

# The Bench and Beyond

*Clayton Judicial Circuit*

## MESSAGE FROM THE BENCH



State Court Judge  
Morris E. Braswell

The greatness of our Country does not lie in our form of government or in our economic prowess, although both are certainly significant and should be sources of pride. The greatness of our Country lies in the collective will of our people. That will has, from time to time, been exercised for both good and bad.

That positive resolve was manifested during the Revolution, the Civil War, and two World Wars. The collective good will of our people has carried us through those perilous times when our nation's immediate future was threatened. It has also provided us with the ability to right wrongs with mass movements toward eradicating injustice.

The Declaration of Independence reflects our desire to self-govern as well as lofty ideals such as "all men are created equal" and "with certain unalienable rights." To further reflect that goodness and allow it to flourish, we were given the Bill of Rights to provide minimal government interference in our way of life.

Our inherent goodness is further manifested in the fact that we as Americans are the most giving and caring nation in the world. Given a catastrophe in any part of our country or the world, our resources and citizens answer the call to provide assistance, wherever needed, whether due to hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, fires or any other disaster. But even on a smaller scale, when we see people in distress we respond with care, love and kindness.

As we approach this upcoming holiday season let us all be mindful of the needs of others and the opportunities that we in our county have to assist others less fortunate. There are many organizations in Clayton County doing great work on behalf of individuals who find themselves in places they would rather not be or just in need of a helping hand to make their lives better. The needs run the gamut from age eight to eighty and beyond, from the young boys and girls requiring volunteer scout leaders to the elderly requiring help in places like the Shelnett Center and various nursing home facilities. The needs include volunteers at Calvary Refuge, a shelter in Forest Park for displaced individuals and families, and for CASA workers in the Juvenile Court of Clayton County. If you have time to donate and are looking for a need to fulfill, you will benefit as well as others by giving of your time.

Do you have an article or information that you would like included in The Bench and Beyond? Send it to [andrea.saxon@co.clayton.ga.us](mailto:andrea.saxon@co.clayton.ga.us) . ♦

## NEW PROGRAMS IN D.A.'S OFFICE GARY DUBOSE, PROGRAMS DIRECTOR, D.A.'S OFFICE

The Pre-trial Intervention & Diversion Program (PIDP) has been successful in offering a second chance, providing services, and keeping participants on the right path. The fourth class of participants will have orientation December 3, 2009 in the Ceremonial Court Room. Three groups have participated in the program thus far. A total of 415 cases have entered the initial phase of the program. We currently have 54 in phase 1, 20 in phase 2, 55 in phase 3, and 33 in phase 4. A total of 82 have successfully completed the program with 4 being terminated unsuccessfully for non-compliance. The success of the pro-

*(PIDP, Continued on page 2)*

*(PIDP, Continued from page 1)*

gram has spawned the initiation to expand upon the program and the department. The expansion has included the new Law Related Educational Workshop, Home-based services, and the D.A. Ambassadors Program.

The Law Related Educational Workshop is an in-house program that offers the participants education and information about the criminal justice process, the types of offenses that are committed, and the consequences for committing those offenses. It also offers correlations between educational attainment, income, and incarceration rates. The Home-based services will allow us to provide services for those offenders that live outside of a 45-50 mile radius of Clayton County but have committed offenses here. The D.A. Ambassadors program will utilize qualified volunteers to assist with program duties such as basic communication, supervision assistance, and community outreach.

The D.A.'s Office has begun its campaign to combat armed robbery by sponsoring a poster contest and a small film production. The poster contest will highlight an armed robber scene with the caption "Armed Robbery 10-year minimum, real gun, fake gun, just doesn't matter' Brought to you by the Clayton County D.A.'s Office". The winner will have their poster in local stores to deter such behavior. The film production will highlight the poster from its initial inception to prison and will be shown at local events prior to the law related workshop.

We will close out the year with our "Change Your Life Day!" event at the Eula Wilborn Ponds Center for Learning, at 137 Spring Street in Jonesboro on December 12, 2009. This event will include educational plays, public speakers, break out sessions, and entertainment for the community by the community. ♦

**C I S P W I N S P R O G R A M  
O F T H E Y E A R**

The Court Interpreter Scheduling Program won Program of the Year at this year's Fall Conference for the Georgia Council of Court Administrators. Yolanda Lewis, on behalf of the Superior and State Court Administrator's office, accepted the award during the conference in Savannah. A plaque was presented to the Superior and State Court by Will Simmons, GCCA past president, at the December 8 Board of Commissioners meeting. The county also presented a proclamation to memorialize the honor and achievement of the courts for the last two years. Several executive board members and administrators from across the state also attended the meeting on behalf of the GCCA. You can find the Interpreter Program at [http://www.co.clayton.ga.us/court\\_administrator/interpreterProgram.htm](http://www.co.clayton.ga.us/court_administrator/interpreterProgram.htm) . ♦



*Happy Holidays from the  
State Court Clerk's Office!*

**S O L I C I T O R ' S O F F I C E C R E A T E S  
D O M E S T I C V I O L E N T U N I T  
T A S H A M O S L E Y , S O L I C I T O R G E N E R A L**

The problem of domestic violence has become more prevalent, destroying the building block of our communities – the family. While we, as the Solicitor's Office, have strived to address the growing general crime in our area, including DUI, theft and other traffic offenses, domestic violence cases have not received the attention that they so deserve, given the limited time and resources of the staff currently in place. Our goal has been to seek an avenue to address this growing concern.

