

High Profile People Visit Court

by Michael Sommermeyer, Court Information Officer

It would have been easy to confuse Clark Avenue with a movie set the past few months as media took over the street for high profile events in the Clark County Courts. Court hearings for Orenthal James Simpson, Darren Mack, Adam "Pacman" Jones and Chester Stiles have brought media back numerous times in the

Stef Watts with Fox News introduced himself and said, "I'm with Greta Van Susterin." I didn't think much of the statement other than, sure, you work with her. He noticed my indifference and followed up with, "No, I'm with her and want to introduce you!" I realized my misunderstanding and shook hands with Ms. Van Susterin, who stepped out of his shadow and greeted me warmly.

with a majority representing the major television networks, newspapers and wire services.

The most visible media represented the major television networks: ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, NBC, and ESPN. These networks in turn produced stories for local affiliates around the country and provided video for European and Asian networks. The wire services, Associated Press, Reuters, UPI and Getty provided stories and photos of the daily events. Newspapers from New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles also sent reporters.

Linda Deutsch, considered the nation's preeminent legal journalist, shared the Court Information Office during her coverage of the Simpson preliminary hearing and provided commentary to many of the national networks.

"Clearly our high profile trial plan provided an excellent roadmap for the court to follow."

last three months to report on proceedings in the Regional Justice Center.

And other celebrities have arrived as well representing the media. Former Simpson Prosecutor Marcia Clark surprised the media by appearing in the courtroom representing the television show Entertainment Tonight as a correspondent.

During a media briefing on the eighth floor of the Regional Justice Center,

En Banc, Clark County Courts News, is an online newsletter created by the Court Information Office.

The newsletter can be found on the District Court and Las Vegas Justice Court Intranet sites: <http://www2.accessclarkcounty.com>.

If you wish to contribute to this newsletter, please send articles, news items, photos or other correspondence to: input@clarkcountycourts.us.

The Eighth Judicial District Court wrote a comprehensive plan for high profile court events following the arrest of Jeremy Strohmeyer in 1997. It involves communication with security, the judges and employees, and coordination with outside agencies. It has been revised numerous times since and has been used for many high profile trials and events.

This was the plan used to coordinate media, security and logistics during the initial appearances for Simpson, Jones and Stiles. The plan takes into account the needs of the court and balances them with the needs of the media. The overall goal is to avoid jeopardizing court operations at the expense of a high profile event.

For the Simpson case nearly 30 television networks were counted by the court for the initial appearance in September, and this number swelled past 30 for the preliminary hearing held in November. Media from around the world covered the case,

The court received high marks for its coordination of the Simpson and Mack proceedings with many media offering praise to the Clark County Marshals for their superb handling of the public and the media. In fact, many media singled out the court as having done a better job of prepar-

ing for our high profile events than other courts that were tasked with responding to recent high profile judicial events in California, Utah, Florida and Colorado.

Clearly our high profile trial plan provided an excellent roadmap for the court to follow.

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Charles J. Short, Court Executive Officer

Message from the Court Executive Officer

New Beginnings

Our courts are poised to accomplish even more in the coming years and we have a solid foundation from which to build upon.

Sometimes there must be a change for a new beginning, and so after serving in this position for more than 14 years, I have decided to make a change and will retire in June 2008.

My tenure with the courts has seen the court system grow up along with the rest of Clark County. When I started in this position, the District and Justice Courts served roughly 700,000 people. Today, we're a major urban court serving more than 2 million people and providing leadership to courts around the nation.

I have been fortunate to work with and learn from many capable individuals. Much progress has occurred and we continue to find innovations that improve our services and further stretch our limited resources. I appreciate all of the work everyone has provided toward improving our courts and am grateful to have been able to lead these efforts.

Since 1993 we have accomplished much from the creation of the Family Court to the further use of Specialty Courts. Our creation of a Virtual Court has led to online payments for Traffic Tickets in the Justice Court and reduced the time it takes for individuals to stand in line by offering them the option to pay by phone or Internet.

Over the years the courts have received numerous awards recognizing innovation and expertise in many areas, including awards for the courts' Prison Re-entry Drug Court Program, Truancy Diversion Program, Short Trial Program, High Profile Trial Management Plan, the Mental Health Court, Child Support Drug Court,

Family Law Self-Help Center, the District Court On-line Minutes and Calendars System, the Complex Litigation Center, the e-Juror Web

Module and Interactive Voice Response System, and the Competency Court. All of these accomplishments could not have been achieved without the help and dedication of countless individuals.

