contexte Case Management System to manage all of their cases. The circuit court went live a year ago with civil, domestic relations, and probate cases. Over the January 1st weekend, the criminal and juvenile cases were loaded into Contexte from the AOC's legacy CMS program. The criminal and juvenile cases took longer to convert because the permissible margin of error in the conversion is so small.

In the next few months, two large circuit courts will be joining the system. Pulaski County Circuit Court is the last court in the nation using the Maximus CourtView system. The system is no longer supported, and it is imperative that the court move to a new system. Just over a year ago the court contracted with ACS to convert its data to the Contexte system. The AOC has been working closely with the court and ACS to convert the data. The court is scheduled to migrate to Contexte on February 16. It has taken a full year to extract and analyze the Maximus data and to write and

test the programs to load the data. The court has also contracted with D.I.S.C. imaging to convert and link the court's images in Contexte.

The Garland County Circuit Court contracted directly with ACS for training and implementation services and will be going online in March. The AOC is monitoring the project closely to see if contracting directly with ACS is a viable method of increasing the rollout of Contexte to the courts. The AOC will be providing the legacy CMS data to the court, but ACS is doing all of the training and consultation with the court.

In the spring, the AOC is expected to begin a project with the Faulkner County Circuit Court. The AOC is also in discussion with several other circuit and district courts to plan 2011 activities. Projects that require data conversion will take much longer, more effort, and are more costly than projects without conversion. The AOC does not have the resources to meet all the demand, but additional hires in the spring should help address this.

Work is also underway on several integration projects. In 2009, a

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COURT SECURITY UPDATE



Pete Hollingsworth, Director of Court Security, taught the first class in White County, along with Lt. Norman Hale from the White County Sheriff's Office.

During 2007- 2009, \$500,000 in grant money was distributed amongst the seventy- five counties in the state for court security purposes. Last October, the counties that had submitted all of the required documents for a Court Security and Emergency Preparedness Plan (67) were notified they could apply for an additional \$15,000 to assist them in carrying out their individual plan. A total of \$250,000 in grant money was available to disburse to any of the sixty-seven counties that submitted a timely application. Forty-eight counties applied by the January 15 deadline to receive the additional funds. The awarding of funds to the applicants will be determined by the Supreme Court Committee on Court Security and Emergency Preparedness.

In late 2008, the Court Security Officer Training was developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in partnership with the National Center for

State Courts and certified by the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training. The training classes were taught state-wide by law enforcement agencies. The first class was hosted by the White County Sheriff's Office and taught by Pete Hollingsworth from the AOC, Director of Court Security and Emergency Preparedness and Lt. Norman Hale/Judicial Process Division in the White County Sheriff's Office. Fifteen officers representing four agencies attended the first session. The number attending in subsequent classes varied from 15 attendees up to 50 during the May - December time frame. 62 classes were held during the eight-month period with 1062 officers, deputies and court personnel attending.

A Law Enforcement Certification is required to perform the duties of a Court Security Officer as defined by Act 576. In December, the Arkansas Law Enforcement

Training Academy decided to offer the Court Security Officer Training as an elective course for officers while they are working toward their basic Law Enforcement Certification.

In discussing the training, Pete Hollingsworth stated, "In order to be prepared for the daily activities of the courtroom environment, the security officers need quality training that is both practical and relevant. It cannot be stressed strongly enough how critical it is for Court Security Officers to be properly trained so that court personnel and participants in the courtroom will be safe from any possible harm."

Case Management

(continued from page 1)

project to transmit driver license suspensions to DFA was completed. An online payment program is currently undergoing testing. The public access module is nearly complete, and work is ongoing to transmit convictions and domestic orders of protection to ACIC. DOC and DCC have expressed interest in starting an exchange project, and the Arkansas State Police is beginning an electronic-citation project, which they hope to interface with Contexte.

The AOC, with guidance of the Supreme Court, began the court automation project to increase uniformity in the administration of justice, to improve public access to and confidence in the judiciary, and to increase public safety by sharing timely, complete, and accurate information with justice agencies.



Current Trends in State Courts

With state budget cuts occurring or future cuts predicted, the Third Branch of government is being required to deal with many new issues. The National Center for State Courts' annual "Future Trends In State Courts- 2009" focuses on the state of the economy's effect on state courts across the country and other current demands the courts are now facing.

Many court personnel have lost their jobs, had their salaries reduced or frozen, or have been required to go on furlough at various times. Unfortunately, when this occurs, good employees and important institutional knowledge are lost. With jobs being lost by the general population in the United States, the number of pro se litigants in the court system has increased because of their inability to hire legal representation. A redesigning of self service resources on state judicial web sites will assist those not able to afford representation.

