

# Benchmarks

Newsletter for the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit

Volume 8, Issue 4

April 2006

## What Did You Say....



Contributed by Amber Baggett,  
Senior Court Program Specialist

Good listening is a key component in effective communication. How many times have you asked a question of someone, only to return later in the day and repeat the same question? This happens all too often because we put the emphasis on hearing what the other person has to say and not really listening to the answer given.

From the time we wake in the morning until we go to bed in the evening, we spend a total of 4 to 5 hours a day communicating. Even though almost half of that time is spent listening, the emphasis in society today is placed on speaking skills, therefore you may hear what is being said without really listening to the information provided.

### Do You Hear Me?

When we HEAR someone, we can repeat word-for-word what he or she has just said to us. We may not understand it, or even remember it a short time later.

### Do You Really Hear Me?

When we LISTEN to someone, we pay close attention to what is being said and how the person is saying it. We practice self-discipline, holding our own thoughts, opinions, and impulses to talk.

## Listening Tip

Being a good listener means more than just lending an ear. You have to demonstrate, using proper body language, that the person who is speaking has your full attention. Make sure your listening techniques are effective.

## DO...

- Face each other and maintain eye contact
- Be interested and attentive
- Listen patiently, act as if you have plenty of time
- Ignore distractions
- Be respectful and open minded
- Let the other person finish what they are saying
- Have a positive attitude
- Watch non-verbal clues (body posture, facial expressions, tone of voice)
- Take notes or write down important points

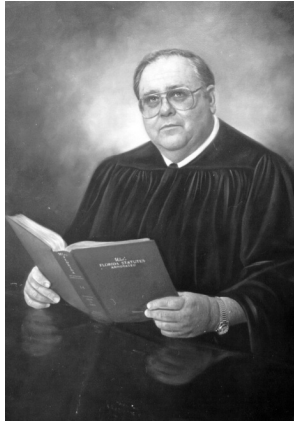
## DON'T...

- Turn your back or look at your feet
- Yawn or flip through notes
- Answer the phone or talk to people as they pass
- Judge, criticize, or reject ideas
- Interrupt or change the subject
- Act like you don't care about the subject
- Dismiss non-verbal cues as irrelevant
- Trust your memory with important details

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## *In Memoriam*



**Phillip Knight**  
July 09, 1937 – March 16, 2006

The citizens of Calhoun County and the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit recently marked the passing of retired Calhoun County Judge, Phillip Knight.

Judge Knight was a native of Calhoun County. He received his undergraduate degree from Florida State University in 1959 and went on to receive a Juris Doctorate from Stetson University School of Law in 1962 and was admitted into the Florida Bar that same year. Knight practiced law in Blountstown, Florida serving as an Assistant State Attorney, as well as operating a private practice.

Phillip Knight took the bench in Calhoun County in 1987 and remained until his retirement in 2000. Always active in his community, he served in numerous civic organizations, including past president of the Blountstown Rotary Club and the Lion's Club of Blountstown. He was a member of the Apalachicola Band of the Creek Indians. Knight was a lay pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Blountstown for 13 years.

Judge Knight is survived by four children and their spouses, two brothers and seven grandchildren.

It is with heavy hearts and fond memories that the judges and staff of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit take pause to remember Judge Phillip Knight.

## From the Personnel Desk

Contributed by Larry Lyons  
Administrative Services Manager

We continue to work closely with OSCA–Personnel Services to resolve pay and benefits issues that have arisen with the transition of the State Courts System payroll date and benefits administration to People First. Should you receive requests from People First for documents pertaining to your benefits, we strongly recommend sending those documents through Court Administration–Personnel. We can assist you with any clarification, determine and provide the necessary forms, and submit and track the document.

Employees who enrolled in the new Health Investor Health Plan were charged 2005 premiums during the month of December for January coverage, instead of a lower premium for this new coverage. For those impacted, the Division of Management Services has processed refunds for the difference between the 2006 Health Investor Health Plan premiums and the premiums deducted during December 2005, as well as adjusted them for the applicable taxes.



Over the past year we have observed an increase in the number of websites designed with 24/7 access to human resources information. To assist you in that endeavor we have established links to many of these sites from the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit's own website [www.jud14.flcourts.org](http://www.jud14.flcourts.org). Under "Human Resources" you will find links to People First, Florida Retirement System (FRS), Florida Accounting and Information Resource (FLAIR), and the ability to access publications related to State Group Insurance. The FLAIR website allows state employees to access monthly earning statements and review W-4 forms. I encourage everyone to use the circuit's website as your link to personnel information.

## Key Elements of the Court System Case Management



### Family Court Case Management

Contributed by Carol Dunaway,  
Family Court Manager

Ten years ago, case management was a one man show. Today, the case management division of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit is a one-man, and four-woman show. Carol Dunaway is the Family Court Manager and has served in this position since 2002 but began her career with the courts as a case manager in 2000. Syntha Alvarez and Trish Riemer are case managers in Bay County; Cary Godwin is a case manager serving the outer counties and Erica Jackson is an administrative assistant serving both criminal and family case management, all of which came on board in 2004.

