



NEW CHIEF JUSTICE SWORN IN



Friend
Court

Chief Justice Betty C. Dickey

Betty C. Dickey was appointed Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court by Governor Huckabee on December 4th. She replaces W. H. "Dub" Arnold who retired January 1, 2004. Chief Justice Dickey's appointment marks the first time in the history of the State to have a woman serving in that capacity.

Chief Justice Dickey grew up in Lawrence County. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and her law degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

She has served as an assistant city attorney for Pine Bluff, a city attorney for Redfield, and as staff

attorney for the state Soil and Water Conservation Commission. She also served as Prosecuting Attorney for the 11th Judicial District and on the Public Service Commission. Prior to being appointed, Chief Justice Dickey was chief legal counsel for Governor Huckabee.

The Chief Justice was sworn in before a packed audience on January 5, 2004 in the Supreme Court Courtroom in the Justice Building. She will hold this position until January 1, 2005, when a newly elected Chief Justice will take office.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION FORMED

In a December 8, 2003 per curiam, the Arkansas Supreme Court established an Access To Justice Commission. The Arkansas Bar Association, through the work of its House of Delegates and Access to Justice Working Group, had petitioned the Court to create a commission to improve access to the civil justice system for those who cannot afford an attorney to represent them in civil matters.

The demand for civil legal services for the poor is increasing in Arkansas. Service providers completed seven percent more cases in 2002 than 2001, and requests for assistance are expected to increase due to the declining economy. According to statistics gathered, just 21% of the 12,558 cases Arkansas' two legal services providers completed in 2002 received full representation, while 71% were given advice and counsel. A significant number would have benefitted from full representation.

The per curiam listed the following goals of the Access to Justice Commission:

- A. Develop an objective and accurate understanding of the problems Arkansans face in using our legal
(See **Commission** next page.)

(Commission continued.)

system to obtain justice in civil cases.

B. Devise a strategic plan for statewide delivery of civil legal services to all Arkansans.

C. Review and report on the efficient allocation and application of the available resources.

D. Educate the people of Arkansas about the importance of equal access to justice and of the problems many Arkansans face in gaining effective access to our civil justice system.

E. Encourage a strong and consistent commitment to providing equal access to justice among the leaders of our state.

F. Suggest innovations that will increase effective access to the civil justice system for all Arkansans.

G. Provide technical and other support to the efforts of the legislature, courts, and other government agencies to improve access to justice for the people of Arkansas.

H. Develop stable, long-term funding and other resources to support access to civil justice.

The Commission will consist of fifteen members, with five appointed by the Arkansas Supreme Court, five appointed by the Arkansas Bar Association, three by the Governor and one each by the Speaker of the Arkansas House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Arkansas Senate.

In addition to the voting members, the Director of the Center for Arkansas Legal Services, the Director of Legal Aid of Arkansas, the Director of the Arkansas IOLTA Foundation and representatives of legal clinics at the state's two law schools will serve as ex-officio members of the Commission.



Court Automation Project Recognizes Participants

The Arkansas Court Automation Project is a statewide project to provide a case management system to all of the courts in the State of Arkansas. In June of 2002, the Administrative Office of the Courts purchased a statewide software license from ACS Government Services for its Justice Information System, including a stand alone jury management system, an in-court processing module, an online traffic ticket payment and information module, and a public access component.

A ceremony, recognizing the efforts of participants in the project, was held in the Supreme Court Courtroom on Thursday, December 11th. The Core Team for the project includes Stephen Sipes/Pulaski County Circuit Court Administrator and Chair of the Arkansas Supreme

Court Committee on Automation, Sharon Rimmer/Faulkner County Circuit Clerk, Sue Jones/Hot Spring County Circuit Clerk, Nancy Brewer/Sebastian County Circuit Clerk, and two of her deputy clerks, Cindy Gilmer/Chief Deputy Clerk and Terry Claussen/Domestic Relations Clerk, Donna Clifton/Faulkner County District Court Clerk and her deputy clerk, Donna Rappold, Melba Russell/Hot Spring County District Court Clerk and Theresa Wilson/Montgomery County District Court Clerk.

The clerks have gone through rigorous periods of evaluation and testing of the new system and have compiled a set of software enhancements that will create a statewide case management system for the courts in Arkansas.



First Row: (L. to R.) Sherri Cole/AOC Auditor, Dinda Hemphill/AOC Audit Coordinator, Sue Jones/Hot Spring County Circuit Clerk, Terry Claussen/Sebastian County Deputy Circuit Clerk, Nancy Brewer/Sebastian County Circuit Clerk.

