



Benchmarks

THERE IS NO “I” IN TEAM

BY JUDGE SHONNA YOUNG GAY, ADMINISTRATIVE CRIMINAL JUDGE FOR THE OUTER COUNTIES

Tuesday, February 16, 2016 was just a normal Felony Criminal Pretrial day in Jackson County. There was a lot of activity in the courthouse, but this was not unusual—that is, until court recessed for lunch, and



then the story drastically changed. A fire occurred in the Circuit Courtroom—but this is not a story about the alleged incident, but rather the actions taken by the Court staff and other occupants of the building.

I can honestly say since coming to serve in Jackson County I have always felt as though the people who work in this Courthouse operate as a family. Some closer than others, but all family none the less. On February 16th my theory was proven. Within seconds of the fire beginning, a Florida Game and Fish officer heard someone yell fire and he grabbed a fire extinguisher and began to put the fire out. Cary Godwin, Case Manager and one of the court bailiffs, also grabbed fire extinguishers and helped in the effort and alerted the authorities. This is when the magic of teamwork really began. *Story continued on Page 2*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A Word from Jan Shadburn2
- Mediation Volunteers3
- Calhoun Teen Court.....4
- Employee Spotlight4
- Mentors in the Courts.....5
- Holidays & Events6
- Senior Santa 2015.....7

THERE IS NO “I” IN TEAM (CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Bailiffs and the Fire Department cleared the building, and once cleared, essential staff came in to begin searching the security footage for images that would assist in the investigation. Meanwhile, our staff that were outside, did not stand idly by, but rather notified the public coming up that court had been canceled, and defendants were noticed for court the following month. Everyone worked together as a well oiled machine. Information was gathered and given to local authorities who were also on scene and then a decision was made by the Jackson County Board of County Commission and Chief Judge Smiley to close the facility the following day for clean up.

Closing did not end the work for our staff. While some were released for the day, others stayed well after working hours to notify those who were scheduled for court the following day and also made arrangement for first appearances to be covered from another county.

While all will remember February 16th at the Jackson County Courthouse differently, I will remember it as one that made us stronger as people and as a unit. What was already a close knit group of people came together in the toughest of times and proved the old saying, “There is no ‘I’ in Team!”

“Everyone worked together as a well oiled machine.” - Judge Gay

COURTHOUSE UPDATES

Bay County Courthouse

The addition to the Bay County Courthouse is on schedule. It is planned that we should begin to move staff and judges in early May 2016.

Washington County Courthouse

Construction is on schedule. The roof was recently completed and occupation of the building is planned for September 2016.

A WORD FROM JAN SHADBURN...

I would like to take just a moment to update everyone on what is going on in the different departments.

Carol Dunaway and the Family Law Staff are busy with Case Management Conferences that are now taking place in Bay, Holmes, and Washington counties. This program is quickly clearing up backlogged cases around the circuit.

Gary Hagan and the Website workgroup have been working to enhance the 14th Circuit’s website. Currently the group is gathering information and ideas from judges and staff to find out what would be most beneficial to internal and external users of the site. They have several ideas and will be presenting recommendations to Judge Smiley in the next few weeks.

As you all know, security has been a huge focus for Chief Judge Smiley and the other judges. The security reviews in all 6 counties have been completed, and recommendations for updates and upgrades have been presented to Judge Smiley. He is currently reviewing the information, and the plans are to take the recommended steps to implement the upgrades this year.

I would like to take just a moment to thank the Jackson County Judges, staff, law enforcement, Clerk staff and the County Administration for their quick response during the recent incident in Marianna. We were able to minimize the disruption of business to only a day and a half.



REMAINING COUNTY MEDIATION VOLUNTEERS:

Still to be acknowledged are Gus Martell, John Bruce, Bill Boyenton, and Jim Hayden.

Again, all of the volunteers in the County Mediation Program are a major asset to the program and the courts, and we appreciate each one of them!