To thank all of you would take up most of this limited space, so I will

offer a general thank you.

Our courts are poised to accomplish even more in the coming years and we have a solid foundation to build upon. It has been a privilege to serve as the court executive officer and I am honored to be able to call each of you a friend and esteemed colleague.

In the coming months, I will be working to ensure there is a smooth transition as the courts select a new court executive officer.

Court Briefs - News from Around the Court

Adoption Day

40 children united with new families during annual event at Family Court.

You could tell by the smiles on their faces that something good was about to happen. From the proud little man dressed in a new suit, to the little girl named Lilly who took over Judge Del Vecchio's bench, the 6th Annual Adoption Day at Family Court brought new families together and added new members to established families.

By the end of the day everyone was happy and feeling pretty good about new beginnings and the decision to adopt.



County Manager Virginia Valentine

Forty children were united with 33 families Nov. 14, 2007 at the Family Court. The event helped bring the total number of adoptions to 300 children for the year. Even so, hundreds of more children wait for an adoptive family to give them a home.

Newly adopted 8-year-old Maxwell Evans Rogers told KLAS-TV, "It feels really good. I really like this family, and I wanted to be with them."



Family celebrates with Judge Cheryl Moss



Employees of the Year

Recognized for improving court processes.

Parker, Kutinac and Vasquez honored.

2007 Employees of the Year honorees were announced at the holiday parties for the Las Vegas Township Justice Court and the Eighth Judicial District Court recognizing each individual for their exemplary work as court employees.

Mary Parker, an employee in the records division of the Family Court Clerk's Office was selected by the Clerk's Office for her commitment and extraordinary customer service.

Anna Vasquez, the manager of Pretrial services in the Las Vegas Justice Court, was named as employee of the year for that court and was honored for her ability to improve the workplace and for her willingness to implement new ideas.

Daniel Kutinac, a judicial executive assistant to Judge Elizabeth A. Gonzalez, was recognized by the Eighth Judicial District Court for his ability to manage multiple projects and his customer service abilities.

Each honoree was selected from a competitive field of deserving court employees. Their hard work and demonstrated commitment to the mission and values of the organization enabled the Clark County Courts to provide exceptional service to the community.

The nominees included the following individuals: Jennifer Adair, Yvette Anderson, Shelly Ajoub, Janice Bergantino, Cassandra Creelman, Christopher Demers, Al Fitzgerald, Rita Gonzalez, Cassie Haley, Stanley Jeckewicz, Brenda Johnson, Lois Kazee, Daniel Kutinac, Monica Kraus, Hector Ledezma, Brett Matuny, Michael Padilla, Mary Parker, Lorraine Radley, Wendy Redfield, Rosa Reyes, Diane Sanzo, Cinda Santini, Penny Sarkissian, Charlene Shepard, Nancy Tibbetts, Anna Vasquez, Leanne Viela, and Peggy Wilcox.

The three Employees of the Year recipients will receive 16 hours of "Incentive Time" off from work, a trophy recognizing their accomplishment, their photo and name on the Employee of the Year Office Wall Plaques, and lunch with the Chief Judge and Court Executive Officer.

Juror Access Project

Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center and Clark County Courts Work

Together to Improve Access for Visually Impaired

The reason the elevators in the Regional Justice Center now announce each floor can be linked to the needs of a visually impaired juror who found it difficult to navigate through the building.

The needs and concerns of this juror led the Clark County Courts to work with the Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center to improve access to the jury services assembly room and place Braille call buttons and new signage throughout the building.

In addition to the new signs and wayfinding features, new handicapped parking was found for jurors and the Court's web site was updated to improve access for jurors with disabilities.

"The project allowed the courts to look for ways to improve access to justice for a large group of people who were having trouble navigating our building and using our services," said Assistant Court Administrator Ed Friedland, who led the project.

"Once the problem was brought to our attention, many employees worked to develop the signage, find ways to improve our access and overall, just make it easier for people with disabilities to navigate through the building. It turned out to be a win-win for everyone," said Friedland.

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Judicial Employees and Political Campaigns

Please remember judicial employees may engage in political activity, if such activity does not tend to reflect adversely on the dignity or the impartiality of the court or office and does not interfere with the proper performance of official duties.

A judicial employee may not engage in such activity while on duty or in the judicial employee's workplace and may not use any court or local government resources in connection with such activity. For more information about acceptable conduct please refer to Model Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees in the State of Nevada.