*(Solicitor, Continued on page 3)*

## FOR THE RECORD \*

### SUPERIOR COURT

- 879 criminal filings
- 1,307 domestic relations filings
- 332 general civil filings

### STATE COURT

- 3,226 civil filings
- 3,307 criminal filings
- 8,081 traffic filings

### DUI COURT

- 49 participants in Phase I
- 26 participants in Phase II
- 10 participants in Phase III
- 9 participants in Phase IV
- 7 participants graduated

### INTERPRETERS

- 494 interpreter hours billed
- \$27,532 billed
- 13 languages used

### ADR MEDIATION

- 253 cases closed
- 40% cases mediated
- 55% reached full or partial agreement

### ADR PARENTING

- 5 seminars held
- 136 cases referred
- 157 seminar attendees

\*for 3rd quarter of 2009

*(Solicitor, Continued from page 2)*

On August 1, 2009, our office received a one year federal grant to start a pilot domestic violence program. This grant will provide funds for a full-time prosecutor and a full-time victim advocate dedicated solely to this effort.

Our major goal in the creation of this unit is to focus on serious and severe domestic violence cases. Prosecutors can now request assistance from the unit to complete an intensive work-up of cases that show the potential for escalating violence. The units' primary objective is to ensure every avenue of support is offered to the victims and their children while holding repeat offenders accountable through aggressive prosecution.

The unit will consist of an Assistant Solicitor and a Victim Advocate that are specially trained in working domestic violence cases and will be dedicated to the sole goal of the unit. The Unit is responsible for:

- Investigating all high risk cases of domestic violence, laying the appropriate charges and assisting the originally assigned prosecutor in the prosecution of those charges;
- Assisting the victims of domestic violence and assessing safety concerns;
- Addressing safety concerns associated with each case through coordination of personal safety plans;
- Monitoring high-risk domestic violence cases until disposition;
- Intensive interviews with victims through lethality risk assessments with licensed psychologist;
- Providing referrals to the appropriate agency when necessary.

According to the unit, the primary criterion for case selection is lethality. Assistant Solicitors will use the criteria to transfer cases that have been arraigned and set for trial. The criteria for assignment will consist of a combination of two or more of the following elements:

1. Substantial injuries
2. Previous violence between parties
3. Previous act of violence against another
4. Threats of violence against the victim
5. History of substance abuse
6. Substance abuse in current incident

On October 19, 2009, the unit will begin its work in this much needed area. Although the funds will only allow for one year of operation, the unit will greatly reduce the possibility of high risk cases "falling through the cracks," which is a major concern for our office. In hopes that the pilot program is successful, our office will continue to seek further federal funding towards substantiality. ♦

## GRASSROOTS GRADUATES

Betty Jo Grossnickle (Court Administration) and Chaundra Lewis (State Court) will be graduating from the Clayton County Grassroots Leadership Institute on December 10. Congratulations to both ladies as well as all of the other participants who completed the program. ♦

**Superior Court**  
Chief Judge Matthew O. Simmons  
Judge Deborah C. Benefield  
Judge Albert B. Collier  
Judge Geronda V. Carter

**State Court**  
Chief Judge Harold G. Benefield  
Judge John C. Carbo  
Judge Linda S. Cowen  
Judge Morris E. Braswell

**Court Administrator**  
Yolanda L. Lewis

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## C L A Y T O N J U D I C I A L C I R C U I T

### F O C U S O N : A N G I E J A C K S O N



Angie Jackson is the Superior Court's newest legal transcriptionist. She

moved to the fourth floor in September after working in the Superior Court Clerk's office. In her position, Angie transcribes trials, pleas, and other court hearings.

Angie holds a degree in accounting, and is currently working on another degree in legal studies. She is a member of Kappa Lambda Honors Society, Alpha Beta Kappa Society, the Paralegal Club, National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), and an Associate member of the National Verbatim Reporters Association (NVRA).

Angie's family includes her husband Matthew, who is the EMS Director of the Forest Park Fire Department, and her two children - Caleb, seven and Sienna, three. Caleb enjoys drawing meticulous designs and is an avid Boy Scout. Sienna is a gymnast, and enjoys music. Angie herself enjoys exercising, gardening, photography, and scrapbooking. "As a family, we try our best to do as much for our community as time will allow; as strange as it may sound all four of us are in 'school!'"

#### **What have you found to be the best way to relieve tension?**

Exercising and dancing...I exercise regularly and enjoy dancing around the house with my children. I find that taking time to simply be silly with my children

reminds me how important I am to them, which in-turn helps me to overlook many stressors.

#### **Where would you go on your dream vacation?**

I have been on a few dream vacations already, but I would say my next "Bucket List" vacation would be to tour Europe. I would love to see Italy, France, and England (in more than one trip of course)!

#### **Do you own an iPod? If so, what songs are in your playlist?**

I do own an iPod...I love music of all genres, honestly, I do! I have everything from Shinedown, Buckcherry, Kiss, Johnny Cash, T-Pain, and Flo Rida to Taylor Swift, Beyonce, Josh Groban, Kelly Clarkson, Andrea Bocelli, Michael Buble, and Patsy Cline (in no particular order). ♦

### L E G A L L I N G O

#### **"Motion"**

*A formal request made to a judge for an order or judgment.*

### 2 0 1 0 P R O C E S S S E R V E R S

The official 2010 list of permanent process servers for Superior and State Court will be available by December 21. The list will be online at [http://www.co.clayton.ga.us/court\\_administrator/permProcessSvrs.htm](http://www.co.clayton.ga.us/court_administrator/permProcessSvrs.htm). The approved permanent process servers will be active for the entire period of one year. If you have any questions, please contact Court Administration at 770-477-3414. ♦