COUNTY MEDIATION VOLUNTEERS

The County Mediation Program is continuing to expand its pool of county court mediators. Since the publication of the November 2015 issue of Benchmark, we have actively recruited individuals in area communities to commit to become certified county mediators and volunteer with the Court in that capacity. In February 2016 a county certification training was conducted. Sixteen individuals were in attendance and made the commitment to become certified as county mediators to enable them to volunteer. We are now in the process of assisting them in the process of becoming certified and are looking forward to that journey. They will be introduced in the newsletter once they have completed the certification process.

In the meantime, we would like to acknowledge a few more of our volunteers:

Jim Robinson has been volunteering since March of 2002. Jim is very active in the community serving on government boards and non-profit committees. When not mediating or volunteering for other organizations, he might be found bicycling around town. Jim is a retired project manager.

Sylvia Maceluch has been volunteering since May 2005. After reading an article in the newspaper, she thought it was interesting and believed it was something she would enjoy. She likes that every case is different, and it gives her great personal satisfaction when she sees parties resolve their differences. Sylvia also volunteers with Kiwanis, AARP income tax returns, and in the past, Girl Scouts, Newcomers Club, and other clubs. Sylvia is a former elementary school teacher and enjoys spending time with her family, grandsons, and friends, and on occasion, travelling, when not volunteering.

Bessie Murfee has been volunteering since October 2013. She is a registered nurse, retired in 2001 but works as a contract nurse at health fairs and blood pressure screenings. Sylvia convinced her to become a county mediator, and Bessie is glad she did. She enjoys volunteering as a mediator, and when not mediating she enjoys working with plants, photography, crocheting, and experimenting with other crafting ideas. She also loves spending time with family and friends and meeting new people.

Jeanie Helms also began as a volunteer mediator in October 2013. With her family grown and independent, she began searching for an opportunity to volunteer that would allow her to give back to the community. She read an article about mediation, did some research, and realized she'd been mediating within the family her whole life and felt this was a perfect fit for her. While a lot of the content in mediation may seem "routine", she recognizes that they are not routine to the parties and, is often able to put the parties at ease about the mediation process. When she is not mediating, she is enjoying time with her husband, camping, reading, sewing, gardening, woodworking, video gaming, and sharing in the lives of her children, grandchildren, and sister.

CALHOUN COUNTY TEEN COURT VISITS FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

Members of the Calhoun County Teen Court Program made their annual trip to hear oral arguments at the Florida Supreme Court on Wednesday, November 4, 2015. They would like to thank Judge Register for setting up a surprise post-court visit from Supreme Court Justice Ricky Polston.

Justice Polston is a Graceville native and a Chipola graduate. He encouraged the students in the pursuit of their educational and career goals. The group then moved over to the Florida Capitol Building for a tour of the Senate and House Chambers. The annual trip is organized by Teen Court Director Cissy Barfield, 14th Circuit Court Administrator Jan Shadburn, and Calhoun County Judge Kevin Grover.



“Believe you can and you are half way there.” - Theodore Roosevelt

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Rose Mary, what is your favorite song?

The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power

What is your favorite food?

Pasta, fixed any way!

What is your favorite movie?

Lonesome Dove

What was your first job?

I was a cashier at Hardee’s when I was 16.

When did you start working for the courts?

My first day was January 6, 2016.

What do you like most about your job?

Being able to provide a way to possibly help someone that may not be aware that there is help for their current situation.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I like to sew and smock.

What would your dream job be if you were not doing your current job?

Any job that would allow me to help those in need, whether it be personal, financial, or spiritual. I think being able to guide them in the right direction to find counseling or programs to assist them through the trials they are experiencing at the time would be rewarding.

What is your favorite color?

Red

What is your favorite sport?

Baseball, at any level!



Rose Mary Swilley

Rose Mary is the Circuit’s newest Judicial Assistant. She serves as Judicial Assistant for Calhoun County Judge Kevin Grover in Blountstown. Rose Mary was previously employed with the school system in Calhoun County. She is really enjoying her new position with the Courts.