From the Chief Judges

Tenth Floor Helps Return Family Court Downtown

By Kathy A. Hardcastle, Chief Judge, Eighth Judicial District Court

Last September, the tenth floor of the Regional Justice Center opened with two courtrooms, two hearing rooms and offices for the District Court Chief Judge and staff. In addition, Civil/Criminal Departments 22 and 23 were relocated to the tenth floor, as

The relocation of Judges Stefany Miley and Bill Potter allows the court to return Family Court services downtown and begin the process of reintegrating court clerk functions for all divisions downtown. As we continue to grow, it is becoming more difficult to find additional courtroom space.

The tenth floor was designed to be more flexible than other court floors and provide more meeting space for settlements and hearings. The floor also provides for more judicial office space. The flexibility of the floor allows court departments to move to a larger courtroom if needed and use smaller space when possible.

"The real need for a new civil and family division courtroom tower is rapidly becoming a high priority."

The real need for a new civil and family division courtroom tower is rapidly becoming a high priority for the courts and planning has begun to address the need. In the interim, the relocation of Judges Miley and Potter gives the court time to address the need, relearn some processes, and develop services for the public. These judges are hearing matters in courtrooms 10A and 10B. The Clerk of the Court also now accepts Family filings at the Civil/Criminal counter.

With the relocation of family courts downtown, the court has begun planning for a Family Court Self-Help Center for the Regional Justice Center. Combining services for the Family Division with advice and help for civil litigants, will give the court the opportunity to create a full-service self-help center for family court services, as well as civil litigation, small claims and landlord tenant disputes. These services will clearly aid the large number of pro se litigants and further enable the court to provide better service.

well as, Justice Court Judge Abbi Silver.

In addition, two judges from the Family Court relocated to the Regional Justice Center to make room at the Family Court and Services Center for construction of new courtrooms and the seating of new judges in 2009.

Pretrial Services Makes Plans to Return to Jail

By Douglas E. Smith, Chief Judge, Las Vegas Township Justice Court

One of the things the Las Vegas Township Justice Court is striving to complete in 2008 is a remodel of the pretrial services area at the Clark County Detention Center.

to work with the county and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department to prepare for a move and a remodeling of pretrial services offices at the Detention Center.

legal filings in civil matters such as small claims, evictions, and other civil lawsuits.

The court has found since moving to the Regional Justice Center (RJC) that the justice community will be better served if the pretrial services division of the Justice Court returns to the jail. A number of staff moved from the jail to the RJC in 2005 when the building opened for business.

In the past few months, the court has worked with jail staff to locate more space and now a remodeling effort is underway to provide space for a better customer service experience.

The Civil Law Resource Center will be modeled after the Clark County Family Law Self-Help Center located at Family Court. Civil law packets

After some time evaluating the job of processing defendants, it has become apparent that the court can better serve our customers if we return all of our pretrial services staff to the Detention Center from the Regional Justice Center. This has led the court

Our goal is to return 24 hour pretrial services to our clients at the Detention Center.

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The Justice Court also has taken the lead on the creation of a Civil Law Resource Center that would be created at the Regional Justice Center to provide pro se litigants with legal education and forms for filing matters in the Justice Court. This center would work with the District Court to assist pro se litigants in filling out

and instructions will be prepared and made available for customers to fill out, copy and then file with the courts.

A growing number of the court's litigants are self-represented, making this Resource Center a needed and welcome addition to the Regional Justice Center.



The Leadership and Law Preparatory Academy Courtroom at Canyon Springs High School features a classroom seating area behind a full courtroom well. The courtroom supports audio-visual tools that rival any courtroom in the Regional Justice Center. During the trial,

students from various classrooms were allowed to enter the courtroom at breaks that occurred approximately every hour. Each student took notes and eagerly watched as the attorneys presented their case. The Academy's students are preparing for a Mock Trial this semester.

Short Trial Program Goes to School

Pre-Law Students Benefit from the Experience

Students in the law magnet program at Canyon Springs High School had a rare opportunity to analyze a civil trial as the Eighth Judicial District Court brought a Short Trial to the school December 7. Using the school's Leadership and Law Preparatory Academy Courtroom, the trial is thought to be the first time a one-day trial has been held at a local high school by a trial court.

Because the Short Trial Program compresses trials into a one day process it was considered a perfect format for teaching prelaw students about how a trial is conducted.

"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 Timothy C. Williams, who presided over the case. "The opportunity to show young people the legal process, and give them a firsthand experience, is a wonderful teaching tool for the District Court and the Clark County School District."