Second Row: (L. to R.) Rose Riggs/ACAP, Melba Russell/Malvern District Court, Donna Clifton/Conway District Court. (partial view)

Third Row: Sharon Rimmer/Faulkner County Circuit Clerk and Kim Gary/Case Coordinator-20th Judicial Circuit.

AOC Staff Changes



Ava Hicks
Supreme Court Librarian

Several staff changes have occurred at the Administrative Office of the Courts. Tim Holthoff, former Director of the Arkansas Supreme Court Library and until recently Director of the Arkansas Court Automation Project, is now Court Information Services Director. He replaces Jack Marks who retired in December.

Holthoff holds a Bachelor of

Science degree in computer science and a Master of Library Science from Vanderbilt University. Additionally, he received a Juris Doctorate from UALR School of Law.

Ava Hicks, who has served as Acting Director of the Supreme Court Library since Holthoff changed positions, has been named as Director of the Library. Before becoming Acting Director of the Library, Hicks



Tim Holthoff
Court Information Services Director

served as Assistant Librarian/Public Services Coordinator. She has a B.A. in English from Southwestern at Memphis (now Rhodes College), a Masters in Library Science from George Peabody College for Teachers, a J.D. from Memphis State University (now University of Memphis) and an LLM in Taxation from New York University.

Justice Building Staff Give Retirement Party for Chief Justice Arnold.



Chief Justice Arnold and family members are seated at the head table for the retirement party given in his honor. (L. to R.) Justice Arnold's son, Gary Arnold, daughter, Melinda Morris, Justice Arnold, and his wife, Earlene.

NEW ACAP EMPLOYEES

Over the last year the six pilot courts in the Arkansas Court Automation Project have undergone extensive training for the dual purpose of identifying system gaps between Arkansas court business processes and the ACS Justice Information System and configuring the system for use. The needed customizations have been specified, so the project is moving into a new phase of implementing the customized changes, completing system configuration, and going live in the pilot courts.

In the project's first year, it had only one full-time staff member, Tim Holthoff, former director of the Supreme Court Library. The second year of the project had two full-time staff when Susan Torrans joined the project from the Crime Information Center. Last year an Administrative Assistant, Frances Oakes, a former project analyst with DIS was added to the ACAP staff. This year ACAP is adding three new employees.

(See **ACAP** next page.)



(ACAP continued)

Tony Webb of Hot Springs recently joined the AOC as the new database administrator. In addition to working on the ACAP team, Tony will also be working with other in-house databases that may be candidates for conversion to Oracle databases. Stephen Cohen of Conway will be joining the staff as the Justice Integration and Reports Manager. Steve will be working on templates for documents that will be generated by the system as well as developing ad hoc reports to be used by the courts and AOC staff for extracting data from the JIS. He will also be working on data exchange techniques with other agencies. Finally, Jackie DeBusk, a seasoned trainer of computer application users will be developing training plans, curricula and materials for the project. Jackie has recently been involved in developing computer-based training materials for the military.

Congratulations to Judge Norman Wilkinson/12th Circuit, who has qualified to run in the Boston Marathon in April.

Go, Judge Wilkinson!

New Faces in the Judiciary

Circuit Judges

5th - Stephen Gardner replaces Richard Gardner.

Case Coordinators

16th - (Harkey) Melissa Anderson is the new case coordinator.

6th - (Branton) Brenda Kay Nellums replaces Yolanda Bishop.

19th W.(Scott) Mary Ann Putman replaces Jeanette Birky.

District Judges

Huntsville - Justin Garrett II replaces W.Q. Hall.

District Clerks

Ashdown - Sheila McDonald replaces Mary Warren.

City Judges

Sulphur Springs - Virginia Middleton replaces John Dodge.

Madison - James Valley replaces William Snowden.

City Court Clerks

Sulphur Springs - Debra Ghent replaces Regina Kuykendall.

London - Deby Sorrells replaces Joyce Hazlett.

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

District & City Court Clerks Certification (2nd & 4th Districts) (Little Rock) **20**

MARCH

Case Coordinators Conf. (Little Rock) **4-5**

APRIL

Education Committee Mtg. (Heber Springs) **22-23**

MAY

District Judges Spring College and District & City Court Clerks Annual Meeting (Springdale) **13-15**

June

Spring Judicial College/ Judicial Council Meeting (Hot Springs) **9-11**

District Court Probation Officers (Jonesboro) **24-25**



Friends of the Court

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Address
Correction
Requested