TAKE STOCK IN CHILDREN

Many of the students that are in this program are the first in their families to attend college. This program not only provides college tuition scholarships, but students can also receive book scholarships through the Gulf Coast State College Foundation and Florida State University-Panama City Foundation.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor with the Take Stock in Children Program, please contact Janet Kessler, Program Manager, at (850) 767-4111 or kesslerj@bay.k12.fl.us. You can also fill out a mentor application on the BEF website at www.bayeducationfoundation.org.

If you cannot mentor but would like to donate to this program, every donation to BEF's Take Stock in Children program is matched dollar for dollar by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation and donations can be made through BEF's website through their "Donate Now" tab.



BAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE EMPLOYEES MENTORING AT LOCAL SCHOOLS

Bay Education Foundation (BEF) has been a part of supporting Bay County's students for over twenty-five years. BEF's Mission is to support the educational development of our students and to promote greater community involvement in education. One of the many ways that BEF promotes greater community involvement is through their Take Stock in Children program that some of our fellow Bay County employees participate in as mentors to students at local area schools.

The program pairs good students who have the odds stacked against them with mentors who provide the support, encouragement, and guidance they need to succeed in school. The selected students sign a pledge of commitment to keep their grades up, stay away from drugs and crime, attend school regularly, meet with their mentor, and focus on achieving high school graduation and being college-ready. If they meet these requirements, they earn a college scholarship.

Patty Kelley, Judicial Assistant to Judge Register, mentors through Take Stock. She meets with her mentee, Kendall, every Thursday over Kendall's lunch break and has been meeting with her every Thursday since she was enrolled at Everitt Middle School. They have stuck together through Kendall's transition to Rutherford High School and this is now their fourth school year together since Patty started mentoring in 2012. When asked about her favorite part of being a mentor to Kendall, Patty said "I love being a mentor, because I get to help a child succeed in not only her everyday life but also give her guidance on education goals. Kendall has become more outgoing and has done well with her school and grades. She is also becoming more responsible and understands her goals of success. Encouragement and support are extremely important in the role of being a mentor."

Judge Joe Grammer also mentors through the Take Stock program. He is currently in his first year as a mentor, but he has served the community's children for many years as a church youth leader, coach to various youth sports, and is a member of two School Advisory Councils. "Even with all of that involvement, I resisted several entreaties to be a mentor. I was afraid that I would get a student who had been involved in the court system or whose parents had been. So, I just wouldn't do it." It wasn't until a recruiting coordinator for the program, and a friend of more than 30 years, Cheri Boyle, asked him to become a mentor, that he couldn't say no. Judge Grammer was later assigned to a seventh grader named Caleb that currently attends school at Bay Haven. "The program suggests that you go once or twice per month. Caleb and I have been meeting two to three times per month. We meet during his lunch hour, which is only 20 minutes, and mostly just talk about life." When speaking of encouraging others to become a mentor, Judge Grammer stated that "There are many people, of many walks of life, involved with Take Stock in Children as mentors. More mentors would provide assistance for more students. It's a service without a huge time commitment. The value to both mentor and student far outweighs the time of involvement."

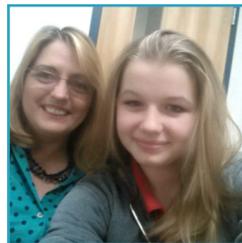
Niki Jones, Judicial Court Reporter, mentors at Everitt Middle School with her student, Ben. She says that she typically goes every Thursday during his 35 minute lunch break and added that the State pays for the mentoring hour, which is great so there is no loss of personal time. Niki says that although she has only been a mentor since last year, she has already seen Ben grow and mature. "He's very shy and quiet, but has gotten comfortable interacting with me. I'm proud to say he has all A's and perfect attendance." She also would encourage others to get involved and stated "It's a wonderful program, and it will surpass your expectations. It's just a great way to give back."

BAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE MENTORS (CONTINUED)

Trish Riemer, Self Help Case Manager, started with her mentee, Jaci, at Everitt Middle School and has continued to visit with her every week into her high school career at Mosley. Trish started mentoring last year but has already developed a special bond with Jaci, “She has a lot to say, and she trusts me. She can tell me whatever she wants. We laugh constantly. She hugs me when I come in, and she hugs me when I leave. She loves the lunches that I bring to her. I am not required to take lunch to her, but she feels special when I do.” When Trish was asked about becoming a mentor or encouraging others in that direction, she said “Absolutely!! There is always someone who can use a friend. Even adults need a friend. My mentee tells me that some of her friends who have mentors get down on themselves, because the mentor focuses a little too much on their grades. Although we are to encourage them and guide them to do their best and make good grades, more importantly they need someone to laugh with, talk to, and trust. That’s what makes them relax and feel comfortable, AND that is what the program director suggests ... to be their friend. After all, they are required to see their mentor, so if you make it fun and enjoyable for them, then they don’t feel like it’s just “one more task”.

Sonja Marks, Court Program Specialist, started mentoring through Take Stock after being approached by Trish Riemer. She recently started mentoring two months ago and was paired with a Bay High School Freshman named Dashyia. Sonja stated “I have always been interested in working with kids. My favorite part of being a mentor is making a difference in a child's life. It’s the approach I would hope someone would take with my children; to invest in them while they are young as a community.” Sonja takes the time to meet with her mentee every two weeks. They eat lunch together at her school and like to talk and catch up. Throughout the week they also text to stay caught up. When asked about encouraging others to get involved Sonja said “Just take the time to do it. It is rewarding for not only the child, but the mentor. I look forward to the time I spend with my mentee. She is such a wonderful girl.”

If you are interested in becoming a mentor or for more information on the Bay Education Foundation Take Stock program, please see the additional information listed on page 5, left side column.



Mentors with their Mentees, From Left to Right: Patty Kelly and Kendall. Niki Jones and Ben. Trish Riemer and Jaci.

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS AND EVENTS

May 23-27: Advanced Judicial Studies; Orlando, Florida

May 30: Memorial Day

July 4: Independence Day

July 12-14: Conference of County Judges; Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

August 8-10: Conference of Circuit Judges; Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

September 5: Labor Day

October 3: Rosh Hashanah



SENIOR SANTA 2015

For the past several years, many employees have participated in the Senior Santa program here in Bay County. Partnering with the local non-profit organization, Santa is a Senior Citizen, Inc., employees volunteer to sponsor a senior citizen and purchase Christmas gifts for them. The non-profit serves seven different nursing homes in the area, and this year donations from our employees went to 26 seniors living at the Panama City Nursing Center. Donated Christmas gifts included toiletries, clothes, CD players, cologne, socks, gloves, caps, CD's/DVD's, and snacks. We have an incredible group of volunteers who offer to help out, and each year the number of participants increases. Thank you all who volunteer in this effort. For more information about the program, contact Robyn Gable.



Senior Santa Participants, Back Row L to R: Judy Reese, Suzanne Cox, Jan Shadburn, Shonna Gay, Wendy Strickland, Sonja Marks, David Holland, Niki Jones, and Gary Hagan. Front Row L to R: Telena Thompson, Sherri Lessig, Terri Rowe, Linda Burd, Patty Kelley, Julia Claypool, Sarah Morgan, Ann Nelson, Sarah Pearce, Jackie House, Mona Johnson, and Robyn Gable. Not pictured: Sue Ann Murray, Susan Petrosino, Shannon Lord, Robin Owens, and Stephanie Woods.



News Letter Committee

Amber Baggett
Sarah Pearce

If you have any information you would like to have included in the next issue of Benchmarks, please contact Amber Baggett at:

baggetta@jud14.flcourts.org

