



Friends OF THE COURT

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Dealing with High-Profile Cases

Every now and then, a case comes along that attracts intense media and public attention. It could be the trial of a public figure, a horrific and notorious crime, or a constitutional issue that has political ramifications.

No matter the subject, the extra work these high-profile cases generate can be overwhelming for already-busy court staff juggling full dockets and responsibilities. What is often misunderstood or ignored is that the courts must balance providing access to the public and the press while preserving due process and equal protection to the parties. Here are a few things that can help ensure a smoother courtroom experience for everyone.

1. Choose a media liaison who can respond to requests for information. Reporters need to know court procedures, what is happening and when, and they need access to public filings. The liaison should be prepared to field phone calls and requests as part of his or her responsibility to the public. Keep an email file of the documents so that they can easily be sent to requestors. Remember that the public usually does not know nearly as much as you do about what is happening in the courthouse. Be patient.

2. Admin. Order No. 6 addresses photos and broadcasting in the courtroom. It is up to the judge whether cameras will be allowed. If anyone objects, they *shall not* be allowed. Will the judge allow recording devices? Laptops? Phones? Learn this rule and determine access in advance.



Outside the Craighead County Courthouse, August 2011.

3. Are you expecting a large crowd at the trial? You should plan to reserve seating for the press and perhaps for family members of the parties. If the trial is expected to be contentious, consider reserving seats for families on different sides of the courtroom.

4. Jurors. Admonish them repeatedly about not using social media! We do not even think anymore about what is "communication." Jurors are talking about the cases on Facebook and Twitter. Remind them of their duties.

Contact Stephanie Harris, Supreme Court's Communications Counsel, at Stephanie.M.Harris@Arkansas.gov for the full Guide for Arkansas Courts with High-Profile Cases.

Supreme Court Staff Honor Law Clerk in ALS Walk

Arkansas Supreme Court employees participated in the Arkansas Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Association's Walk to Defeat ALS in Little Rock on April 5, 2014. Employees walked in honor of Richard Thomas, law clerk to Chief Justice Jim Hannah.

Richard Thomas, who clerked for Justice Lavenski Smith prior to becoming clerk for Justice Hannah in 1991, was first diagnosed with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) in 2012. ALS is a "neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord" and causes patients' brains to progressively lose the ability to initiate and control muscle movement. Currently, there is no cure for ALS.

The Arkansas ALS Association works to raise awareness for the disease as well as funds for research, while helping local patients and families. Proceeds from their annual walk go to help provide patients with wheelchairs and other medical care. This is the second year that Arkansas Supreme Court staff have walked in honor of Thomas.

For more information on ALS, to make a donation, and for volunteer opportunities, please visit www.alsa.org.



Family, friends, and coworkers of Richard Thomas, law clerk to Chief Justice Jim Hannah, participate in the Arkansas ALS Association's Walk to Defeat ALS.

Trial Court Assistants Association Announces 2014-2016 Board



The Trial Court Assistants' Association elected the new officers at their annual conference in Eureka Springs. Front row (left to right): Sherri Daniels, President; LaShannon Robinson, President-Elect; Dawn Thompson, Secretary; Bonnie Ridley, Treasurer. Back row (left to right): Betty Schrader, Financial Review/Audit Chair; Vicki Evans, Education Chair; Bridgette Howard, Nominations/Elections Chair; Alice Schultz, Judicial/Legislative Liaison; Janette Pedigo, Parliamentarian & Bylaws Chair; Joyce Morgan, Past President.

Going Digital

The Administrative Office of the Courts will eliminate the paper version of *Friends of the Court* and go to an online-only format this summer. This will allow room for regular content, more diverse court-related news, and more features on *you*, the people who do the work of the Judicial Branch.

An electronic version of the newsletter is also published on the Judiciary website:

www.courts.arkansas.gov/forms-and-publications/newsletters/friends-court

The AOC has created a survey to measure the attitudes of our readers regarding the change to a digital format. If you haven't taken the survey, we strongly encourage you to do so. It can be found at:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/FriendsoftheCourt

Meet Judge David McCormick



Judge David McCormick runs the Great Wall of China Marathon.

As the son of the Yell County Sheriff, Judge David McCormick grew up in the courthouse. So it was only natural that after graduating from the University of Central Arkansas, he went to law school and started his legal career. He didn't necessarily want to be a judge; it just "seemed like a natural progression during the course of my legal career," said McCormick. He went on to serve as a district court judge, juvenile judge, and circuit court judge. Being a part of the court system for so long, McCormick has witnessed many significant changes over the course of his career, including the unification of the Arkansas court system (brought on by the passage of Amendment 80) and the rise of

technology, such as Contexte and e-Filing, and their effects on the Judicial Branch.

