

—THE—  
15<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
—OF FLORIDA—

# CIRCUIT COURIER

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2024

## Katherine Mullinax Appointed to County Court Bench



On September 5, the Office of Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of Katherine Mullinax to the County Court Bench, Judge Mullinax started with the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit in 2021 and assumed the position of General Counsel in 2022. Previously, she was the sole practitioner at Mullinax Law Group, PLLC. She earned her Bachelor's Degree from Old Dominion University and her Juris Doctor from Florida International University. Judge Mullinax fills the judicial vacancy created by the retirement of the Hon. Robert Panse.



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## 2024 Chief Justice Award for Excellence



Pictured above is Judge Collins with Chief Justice Carlos G. Muñiz.

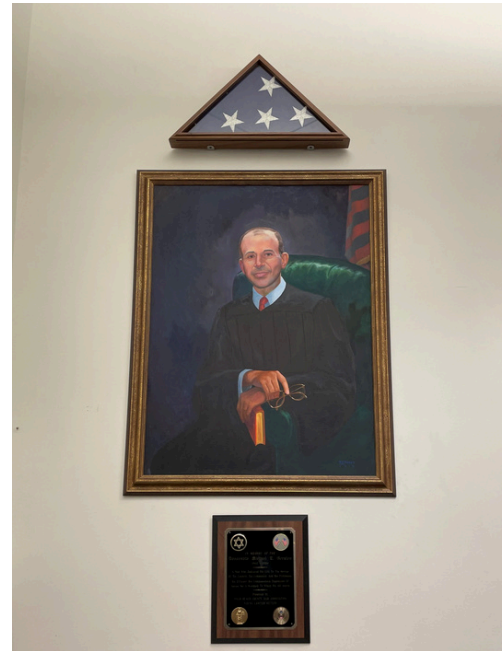
The Hon. Sherri Collins was awarded the 2024 Chief Justice Award for Excellence. The annual award recognizes significant contributions to the State Courts made by a County and Circuit Judge.

The award was presented by Chief Justice Carlos G. Muñiz at the Conference of County Court Judges of Florida. Each year, winners are selected from a statewide pool of judicial nominations. This is an honor for Judge Collins as well as for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit.

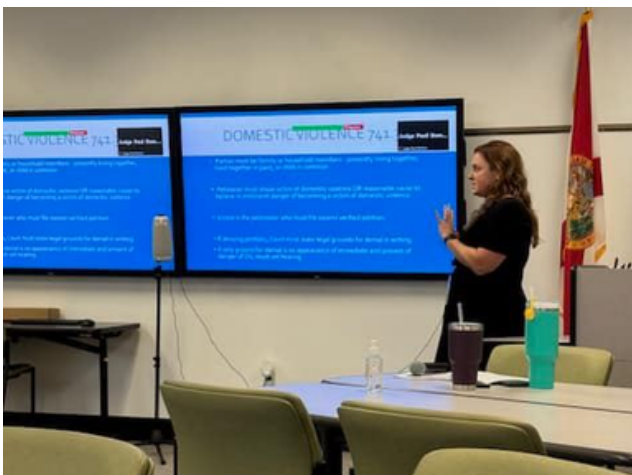
## Family of Judge Michael Ewens Gersten Donates Veteran's Flag

In June 2024, the family of Judge Michael Ewens Gersten, donated his veteran's burial flag to the Fifteenth Circuit. The flag is mounted above his judicial portrait and plaque in the South County Law Library, which bears his name.

Judge Gersten served as a Circuit Court Judge from 1989-1994.



## Hon. Lauren Burke Leads Injunction Training



The Hon. Lauren Burke, an expert of Domestic Violence injunctions, conducted a training for judges and staff. She explained the importance of understanding the complex dynamics of abuse and the critical role judges play in protecting victims. The training focused on enhancing judicial awareness, ensuring fair, and sensitive handling of these cases, and fostering a deeper understanding of the legal and emotional aspects surrounding domestic violence.

## Judge Daliah Weiss Leads Innovative Technology Project to Streamline Probation Orders in Felony Divisions

Felony Administrative Judge Daliah Weiss spearheaded an initiative within the felony divisions to go paperless with the submission of probation orders from the Department of Corrections (DOC). Previously, under the paper system, orders were sent inter-office to each felony judge, often resulting in slowdowns, and even lost orders. Given the critical nature of probation orders, these inefficiencies not only created administrative challenges, but also created backlogs that could affect the lives of individuals under the court’s supervision.

