

BENCHMARKS

JANUARY 2008

2007: What A Year It Was!

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2007: WHAT A
YEAR IT WAS!
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FOURTEENTH
CIRCUIT

- One of the largest geographic circuits in the state of Florida.
- Circuit stretches from the Emerald Coast of the Gulf of Mexico to the Alabama and Georgia state lines.
- 14th Circuit has county seats in the Central time zone as well as the Eastern time zone.

As the calendar turns to a new year, we here in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit find ourselves reflecting back over the previous twelve months remembering all that transpired in the six counties of Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, and Washington.



Studio Photograph

In January our circuit gained two new judges. Judge Elijah Smiley was elected to a newly created

circuit judgeship appropriated by the Florida Legislature. No stranger to the bench, Judge Smiley previously served 11 years as a county judge in Bay County.

Judge Shane Vann was elected to fill the Bay County judgeship vacated when Judge Smiley advanced. A native of Panama City, Judge Vann previously served as an Assistant State Attorney for eleven years before being elected.



Studio Photograph

The beginning of 2007 also

brings a significant milestone to the Fourteenth Circuit. Jackson County Judge Woodrow W. Hatcher and his judicial assistant Betty Carol Spooner celebrated 30 years of



Judge Woodrow Hatcher and his judicial assistant Betty Carol Spooner as they began their first term in 1977.

service to the citizens of Jackson County. The staff of the Jackson County Probation Office honored the two with a special program followed by a reception, all held in the County Courtroom of the Jackson County Courthouse.

Early 2007 also brought new changes to the way weekend and holiday first appearances are handled in the outer counties of Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson and Washington. Through a cooperative agreement between all judges, both circuit and county, assigned to the outer counties a system was

developed that allowed one judge to conduct first appearance hearings via video conferencing for all 5 counties. This rotation system only requires the judges to be responsible for first appearance hearings once every nine weeks. Spearheading this program were Washington County Judge Colby Peel and Court Operations Consultant Robyn Gable, who created a comprehensive bench book that is a readily available resource for the judge conducting the hearings.



In July of 2007 Circuit Judge Hentz

McClellan took on the task of Chief Judge for the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. Having been elected to the circuit bench in 2002, Chief Judge McClellan has presided over cases in all six counties in the circuit. The first resident judge from Calhoun County to be elected by his peers to serve as Chief Judge of the Circuit, he splits his time between Bay, Calhoun, and Gulf Counties.

2007: WHAT A YEAR IT WAS!

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During the 2007 year, the Fourteenth Circuit made great strides in the area of Human Resources/Personnel.



As the year progressed, so did the circuit. In an effort to be more "green" the circuit adopted a paperless timesheet system. No longer do employees have to manually maintain their leave and attendance records, all is recorded through the Information System Services team at the Office of State Court Administrator. With relatively few glitches, the system has simplified the record keeping of employees.

This past year saw the circuit adopt a New Employee Orientation Program that encompassed presentations from Personnel, Purchasing, Court Operations, Technology, the Trial Court Administrator, and the Chief Judge. The standardized program was designed to give an overall view of inner workings of Court Administration and the Court System as a whole.

In maintaining a positive atmosphere for employees to work, the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit hosted the first Courts System Diversity Training workshop at Gulf Coast Community College in Panama City, Florida. The training was attended by employees from around the circuit and was conducted by trainers from the Human Rights Commission based in Tallahassee, Florida.



Team Building training was also conducted throughout the circuit. Staff from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) conducted three successful sessions with court personnel in Marianna and Panama City. EAP also provides confidential programs dealing with personal difficulties, and are free to all employees and their eligible dependents.

2007 saw many programs expand to better serve the needs of the citizens here in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. The biggest expansion was in the area

of Alternative Dispute Resolution, many times referred to as mediation. Bay County has been successfully operating a County Court Civil Mediation Program for a number of years, but 2007 saw the expansion of this program to other counties in the circuit. Holmes, Jackson, and Washington counties made mediation a part of the County Court Civil process. Trainings have been held in several of the counties of the 14th Circuit



Local Participants in County Court Mediation Training.

for those wishing to be certified as a volunteer county court mediator.

In addition to County Court Mediation, Alternative Dispute Resolution Director, Carol Dunaway, and her staff have been very busy over this past year. Mediation has expanded to new areas of the Court, including Family Court Mediation throughout the circuit and Dependency Mediation in Calhoun, Holmes, Jackson, and Washington Counties.