More than 600 students make up the Leadership and Law Preparatory Academy, which educates high school students on the basics of the American legal system and prepares them for

leadership positions in their school and community. Students graduate with an Honors Diploma after taking classes focusing on economics, policy studies, political analysis and law.

"We are ecstatic that Judge Williams offered our students this opportunity. It will be a great benefit to the law program and all of our students. We hope to continue this partnership in the future.

I hope we can make it a permanent part of the curriculum because I know of no other high school in the country that can offer this type of educational experience to its students," said Dr. Ronan Matthew, principal at Canyon Springs High School.

At the conclusion of the trial, students visited with the attorneys, judge, marshal, court clerk, law clerk, court reporter to learn more about careers in the legal system. In addition, students were able to question the jurors about their participation in the proceeding and why they reached their decision to find in favor of the defense.

"By taking the Short Trial Program to Canyon Springs High School we essentially are bringing an existent court to the school and providing a learning experience," said Alternative Dispute Resolution Commissioner Chris A. Beecroft Jr., who supervises the Short Trial Program. For instance, the court intends to further this partnership with the Clark County School District to include truancy and juvenile hearings. Other Short Trial cases are expected to return to Canyon Springs in the future.

The case attracted the attention of

KVBC Channel 3 and KTNV, Channel 13. In addition, a photographer from the Review-Journal snapped photos of the event for a future story in the paper. Also the broadcast

students at Canyon Springs broadcast a portion of the trial live and interview students about the experience.

The entire event provided a real-world experience for the students, according to Dr. Matthew.

"We hope to continue this partnership in the future...because I know of no other high school in the country that can offer this type of educational experience to its students."

2007 Brought New Judges to the Court

by Michael Sommermeyer, Court Information Officer

New Jurists Bring Wealth of Experience to Bench

The District Court and the Justice Court welcomed the knowledge and experience of two new judges in 2007. Both individuals brought to the court diverse backgrounds and experience to the bench.

Judge Melissa Saragosa joined the bench a year ago filling the vacancy left in Justice Court Department 4 when Judge James Bixler moved up to the District Court.

Judge Saragosa previously worked in the Clark County District Attorney's Office serving in the Appellate Division and on various General Litigation Teams. Prior to leaving the District Attorney, Judge Saragosa was the Chief Deputy District Attorney of Recruiting and Training where she developed a program that allowed the District Attorney to recruit the best candidates at the optimal time of the year.

She also created a formal training program for new deputy district attorneys and supervised the summer associate program.

Judge Melissa Saragosa was raised in Mesa, Arizona. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of San Diego in 1990 with a Major in Psychology and a Minor in Philosophy. She continued her education at the University of San Diego School of Law, earning her Juris Doctor in 1993.

Following law school, Judge Saragosa was selected as a direct appointee to the United States Air Force Judge

Advocate General Corps. In this position she specialized in administrative and labor law and served as the lead prosecutor on court-martial cases at 18 Air Force bases in the Western region of the United States.

Governor Jim Gibbons appointed Elissa Cadish District Court Judge for Department 6 in July 2007 and she took the bench the following August. She filled the vacancy left when District Judge Joseph Bonaventure retired from the bench.

Judge Cadish graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Pennsylvania in 1986, receiving her Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in Political Science. She received her law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1989, where she was a member of the Virginia Law Review and was honored to be awarded the Order of the Coif. After graduation, she moved to Las Vegas and clerked for two years for Hon. Philip M. Pro in the United States District Court for the District of Nevada.

Cadish became a shareholder at the law firm of Hale Lane Peek Dennison and Howard in 2000. Her specialty is civil litigation. She was admitted to the Nevada Bar in 1991 and was also admitted to the Bars of Ohio and the District of Columbia in 1989 and 1991. She then entered private practice where she focused on commercial litigation and employment law.

Judge Cadish enjoys reading mystery

novels and solving Sudoku puzzles. Over the years, she has taught at numerous seminars regarding employment law topics, and participated in presentations regarding various litigation topics for the Howard D. McKibben Inn of Court.

Judge Cadish is a member of the Clark County Bar Association, the American Bar Association, the Federal Bar Association, and the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys. She served as president of the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys from 2004 to 2006.



New Faces

The following employees recently joined the Clark County Courts

District Court

Lilly Burns
Vanessa Mendez
Krishawn Taylor-Allen
Brecklin Wilke

Justice Court

Catherine Ayers

Clerk of the Court

Jennifer Aravallo