Judge Weiss, a longtime advocate of technology in the criminal justice system, saw this as an opportunity to modernize how probation orders are processed and delivered. She assembled a team of individuals to develop a plan. This team consisted of Noel Chessman, Chief Information Officer; Derek Gibson, Circuit Administrator for DOC; Ernie Williams, Correctional Probation Senior Supervisor; Edward Rufus, Correctional Probation Senior Supervisor; and Michelle Cruz, Director of Case Management. Through a collaborative process, a pilot project was developed and tested in Judge Weiss’ division. After a successful pilot and a few helpful revisions, the project was implemented in all of the felony divisions.

The new process allows DOC to upload electronic probation orders utilizing the Circuit’s Online Services System (“OLS”). OLS integrates with the Circuit’s Judicial Viewer, JVS and allows for generated/submitted orders to be immediately transferred to the Judges’ queue for electronic signing and e-filing. This new process has already reduced delays and errors while promoting real-time preparation of court orders.

While the idea for this initiative came from Judge Weiss, it was the Court Technology staff who implemented this vision. Hrushi Moparthy, Systems Administrator gathered the probation forms and created automated templates in OLS for DOC’s use, then worked with DOC to test and correct them throughout the pilot. Also, Senior Analyst Programmer Ramiro Vidal programmed OLS to create a “Virtual Law Firm” in OLS for use by the Department of Corrections. Software Trainer Sheila Abdelrazek trained the Department’s users and, also created training materials for their reference.

The effort led by Judge Weiss is an exciting step forward. By embracing technology, the judge and her team are creating a more effective and equitable system. As this project gains traction, it could serve as a catalyst for broader change, paving the way for more technological advancements.



Pictured above: Derek Gibson, Circuit Administrator for DOC; Ernie Williams, Correctional Probation Senior Supervisor; Edward Rufus, Correctional Probation Senior Supervisor; Judge Daliah Weiss, Michelle Cruz, Director of Case Management, and Noel Chessman, Chief Information Officer



Hon. Ori Silver



On September 23, Judge Ori Silver administered the new attorney oath to Sam Herman.

Hon. Samantha Schosberg Feuer



On September 25, Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer administered the new attorney oath to Julianna Morgan.

## Judges Participate in Constitution Day Event with the School District of Palm Beach County



ABOTA hosted its annual James T. Otis Constitution Day presentation at The School District of Palm Beach County headquarters. The best and brightest students in the County came to the headquarters on chartered busses for an en banc panel presentation. Chief Judge Kelley, Judges from 15th Circuit, as well as 4th DCA Chief Judge-Elect Jeffrey Kuntz, presided. The presentation focused on the jury trial system and civil discourse using the factual pattern from a U.S. Supreme Court case. Participating Judges from the Fifteenth Circuit included Chief Judge Kelley, Judges Burke, Cheesman, Curley, Delgado, Feuer, Nutt, Rowe, Stephens, Tew, Weiss, and Willis.



## North County Nursing Room Opens



PBC FAWL President Victoria Mesa-Estrada, Rep. Ashley Gantt D-Miami, and PBC FAWL Past President Heather Stohlman cut the ribbon to the new lactation room.

Nursing mothers can now utilize a private space when visiting the North County Courthouse in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, in partnership with the Palm Beach County chapter of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers (FAWL), held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 10, marking the official opening of a new lactation space. The nursing pod and location was provided by Palm Beach County.

The opening of this new nursing room completes a multi-year project to provide rooms in all of the courthouses in Palm Beach County. The rooms in the other three courthouse locations – West Palm Beach, Delray Beach and Belle Glade – opened in 2017, 2019 and 2023. The initiative has been a passion project spearheaded by Palm Beach County FAWL and Circuit Court Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer in collaboration with Court Administration and Palm Beach County. Representative Ashley Gantt - Miami, along with Senator Lori Berman - Delray Beach, served as Florida House co-sponsors, securing passage of the lactation bill in 2023.

"I am very pleased that the 15th Judicial Circuit can now provide these spaces for nursing mothers," Chief Judge Glenn Kelley said. "Prior to the push for nursing rooms by FAWL and Circuit Court Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer, nursing mothers who were working in the courthouses often had to seek out privacy in unsuitable areas. Thanks to the efforts of our local PBC FAWL and Judge Feuer, along with coordination by court administration, nursing mothers in our courthouses, whether it be a member of the public, staff, or attorneys, can now feel more welcomed."