The process of mediating disputes in the court system has proven to be very successful and reduces the time it takes to reach resolution of the pending case. The process is non-adversarial, and in the majority of cases a full or partial resolution is reached.

To contact the Employee Assistance Program for the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, call 1-877-246-4679 Or go to www.eap.fsu.edu

TOP TEN TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS OF 2007

CONTRIBUTED BY GARY HAGAN, COURT TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

Over the holidays, I watched several television shows and read several articles about the Top Television Shows of the Year, Top News Stories of the Year, Top Songs of the Year, etc.... Well, we (the technology staff of the Fourteenth Circuit) decided to create our own Top 10 Technology Projects of 2007.

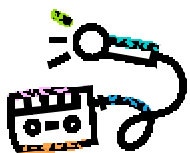


There are several more projects we would could have listed, but the editor forced us to limit our list to 10! So without further delay, here are our Top Ten.

10. Digital Court

Recording Playback Systems–

Equipment was installed in each courtroom that allows the digital recordings to be played back remotely.



9. Courtroom Technology- Many software and hardware changes were made throughout the year to improve equipment used in the courtrooms.

8. Upgrade of the Universal Power Surge (UPS) Systems throughout the Circuit– UPS systems were upgraded to provide backup power. These systems are designed for short

term power interruptions, power surges, and brown outs. We also installed Power Distribution Units (PDU) that provide the ability to remotely turn power on and/or off to specific pieces of equipment.

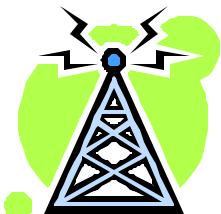
7. Circuit Wide Network Equipment Monitoring System– A new server and software system allows us to monitor, update, backup, and troubleshoot all of our network equipment.



6. Polycom GMS– This software enables us to manage and update all of our video systems from one location. If an IP address changes, we only have to update one system rather than thirty five.

5. File Server– Our new file server provides the circuit with a reliable system to store and retrieve work files.

4. Court TV Trial Broadcast– Our Courtroom Technology was on display for the world to watch. We setup a network



and equipment at an off-site location, provided audio/visual feeds to the media, and provided technological support to the lawyers.

3. Exchange Server 2007– This new system provides many new features and benefits that will be released in 2008. All you IM fans will be pleased!

2. My Florida Network (MFN)- We completed migrating all of our networks to high speed networks. The higher bandwidth provides us with resources to provide you with more services.

AND.....

1. Iron Port Spam Filter– This project was the most visible project to all you our users in 2007. Over the last



30 days, we received over 1 million email messages. Less than 1.4% (14,000) of these emails were valid and allowed to be delivered to our users here in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit.

For more information regarding the technology of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, please contact:
Gary Hagan
Technology Officer
850-747-5410

hagan@jud14.flcourts.org

Sights and Sounds of the Season

Below are photos from the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit's Christmas Luncheon held on December 18, 2007 at the Panama Country Club .



Christmas 2007

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

As we enter 2008, the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit has many changes in the horizon. The Circuit will say goodbye to a circuit judge and a long-time court reporter.

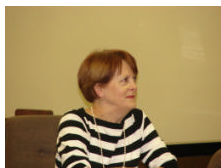


On January 2, 2008, Circuit Judge Glenn L.

Hess submitted his resignation to Governor Charlie Crist. After serving 13 years on the circuit bench and having heard countless cases in all 6 counties of the 14th circuit, Judge Hess stated in his letter, "It is now time for me to step aside permitting another to experience life on the bench." The judges, staff, and citizens of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit will miss Judge Hess's sharp legal mind and charming wit so

often seen from his bench. Governor Crist is currently taking applications for appointment to the judgeship Hess will be vacating.

Also leaving the Fourteenth Circuit is long-time court reporter Diane Pate, who is retiring after 37 years of service here in the Fourteenth Circuit.



Having worked all over the 14th Circuit, Mrs. Pate has been based in Jackson County since 1980. She was honored with a surprise retirement party on January 18, 2008 at the Jackson County Courthouse where a mock trial was conducted and she was found "guilty"

of being the World's Greatest Court Reporter. Everyone in the Circuit wishes Diane well in her retirement and she will be surely missed.



"Have you given much thought to what kind of job you want after you retire?"

CHIEF JUDGE: HONORABLE HENTZ McCLELLAN

COURT ADMINISTRATOR: JENNIFER DYER WELLS

Editor: Amber Baggett, Senior Court Program Specialist

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