

## Clark County Courts Take Steps to Weather the Storm During Financial Downturn

During a series of employee meetings, Court Executive Officer Edward A. Friedland told employees the Clark County Courts have made progress in meeting the demands of the community despite an economic recession. He reassured employees that while other courts are making cuts in services, the Clark County Courts are weathering the storm through cost containment and innovative efforts.

As an example, Mr. Friedland pointed to the hard work of the Las Vegas Township Justice Court Traffic Division for bringing in more than \$5.4 million in revenue through the use of an amnesty program.

“Traffic Amnesty is one example of how we’re doing something to bring in more revenues and people are taking note,” said Friedland. “The efforts of our employees to find creative solutions to our budget shortfall, through programs like Traffic Amnesty, or in finding ways to cut expenditures in supplies or other operating expenses, certainly are helping us improve our financial outlook.”

Friedland pointed out that courts across the nation are cutting programs, laying off employees and closing courthouses to deal with financial shortfalls. This is going on even as courts are seeing additional case filings

and increased community needs. “Nationwide there are courts facing program

“We have been very successful in our efforts to hold the line on our costs and reduce our expenditures, namely overtime,” said Friedland.



**“We have done well to hold the line on our costs and reduce expenditures, namely overtime. I appreciate your help.”**

Edward A. Friedland

eliminations, specialty and treatment court reductions, hiring freezes, staff layoffs and even courthouse closure proposals,” said Friedland.

He added, “Our Courts are finding ways to reduce costs, increase our collection of revenues and doing our best to ensure we do not see any reduction in services to the community.”

Friedland also told employees that the court recognizes that its employees are its most valuable resource and the court leadership team is doing everything it can to protect employees.

He congratulated everyone on their hard work and thanked employees for bringing in new ideas and working to cut costs.

The court expects to return nearly \$4 million to Clark County by the end of the fiscal year through cost savings and by finding ways to do a better job with fewer resources.

“If there is something inefficient, ineffective or a way we can do something better, a way to save money, bring that to your supervisors attention,” said Friedland.

“Many suggestions have already come in and we’ve been able to implement them right away. We understand things are tight right now and with your help we’ve been able to work with County Management in its efforts to remain under budget in these economic times,” said Friedland.

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Clark County Courts Deputy Marshal Larry Lynch answers a question during a busy day at the Las Vegas Township Justice Court Traffic Amnesty event.

## Traffic Amnesty a “Win-Win” for Everyone

The Las Vegas Township Justice Court has completed its first Traffic Amnesty Program, which provided individuals the opportunity to resolve their unpaid traffic citations and avoid additional late fees and penalties.

The Traffic Amnesty Program was officially kicked off at a press conference on November 14, 2008 and ended on February 13, 2009. During that time period, thousands of people visited the court in person, via telephone or on the Internet to pay their outstanding fines.

The Traffic Amnesty Program was very successful. Since the mailing of the notices on December 9, 2008, nearly 10,000 individuals paid outstanding fines without penalty resulting in a collection of \$5,449,850.44 for Clark County and the State of Nevada.

Additionally, more than 9,600 individuals established payment plans totaling \$5,841,313.54 in outstanding fines.

Approximately \$2,400,000 in fines were cleared by Las Vegas Justice Court once individuals provided proof of payment or evidence that they were not liable for the fines because they had insurance or

registration at the time of the issuance of the citations. Finally, an additional 10,000 individuals have requested traffic court dates.

“This program was a win-win for the Las Vegas Justice Court and the Las Vegas community. Our court was able to collect millions of dollars in outstanding fines and citizens were able to pay their outstanding traffic tickets without expensive late fees and penalties,” said Chief Judge Ann Zimmerman. “The majority of the revenue from the fines collected is returned to Clark County and the State of Nevada. This benefits everyone.”

## Governor Names New Judges to Family Court

Governor Jim Gibbons appointed William E. Gonzalez and Charles F. Hoskin to judgeships in the Eighth Judicial District Court’s Family Division March 5, 2009.

Judge Hoskin serves in Department E and Judge Gonzalez serves on the Department F bench.

Judge Hoskin was in private practice as an attorney in Las Vegas before joining the bench. He was admitted to the Nevada Bar Association in 1991.

With the conclusion of the Traffic Amnesty program, the court has now begun the process of issuing warrants for those individuals who did not take advantage of the program. In addition to a \$25 processing fee, Las Vegas Justice Court will add a \$200 warrant fee to each outstanding fine. Warrants will be served by the Las Vegas Township Constable, led by Bobby “G” Gronauer.