McCormick stays busy serving six courthouses and four counties, but is just as busy off the bench. He enjoys hunting, especially bow hunting, and maintains several bee hives, from which he harvests honey. Since 2003, much of his free time has been spent actively involved in Arkansas's running community. To date, McCormick has run 33 marathons in 18 states. He is one of few to have run all 12 Little Rock Marathons. He has run marathons at the Great Wall of China, Pike's Peak in Colorado, the ET Extraterrestrial Full Moon Marathon near Area 51, and in 2010, participated in the 2500th anniversary of the first marathon in Greece from Marathon to Athens. Most recently, McCormick ran the 2014 Boston Marathon.

Having run the Boston Marathon twice already, McCormick had not planned on running it again but the events of last year changed his mind. "Last year, after the bombings took place at the Boston Marathon, the attitude within what I would call the running community was that a statement needed to be made that such an act of terrorism would not deter runners and that we would be 'Boston Strong,'" says McCormick. This year's race was indeed very special. Many Americans shared McCormick's sentiment and turned out to witness the event in record numbers. The number of runners increased by more than 9,000 and the population of spectators was anticipated to be one million – almost twice the normal number. While there was increased security, McCormick considered it a minor inconvenience and felt "grateful that God has given me the ability to qualify for and run this event."

2014 District Court Clerk of the Year



Melba Russell, 2014 District Court Clerk of the Year. Photo by Veronica Henry

Melba Russell, Chief Court Clerk in Malvern, was named the 2014 District Court Clerk of the Year at the District Judges Spring College/District Court Clerks Annual Meeting in Rogers.

The Clerk of the Year award is given by the Arkansas District Court Clerks Association to an individual who has made significant contributions to the profession of court clerk. To be nominated for this achievement, a clerk must be an active member of the association for at least five years, exhibit leadership, and provide service to other clerks. Russell has worked in the court system for 22 years, served the association as a representative at-large, and as the first clerk to be on Contexte, spent countless hours training other clerks to use the system.

Russell was recognized for her achievement at the association's award luncheon, held during the conference on April 25.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June

- CMP Class '16 "CourTools" (Little Rock) 4-6
- Spring Judicial College/ Judicial Council Meeting (Hot Springs) 11-13
- Candidate Assessment Exam (Springdale) 21
- CMP Class '15 "Managing Technology Projects" (Little Rock) 18-20
- CMP Class '14 "Managing Human Resources" (Little Rock) 25-27

July

- 40 Hr. Basic Mediation Training (Little Rock) 14-18
- ADR Central AR CME/CLE Program (Little Rock) 25
- ADR Commission Meeting 31

- Legal Interpreting Seminar for Interpreters in the Judiciary (Little Rock) 31

August

- Legal Interpreting Seminar for Court Interpreters (Little Rock) 1-2
- CMP Class '16: Caseflow (Little Rock) 6-8
- 20-Hour Family Mediation Training (Little Rock) 13-14
- District Court Clerk Certification Chief Clerks (Little Rock) 15
- ADR Southeast Regional CME/CLE Program (Pine Bluff) 15
- CMP Class '15: Purposes & Responsibilities of Courts (Little Rock) 20-22
- CMP Class '14: Managing Financial Resources (Little Rock) 27-29
- ADR Last Chance CME Program (Little Rock) 29
- ADR Recertification Deadline 31

New Faces in the Judiciary

AOC

Kim Smith - ADR Training & Program Coordinator
Rick Coppola - Project Manager
Bryan Harp - Project Manager

District Court Clerks

White County/Kensett Dept. - Jody Hodgson

Circuit Court Judges

6th Circuit, Div. 3 - Judge Chris Palmer

County Clerks

Stone County - Darlene Avery

Does your courthouse have a ghostly history? Ever hear strange noises or witness unexplainable events? If your courthouse is haunted, we want to hear from you!

We want your strange and interesting stories, experiences, and photos for the October issue. Please send your submissions to meghan.sever@arkansas.gov.



Fayetteville, Arkansas

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Friends of the Court
625 Marshall
Little Rock, AR 72201

Friends of the Court is a bi-monthly publication by the Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts. Contributions, comments, and inquiries are welcome. Please submit to Friends of the Court, A.O.C., Justice Building, 625 Marshall, Little Rock, AR 72201. Tel. (501) 682-9400. Meghan Sever, Editor. meghan.sever@arkansas.gov