"I am proud of Palm Beach County FAWL and our Circuit who, together, have collaborated to provide private lactation areas in all of our courthouses," said Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer. "This tremendous effort will no doubt have a long-standing positive impact for working mothers and for our profession for years to come."

## Kelly Rowley Selected as New General Counsel



In September 2024, Kelly Rowley was selected to serve in a new role as General Counsel for the Circuit.

Ms. Rowley was first employed with the Circuit as a Trial Court Law Clerk from 2016-2018. She then served as a Law Clerk for the Honorable Bruce E. Reinhart followed by employment as a Pro se Law Clerk with the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, West Palm Beach from 2018-2021. She also served as an Attorney with the Florida House of Representatives in Tallahassee and was employed as an Associate Attorney with Atherton Galardi Mullen & Reeder PLLC, West Palm Beach.

Prior to her elevation to General Counsel, Ms. Rowley served as Supervising Senior Staff Attorney (2022-2024).

Ms. Rowley holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, History, Journalism from Wake Forest University and graduated *cum laude*, with her Juris Doctor from the University of Miami.

## Family Treatment Court

Family Treatment Court is a voluntary specialty court that uses a family-centered, multidisciplinary approach to serve families with substance use disorders who are involved in the child welfare system. It is the mission of Family Treatment Court to provide families with the support and services they need to stabilize the family in a safe and expeditious manner.

By doing this, the goals are to 1) decrease the risk to the children, 2) reunite families before or around 12 months, 3) reduce the probabilities of the children being removed from the parents in the future, and 4) help the parents address their substance use.

On September 18, Family Treatment Court held a graduation ceremony with the Honorable Lisa Small presiding for the Honorable Kirk Volker. During the Graduate's involvement in Family Treatment Court, she successfully completed Intensive Outpatient Treatment, maintained stable housing, and sustained continued sobriety. The Court commended the Graduate on her resilience, resourcefulness, and positivity. In taking responsibility for her and her child's lives, she demonstrated strength, maturity, and growth. This event marks the third graduation this year as the number of participants in Family Treatment Court continues to grow.



Judge Small with Graduate



## Courthouse Visits



On July 3, Judge Rowe hosted the PBSC Criminal Justice Institute, BLE 224.



On August 1, Judge Zuckerman hosted the FAU Criminal Justice Club.



On August 20, students from the West Jupiter Classical Conversations observed Judge Reid Scott and Judge Howard Coates' courtrooms.



On September 17, students from Advent Lutheran were able to observe and speak with Judges Maxine Cheesman, Judge G. Joseph Curley and Judge Daliah Weiss.



On September 18, Judge Rowe hosted students from Keiser University, Flagship Campus. William Hutchings, Jr., Chief of Personnel Services informed the students of the Circuit's recruitment practices.





## Summer Interns Program Recap

The Circuit sponsored another successful year with the summer intern program. The program, led by Judge Sherri Collins, Judge Samantha Schosberg Feuer and Judge Katherine Mullinax, included two months of panel discussions, lunch Q&As and visits to several judicial buildings and departments.



The interns paid a visit to the South County courthouse where they met with Judges Burton, Silver and Surber. They also took a tour of the courthouse and met with courtroom clerks. The South Palm Beach County Bar Association hosted a lunch and held a “meet and greet” for the interns to interact with the board members.



During a lunch panel, Family and Probate Attorneys Kathryn Lewis, Ronda Gluck, Andrew Kwan and Tami Augen Rhodes spoke with the summer interns.



Florida Supreme Court Justice Renatha Francis paid a visit to the summer interns at the Main Courthouse. Justice Francis spoke with the group about career aspirations in the legal field, maintaining professionalism and the importance of mentorship.

## Juvenile Division Summer Program

The Juvenile Division brought back its Division JS Summer Program for the first year since pre-Covid.

The program, which runs all 10 Fridays of summer break from 8:30am-3:00pm, gives youth on probation in Division JS the chance to complete probation sanctions, earn community service hours, and learn life skills such as budgeting, CPR, healthy eating, and college and career readiness.

This summer, 12 youth successfully completed the program and in total over 850 hours of community service were earned through various projects, such as making greeting cards for Veterans and individuals in nursing homes. The program helped participants put community service hours earned towards paying off court costs, submitting a total of nearly \$7,500 this summer. Additionally, 12 youth created a resume and two earned a Florida Food Safety Certification.