Las Vegas Justice Court has also contracted with an outside collection agency as an additional avenue to collecting outstanding fines. The collection agency will charge up to an additional 10.9% of the balance of the outstanding fines.

Judge Gonzalez joins the court from the Clark County Public Defender’s Office where he primarily represented juvenile clients. He graduated from law school in 1997 and also holds a Masters Degree in Business Administration.

Both men join a Family Division made up of 18 District Court Judges led by Presiding Judge Gloria S. Sanchez.

## Senior Judges to Help Resolve Med Mal Cases

By Chief Judge T. Arthur Ritchie, Jr

Next month the District Court will make a significant and meaningful attempt to resolve pending medical malpractice cases by conducting a marathon of settlement conferences with the help of Senior Judges who will be tasked with resolving the backlog of these cases.

Teams made up of two senior judges each will conduct settlement conferences in medical malpractice cases at a rate of two a day.

Eighteen or more conferences will be set each week with the goal of adjudicating as many cases as possible during the four weeks in May. The court will target the 216 oldest cases pending in the District Court.

Presently, there are 109 cases beyond the NRS 41A requirements set out by the legislature and all of the 216 cases identified for this program exceed two years. The backlog of medical malpractice cases continues to grow in the court, especially in light of the additional case filings from the Endoscopy Center lawsuits.

More than 400 new endoscopy-related cases have been added in the past year to our inventory of medical malpractice cases.

With the Supreme Court rule dictating medical malpractice cases must be adjudicated within three years and the Legislature's mandate that these case types be adjudicated within two years, it was necessary to think outside the box and develop the May Marathon.

The court has found mandatory settlement conferences to be beneficial in the Family Court and it seems appropriate to turn to this process to adjudicate cases ready for settlement.

If all goes well, the court anticipates resolving a large number of the pending cases and then devoting resources towards the remaining medical malpractice cases ready for settlement. We thank you for your help and cooperation in making this event a success.

## Justice Court Stays Busy Solving Problems

By Chief Judge Ann Zimmerman

Las Vegas Township Justice Court has been very busy the first couple of months of 2009. Our first Traffic Amnesty Program ran from December 9, 2008 through February 13, 2009. The Program was tremendously successful with thousands of individuals taking advantage of this opportunity.

More than \$5.4 million dollars in unpaid fines were collected. In addition to that, nearly 10,000 individuals were placed on payment plans totaling more than \$5.8 million dollars. Now that the Traffic Amnesty Program has concluded, the remaining outstanding traffic matters will be placed into warrant and turned over to a collection agency for collection.

Vice-Chief Judge Melissa Saragosa has spearheaded an effort to update our civil case management system. Judge Saragosa has worked closely with Court IT to identify and dismiss civil cases for lack of service and lack of prosecution. Thus far, tens of thousands of cases have been dismissed under JCRCP 4(i). Las Vegas Justice Court intends to monitor the civil cases on a quarterly basis to identify those cases that are ripe for dismissal.

Las Vegas Justice Court is also preparing for the arrival of new Justices of the Peace to fill the vacancies in Department 2 and Department 10, expected by July 1, 2009.

There were 28 applications received for these vacancies. The Selection Committee will interview the applicants and recommend six applicants (three for each Department) to the Clark County Commission. The Clark County Commission will then select the two new judges from the list submitted.

Finally, I want to thank all of our employees for providing exceptional service to the courts and the community.

## Continued Success in Difficult Times

By CEO Edward A. Friedland

I would like to personally thank the employees who recently attended the all staff meetings held at the RJC & Family Division. There were many great questions and creative suggestions from all who attended, some of which have been put into practice. As indicated at the meetings, the Clark County Courts have been at the forefront of meeting the financial challenges currently facing the Court and the County. Through your efforts, the Court has been a leader in implementing and maintaining various cost containment initiatives.

In these difficult financial times, when everyone's primary focus seems to be on the economy, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of the many other issues facing the Court and the many successes which we have achieved. Our employees continue to demonstrate the unique ability of going above and beyond expectations. A few examples which come to mind include: Deputy Marshal Jason Dean recently identifying and detaining an individual attempting to conceal a handgun while entering the RJC; 16 of our Deputy Marshals are expected to graduate from the POST upgrade academy in May; Greer Jennison's extraordinary work coordinating the endoscopy related hearings & calendar; Gary Kacher assisting the LVJC with disposing over 150,000 cases; Stephanie York of our Family Division assisting with the Odyssey Civil implementation; the Odyssey Team being in the final stages of the civil case management system implementation; the overwhelming success of the LVJC Traffic Amnesty Program, and the list goes on and on.