Originally the idea of a case manager was to review pro se (self-represented) litigant's files to make sure the file was procedurally correct before the case went before a judge. Today, the role of case manager has expanded well beyond that description. Not only do case managers review pro se cases; they also appear in court to prepare orders for judges, magistrates or hearing officers. They monitor compliance with court orders such as participation in court-ordered Batterer's Intervention Programs or anger management classes; they complete detailed research on related cases and provide these reports to the Court prior to hearings. Acting as liaisons for the courts, members of the family court case management team belong to various workgroups and committees that promote best practices within the court system.

One project currently in the works is the "Road to Permanency" dependency court conference, which is a joint project with several local child welfare agencies. The conference is slated for April 20-21, 2006 at Gulf Coast Community College. Judge Allen Register, the circuit's administrative juvenile judge, has had a hand in the planning of the event and will participate as well. Chief Judge William L. Wright is scheduled for opening remarks the first day of the conference.

The case management division works closely with the Clerks of Court offices in the Fourteenth Circuit. As the clerks can bear witness to, working with litigants without attorneys can be very challenging. On a day-to-day basis the case managers often become a listening ear to a litigant who is upset about "all these confusing forms" they must complete for their case. We have definitely heard a lot of stories in family case management; some sad, some funny, and some downright strange. However, the one thing we try to do is to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and courtesy, and that we

make every case count. We strive to always remember that a case file is not just a binder containing legal documents, it's a family's history and their future.

### Criminal Case Management

Contributed by Linda Burd, Drug Court Manager

Criminal case management provides a holistic service approach that addresses conditions within the offender's life that could contribute to recidivism, joblessness, homelessness, or substance abuse relapse. Case managers assist the Court by finding appropriate treatment programs for offenders with the hope of stopping the "revolving door syndrome." Case managers' activities usually include assessing the offender's needs, developing a service plan, linking the offender to appropriate services, acting as a liaison for the Court with related outside agencies, monitoring the offender's progress and reporting to the Court as requested and advocating for the offender as needed.

Criminal case management in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit include a Drug Court Manager, a Senior Court Program Specialist, two Court Program Specialist II and an Administrative Assistant II. The Drug Court Manager, Linda Burd, ensures that the case management, administrative, fiscal, and research and development duties required for the ongoing functions of the circuit's drug court programs are maintained. This position also provides criminal case management for the judiciary by researching various programs for placement of adult and juvenile offenders and parents involved in dependency cases.

In addition to other duties in court administration, Amber Baggett, Senior Court Program Specialist, and Cary Godwin, Court Program Specialist II, are based in Jackson County and maintain the daily operations of the drug court program located in Jackson County which serves the counties of Calhoun, Holmes, Jackson and Washington. Additionally, Cary Godwin also manages the felony trial court docket in Jackson County to ensure the timely progression of cases through the criminal court system.

Sherri Lee-White, Court Program Specialist II, is based in Bay County. At the request of the Court, Sherri completes an assessment on all offenders in Bay and Gulf County in need of a treatment program in lieu of jail or prison. She determines appropriate placement based on a program's admission criteria. Erica Jackson, Administrative Assistant II, is also based in Bay County and performs detailed data entry and statistical reporting as well as assisting with the daily operations of the drug court programs.

# Birthdays



## April

- 01 Stacy Pippin
- 04 Hayes Baggett
- \_\_\_\_\_07 Jennifer Wells
- \_\_\_\_\_11 Suzanne Cox
- \_\_\_\_\_17 Julie Armstrong\_
- \_\_\_\_\_19 Stephanie Gordon
- \_\_\_\_\_23 Marilyn Nelson
- 30 Thada Rehberg

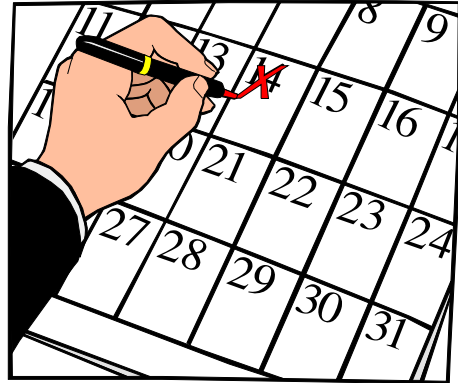
## May

- 11 Sue Ann Murray
- 17 Myra Paxton
- 31 Larry Lyons

## June

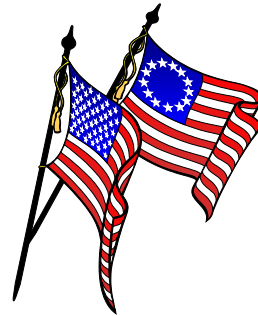
- 02 Gary Hagan
- \_\_\_\_\_02 Diane Crawford
- \_\_\_\_\_02 Terry Thompson
- \_\_\_\_\_22 Laura Romans
- \_\_\_\_\_25 Syntha Alvarez
- 28 Gene Morris

# Holidays for the Quarter



Good Friday April 14, 2006

Memorial Day May 29, 2006



**CHIEF JUDGE: HON. WILLIAM L. WRIGHT**  
**COURT ADMINISTRATOR: JENNIFER DYER WELLS**

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