The summer program owes a large part of its success to the South Palm Beach County Florida Association of Women Lawyers (FAWL) who provided breakfast and lunch each week, in addition to hygiene kits and backpacks full of school supplies. Juvenile staff would also like to acknowledge the 20-plus community partners who contributed time and effort to the summer program and came to speak to the youth, especially our furry friends with Caring Canines. Special thanks to Judge Surber for her support and dedication.



Guest Speaker Tammy Saltzman





## Court Administration Staff Attend DCF Summit

The Juvenile Division was well represented at the 2024 Florida Children & Families Summit held September 4th through the 6th in Orlando, Florida. Members of the Juvenile Division in attendance included: Judge Kathleen Kroll, Judge Jeffrey Gillen, Magistrate Jodi Cason, Mary Quinlan, Rachel Lively, Kristen Parske and Anna Branney.

The summit incorporated programs for all stakeholders focusing on amplifying behavioral health, mental health disorders, and substance abuse. The event also highlighted the need for stakeholders to take a collaborative, trauma-informed approach when dealing with children and families. Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis joined the Florida Department of Children and Families Secretary Shevaun Harris, serving as the Summit's keynote speakers. The DeSantis' gave updates on Father Initiative, Hope Florida, and the Activate Hope Program.

## Florida Chapter of Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (FLAFCC)

On September 12, 2024 to September 13, 2024, the 20th Annual Conference for the Florida Chapter of Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (FLAFCC) took place in Orlando, Florida. More than 300 judges, magistrates, mediators, court staff, and other family court professionals from across the state of Florida attended the conference. The conference theme was "Recognize the Signs, Plan the Solutions" and featured keynote presentations and workshops on many emerging issues in family courts such as Trauma, Neurodiverse Children, Co-Parenting, Substance Abuse and Artificial Intelligence.



Pictured (from l to r): Mediators Katiana Saintable and Sandra Picchiello, Administrative Family Judge, the Honorable Dina Kever-Agrama, Magistrates Peter Bassaline and Ilana Marcus, and Family Court Manager and Senior Court Operations Consultant, Tara Kranz.



## Chief Judge’s Ice Cream Social

On August 22, Judges, JAs and court administration staff joined Chief Judge Kelley for an afternoon ice cream treat. The social is a way for the Chief Judge to express his gratitude to the Circuit staff and Judges for their work on behalf of the citizens of Palm Beach County. Attendees socialized all the while enjoying their choice of ice cream and toppings.



Judges Delgado, Nutt, and Sherriff, enjoying the ice cream social.

## Human Resources Events

### Lunch & Learn Dates:

**July 2024:** On July 15, Frederick DeTar, Emergency Program Manager presented on the topic of Hurricane Preparedness.

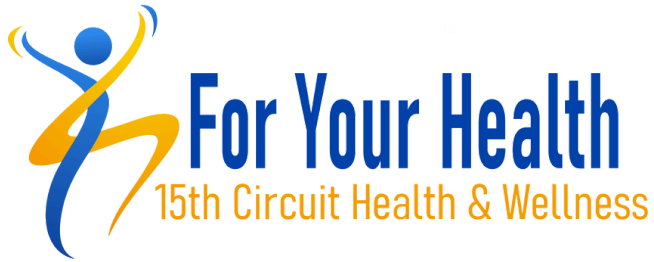
**August 2024:** On August 22, Stacey Sherbinsky, Voya Representative led a workshop on Deferred Compensation.

**September 2024:** On September 30, Joi Lasnick, Human Resources Analyst II and Justin Forest, Human Resources Manager led a presentation for Judicial Assistants on available benefits.

## New Employee Orientation



Several new Court employees attended the Circuit’s employee orientation course in August 2024. During the course, the employees were introduced to the Circuit’s Mission and Vision, the Circuit’s Core Competencies, the structure of the judicial branch, and their role as officers of the Court.



## Health & Wellness Committee Event Recaps

Judges, court staff, and clerks enjoyed time with the Circuit Therapy Dogs on August 1 as part of the Circuit’s Health and Wellness Program. Visits by the therapy dogs continue to be a popular event, sponsored by the Health and Wellness Committee.



The Health and Wellness Committee commenced the 2nd Annual “Summer Step Challenge.” From September 1 to September 30, 3,750,864 steps were logged by 14 participants.

