

The “Good News” about Judges

There are a myriad of examples of judges in Florida and across the U.S. who have been lauded for their good work. The Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation at Florida State University has compiled a brief list of a few some of these judges.

Homelessness

1.) Judge John Baxter – Salt Lake City, UT (2004) – Created and presides over Salt Lake City Justice Court Homeless Outreach Project. He also worked on creating the Salt Lake City restorative justice program “Passages,” the Salt Lake County Justice Court, Misdemeanor Drug Court, and the Third District Court Mental Health Court.

The Homeless Outreach Project is a dressed-down court for homeless defendants held twice a month at the Bishop Weigand Homeless day center. The court deals only with infractions and misdemeanor cases.

http://www.utcourts.gov/judgesbios/showGallery.asp?dist=3&ct_type=U
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4188/is_20050606/ai_n14656784

2.) Judge Michael Tynan – Los, Angeles, CA (2000) – Judge Tynan created a “Homeless Court” to model the original court idea created by Judge Leo Valentine in San Diego, CA. Held on the streets of skid row, this court helps to erase infractions from records. The requirements for the program include enrollment in a rehabilitative program for at least three months and citations must be at least six months old. Pro-bono legal service is also provided through various universities and an organization called Public Counsel.

Homeless Courts in California “build on partnerships between the court, local shelters and service agencies, and the prosecutor and public defender” and sentencing “is most often participation in a work and counseling program that offers help with overcoming social problems, enhancing job seeking skills and location employment opportunities and affordable housing”*.

http://myhero.com/myhero/hero.asp?hero=m_tynan
*http://www.abanet.org/homeless/HCP_Manual.pdf

3.) Judge Kimberly Kreider – San Antonio, TX (2006) – Judge Kreider uses a type of community court, much like the original “Homeless Courts” of California. “The court is meant to stop the revolving door of homeless people through the municipal court system. Instead of being convicted of misdemeanor crimes, they're connected with social services... Kreider has built a network of social services she can access at a moment's notice, including arrangements at local shelters for people who work at night to sleep there during the day. She found that homeless people without identification risked losing their personal property when they were arrested because there was no way to tag it. Police agreed to take photos of those without IDs so they could reclaim their belongings.”

- METRO AND STATE NEWS, Court of solutions, not punishment, Laura E. Jesse in WORD
Available at the Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

Literacy

4.) Judge David A. Glant – Alachua County, Gainesville, FL (2006) – Actively supports literacy issues in the community. Works with local literacy group. Guest hosts a reading group for children within the district.

5.) Chief Judge Belvin Perry, Jr. – Orange County, Orlando, FL (2003) – Chief Judge Perry was a driving force in the creation of the program “Sanctioned to Read.” This program is used as a condition of probation for juvenile offenders in which they learn reading skills. Chief Judge Perry is dedicated to improving literacy rates of young offenders.

<http://www.ninja9.org/courts/juvenile/Sanctiontoread.htm>

6.) Judge Mark Wiest – Wooster, Ohio (2002) – Warren County Court of Common Pleas judge has created a book club for low- level felons on probation. The probationers are required to read six books including: “Of Mice and Men” and “The Green Mile” which is counted in part as their community service hours.

"It just gives them something more positive," Wiest said. "Usually, we're telling them when they're on probation: 'Don't do this, don't do that. Stay out of trouble. Be good. Take your drug test. Pay your money.' And this is just something a little different."

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,203042,00.html>

Domestic Violence

7.) Judge Aviva K. Bobb – Los Angeles, CA (2005) – Advocate of fairness and access in the state’s family courts, Judge Bobb “has been at the forefront of dramatic improvements in the family law system to make it more friendly and accessible to self-represented litigants and more responsive to the evolving legal needs of all litigants, regardless of financial resources.” She has developed several programs that “greatly enhanced the rights of family law litigant.” In addition “[h]er efforts include making it easier to obtain domestic violence restraining orders by opening courtrooms in neighborhood courthouses and by ensuring that self-help centers are available to assist in the preparation of applications for restraining orders.”