All of these successes and your many other achievements have not gone unnoticed, and they are a direct result of your personal efforts. Your Court leaders will continue to support the best interests of all staff. The initiative, dedication and perseverance of our team, is giving the Court an advantage in these difficult times and I look forward to our continued successes in the future. Thank you for making Clark County Courts the leader during these trying times.

## Project REAL

Middle school students from Johnson Middle School recently took a tour of the Regional Justice Center. In the past year more than 4,500 students have toured the Clark County Courts. Project REAL (Relevant Education About the Law) has provided school tours since 2005 through a partnership with the Clark County Courts, the US District Court and the Clark County School District.



## Clark County Courts Employees Learn Odyssey System



Judges, court clerks, law clerks and support staff have been spending the past few months learning how to navigate the Tyler Odyssey system as the court prepares to migrate to the system in the Civil Division of the Eighth Judicial District Court on April 27, 2009.

This is the continuation of a process that began with the implementation of the new case management system in the Las Vegas Township Justice Court's Traffic Division and the Eighth Judicial District Court's Family Division.

The user interface differs greatly from the Blackstone system and classes have focused on searching for documents and cases, as well as entering information and extracting detailed information about filings in the District Court.

## Short Trial Program Hits the Road For Visit to Canyon Springs High School

Like a visiting team, the Clark County District Court played an away game February 20 at Canyon Springs High School in North Las Vegas by bringing a Short Trial case to the high school. The outreach program was initiated to allow students in the Canyon Springs High School Law Magnet Program to see an actual trial without having to leave school.

"The Short Trial concept provides the perfect educational experience for students because it takes all the elements of a complex trial and distills it down into one day," said Judge Tim Williams, who presided over the trial. "The opportunity to show young people the legal process, and give them a first-hand experience, is a wonderful teaching tool for the District Court and the Clark County School District."



## HR Corner

### Clark County Announces Extension of Voluntary Furloughs

The Clark County Commissioners recently extended the Voluntary Unpaid Furlough Program in response to the need to contain costs and avoid layoffs or non-voluntary furloughs. While the County Commissioners are encouraging the use of the Voluntary Furlough program, employees are not required to take voluntary furloughs at this time.

The policy allows employees to take up to 15 days of voluntary furloughs through September 4, 2009. Furlough requests must be approved by the employee's supervisor and may be approved or denied based on the needs of the department or division.

Overtime exempt employees must take voluntary furloughs in work day or work week increments and the voluntary furlough cannot exceed 40 hours.

Clark County will pay the employer portion of all insurance contributions during the furlough period. Employees will not receive PERS service credit during the voluntary furlough.

For more information about the program contact your supervisor or Human Resources.

In addition to voluntary furloughs, the county has asked all employees to minimize costs by turning off unused lights, reducing the use of supplies and working with a mindset of efficiency.

### Worries About Economy Can Bring on Stress

The effects of stress can affect people in many ways, but there are ways to deal with it, according to Melissa Conrad Stoppler, MD.

Most of our lives are filled with family, work, and community obligations, and at some point we feel as though we are "running on empty." Stoppler suggests stress can be managed through some simple steps, which are highlighted in the box on the right.

Watch for the next instance in which you find yourself becoming stressed. Then practice letting go, making a conscious choice not to become angry, anxious or upset, said Stoppler.

### New Intranet Address:

<http://www2/departments/ClarkCountyCourts/index.htm>

### Ed May and Shaun Argyle Join Human Resources

Edward May has rejoined the Clark County Courts as a human resources manager. He served as a human resources supervisor in the Court Clerk's office between 2000 and 2004. He recently was employed at the Clark County Office of Diversity where he was responsible for overseeing compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity laws.

Shaun Argyle, a Senior Office Specialist, recently transferred from the Family Division Clerk's Office.

### Check Your Paychecks

It is important that Clark County Courts employees check their paychecks for errors or problems.

If you have questions about your paycheck or concerns regarding withholdings or other matters, the Clark County Courts Human Resources Payroll Department encourages you to contact them:

District Court/Clerk of the Court  
Chris Hogencamp,  
hogencampc@clarkcountycourts.us, 671-0794

Justice Court/Marshals  
Jennifer Velazquez, velaj@clarkcountycourts.us,  
671-3210.

### Stress Busters

- ◆ Get up and move about for a brief break. Five minutes on a balcony or moving about can be rejuvenating.
- ◆ Drink plenty of water and eat small, nutritious snacks.
- ◆ Do a quick posture check. Hold your head and shoulders upright and avoid stooping or slumping.
- ◆ Plan something rewarding for the end of your stressful day.