Mordechai Spolter, Systems Administrator II, placed first with 424,985 steps and Kelly Conte, Judicial Assistant to Judge Shullman, placed second with 419,630 steps.





# Around the Circuit – News from Court Administration Staff

## Judicial Assistants Association Education Committee Collaborate with Court Technology to Provide Training

On August 20th, members of court technology met with judicial assistants for a technology Q&A. Approximately 20 judicial assistants attended the presentation, which covered topics from JVS, new courtroom sounds systems. New evidence presentation, hardware, and Zoom updates.

Chief Information Officer Noel Chessman presented, along with Courtroom Technology Administrator Maccson Etienne, Computer Specialist Christina Chappa, and Software Training Specialist Sheila Abdelrazek (not pictured). The meeting was coordinated by the Judicial Assistant’s Education Committee members Kimberly Wolf , Marianna Contreras and Kenthia White. The success of the meeting and the positive response from judicial assistants will result in additional Q & A presentations being held in the future.

The Circuit’s Judicial Assistants Association Committee regularly coordinates a host of educational events throughout the year for the Circuit’s Judicial Assistants. Events include tours and various trainings, ensuring JAs are equipped with the most up-to-date information and processes.



## Judicial Assistants Association of Florida Conference



Several of the Circuit’s JAs attended the 2024 Judicial Assistants Association of Florida Conference in September 2024, which was held in St. Petersburg, FL. The annual conference allows judicial assistants throughout the state to gather and learn from speakers and experts on a variety of topics and programs that are handled in the court system.

Pictured:

(Back Row, l to r): Shakeria Hamilton-Knowles, Marianna Contreras, Steffany Kinderman Coneo, Violeta Woxberg, Kimberly Wolf and Donna Francis

(Front row, l to r): Lesley Restivo and Diana Grant



# New Hires | Employees On the Move

## Welcome to the Circuit's newest employees

### **July 2024**

Caprice McCray, Student Technologist;  
Ashlyn Darden, Supervising Trial Court Staff Attorney;  
Dana Green, Drug Court Case Manager

### **August 2024**

Mirna Hernandez Winn, Civil Court Program Specialist II;  
Katherine Bolliger, Trial Court Staff Attorney;  
Yerald Leiva, Systems Administrator I

### **September 2024**

Janie Lowe Crittendo, Magistrate;  
Logan Child, Digital Court Reporter;  
Lovey Love, Civil Court Program Specialist II

## Employees on the Move/Position Reclassified

### **August 2024**

Rhoda Jones, Administrative Services Manager;  
Stefanie Thomas, Budget Director

### **September 2024**

Katherine Mullinax, County Court Judge;  
Maxine Williams, Administrative Magistrate;  
Kelly Rowley, General Counsel

## Retirements

### **July 2024**

Robert Panse, County Court Judge

# Administrative Orders

The following AOs were updated or entered July - September 2024 (most recent to oldest):

09-30-2024	11.106	Alternate Assignments	
09-30-2024	5.104	UFC Magistrates	
09-27-2024	11.109 2025	Duty Judge Roster 2024 - 2025	
09-27-2024	11.109	Duty Judge Roster	
09-23-2024	11.104	Seniority Listing Of Judges	
09-20-2024	11.101	Assignment of Judges	
09-19-2024	6.315	Eldercaring Coordinator Roster	
09-18-2024	2.105	Local Professionalism Panel Members	
09-18-2024	2.105	Fifteenth Circuit's Professionalism Panel	
09-09-2024	11.203	Appointment of Magistrates	
09-05-2024	11.201	Request for Senior Judge Assistance	
08-21-2024	2.208	Procedures for Special Interest/High Profile Proceedings	
08-21-2024	5.304	Procedures for UFC Cases Involving the Department of Revenue	(Vacated)
08-21-2024	12.504	County Canvassing Board	
08-21-2024	11.110	Appointment of Circuit Judges as Acting County Judges; Appointment of County Judges As Acting Circuit Judges	
08-21-2024	5.308	Administrative Child Support Cases	
08-14-2024	5.208	Family Mediation	
08-14-2024	3.602	Residential Eviction Summons	
8-13-2024	2.710	Authorization of Service Pursuant to Section 397.68151 of the Florida Statutes	
08-12-2024	2.802	Arbitrators	





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The Circuit Courier is published by the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit

Glenn Kelley, Chief Judge  
Barbara Dawicke, Trial Court Administrator  
Richalyn Miller, Public Information Officer

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