New and advanced technology is vital to a court system. Electronically filed documents and "paperless courts" are saving the courts time and costs for supplies (paper, postage, envelopes and storage). An E-Filing Task Force was established in Arkansas to address various issues in relation to an E-Filing system and a report and recommendations were sent by the Task Force to the Supreme Court for review. In the survey conducted by NCSC, an overwhelming 90.3 percent of state court administrators indicated that they expected new or enhanced technology that would increase efficiency.

Courts are having to develop strategies to manage the increasing number of immigrants coming into the United States. Thus, the total cost of qualified, proficient inter-

preters is ever increasing. States are beginning to turn to remote interpretation by telephone or video to give non-English speaking citizens equal access to justice. Mara Simmons, Coordinator of Court Interpreting Services for the AOC, indicated that remote interpreting is occurring 2-4 times a week in Arkansas.

The need for court security for judges, court personnel and the public, and the cost of providing a safe and secure courthouse is being addressed by earmarking funds for salaries and benefits for security personnel and designating funds for improving security measures for court facilities. In 2007, the Arkansas General Assembly allocated funds to the AOC for the purpose of assisting district and circuit courts in improving security.

In addition to dealing with difficult fiscal issues, courts are taking into consideration current environmental trends. These trends have made an impact on courthouse construction. In order to conserve water, energy and other resources, courthouse designs and buildings are going "green" to help reduce negative impact to the environment and to save energy costs.

Courts are beginning to use outside assistance to facilitate court proceedings. CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), youth or teen courts, and nonprofit organizations are proving to be successful partners in conducting efficient proceedings. Problem-solving courts dealing with drugs, mental health, domestic violence, homelessness and truancy are lowering the rate of recidivism and reducing costs by bringing together the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, and treatment providers to form an interdisciplinary team that better facilitates individual treatment plans.



New Facility in Pike County

Pike County officials are celebrating the opening of a new jail and courtroom building. The new structure has officially been named The Pike County Detention Facility and Court System. Along with the new jail that can accommodate 64 prisoners, the new complex also includes a large courtroom. All District Court and Circuit Court proceedings in Murfreesboro are now being held in the new facility as opposed to the old courtroom in the Pike County Courthouse.

The spectator benches in the courtroom are refinished oak church pews and the judge's bench has been reinforced with bullet proof steel. Additional security is provided by a control room in the building that can monitor the entire facility at all times.



Judge Charles Yeargan – 9th Circuit West – inside the new courtroom.



New faces in the Judiciary

District Judges

Yell County District
Court/Northern District —
Kristin Clark replaces David
Rush.

District Court Clerks

Benton County District
Court/Bethel Heights — **Jordan
Wagner** replaces Amanda Fenton.

Yell County District
Court/Northern District — **Vicki
George** replaces Linda Goocher.

City Court Clerks

Cammack Village — **Alex
McAllister** replaces Leah White.

Greenland — **Tammy Shaffer**
replaces Janice Wagon.

Marvell — **Rabian Briggs** replaces
Mary Frans.

Official Court Reporter

12th Circuit (Cox) — **Paula
Sparrow** replaces Mavis McElroy.

CALENDAR

February

District & City Court **12**
Clerks Certification- 2nd & 4th
Districts (Little Rock)

District Court Officers **18-19**
(Eureka Springs)

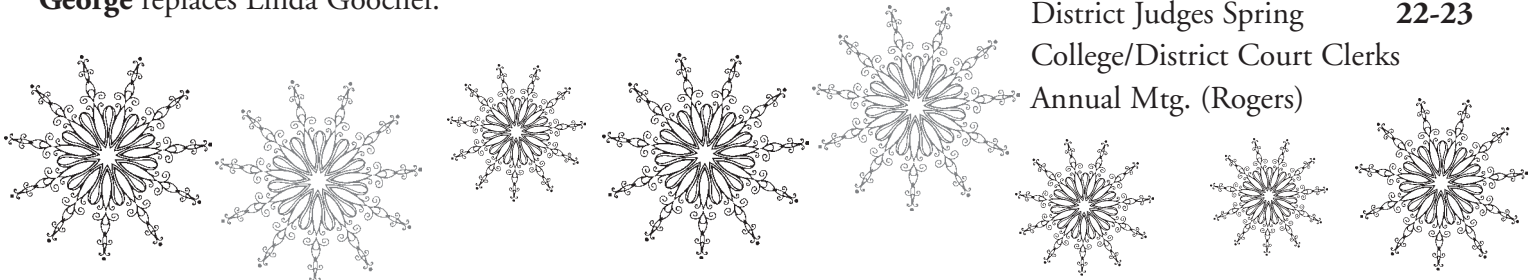
March

Trial Court Assistants Conf. **4-5**
(North Little Rock)

April

Drug Court Conference **8-9**
(Little Rock)

District Judges Spring **22-23**
College/District Court Clerks
Annual Mtg. (Rogers)



Deer in snow at Mount Nebo



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Address Correction Requested

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are welcome.

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