- News Release, Sept 9, 2005, PDF

8.) Judge Bernadette T. Romano – Utica, New York (2001) – “Judge Romano served as a board member for the YWCA of the Mohawk Valley where she became one of their strongest advocates in starting the Domestic Violence Impact Panel, a condition used by Oneida County Family Court judges in Family Court orders of protection. She co-chaired the Oneida County Domestic Violence Coalition and worked to obtain funding to hire domestic violence advocates utilized by town, village, city, family and criminal courts.”

http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/public_awareness/bulletins/fall2001/awards.html

Family Court

9.) Judge Donna Hitchens – San Francisco, CA (2002) – As a family court judge, Hitchens has improved access to the legal system for low- and middle-income families. She has worked with the Bar Association of San Francisco lawyers to create a self-help center for residents in need of lawyers. A committee she created produced a self-help manual for dealing with traffic tickets

and developed a workshop on small claims court. Finally, Judge Hitchens has helped obtain federal grants for community intervention programs to help children exposed to violence whether at home or in their neighborhood.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2002/02/02/MN2130742.DTL>

10.) Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer – Columbus, OH (2003) – Chief Justice Moyer has made guardian ad litem services a priority for the court. He has established “the Committee on Children, Families & the Courts to help guide the court system to adapt and reform to meet the needs of the future” and developed educational programs “to further children's understanding of the Ohio judicial system.”

http://www.sconet.state.oh.us/Communications_office/Press_Releases/2003/100203casa.asp

11.) Assistant Chief Judge James Swenson – Hennepin County, MN (2001, 2003) – “Swenson has been instrumental in the development of the court's aggressive case management and early neutral evaluation programs, designed to reduce the time families spend arguing over child custody and parenting issues... The aggressive case-management program was started in 2001, when the court began requiring litigants and their lawyers to meet with the judge three weeks after filing the case. According to Swenson, it's an opportunity for the parties to work on a cooperative basis, settle inconsequential matters and develop aggressive schedules designed to bring the case to conclusion as quickly as possible. Out of that program the court began developing techniques to speed up the process even more, including allowing informal letter arguments that can be given to the court quickly, rather than the traditional method of bringing a formal motion supported by affidavits. In 2003, the court initiated the early neutral evaluation program, whereby litigants meet with experienced child custody evaluators - one male and one female - usually the day of the case management conference. Swenson notes that an early neutral evaluation has as its core component a candid assessment by the evaluators, which they use to help the parties come to agreement.”

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12.) Judge Donna M. Petre – Yolo County, CA (1996, 1997, 2000, 2003) – Judge Petre's has been instrumental in accessing resources for low and moderate income families within the court system she serves. She has done this in several ways. She has:

- Created one of the first unified family courts in California. Unified family courts are "therapeutic" courts that decrease the total number of court appearances that families must make by placing all of a family's cases in front of one judge. With a goal of one stop service, the court has arranged an array of services that low-income litigants can access when they appear in court. (1996)
- Collaborated with her colleague, Judge Stephen L. Mock, to create the Yolo Domestic Violence Court. To enhance services for low-income litigants, Judge Petre encouraged the local domestic violence victim advocate program to provide an attorney in her court every day to assist petitioners seeking domestic violence restraining orders. (1997)
- Developed a program to help low-income petitioners in domestic violence cases obtain legal assistance for restraining orders and legal representation in child custody, child support, visitation, and divorce proceedings. (1997)
- Established two supervised visitation programs for low income families: the Family Resource Center in Woodland and Child Safe in West Sacramento (1997)

- Worked closely with the Yolo County Department of Alcohol, Drugs, and Mental Health to obtain a Cal WORKS grant that supported a full time psychologist in the unified family court. Free counseling is provided to low and moderate income families. (2000)
- Copyright 2006 HT Media Ltd. US States News, (San Francisco, CA) WORD

13.) Judge Lee Satterfield – Washington D.C. (2004) – “The most critical thing that we have done to improve the performance of the courts handling of child abuse and neglect cases is to go to the one-judge/one-family management approach to family cases. The one-judge/one-family model allows us to get a better picture of the family, which allows us to make more informed decisions. In addition to dependency cases, we handle custody, support, divorce, juvenile, mental health, and civil domestic violence cases.” Judge Satterfield cites “better collaborative relationships with stakeholders” as their biggest success thus far. “We've added judicial officers and started a child protection mediation program which helps resolve legal issues before getting to court... We have also done quite a bit of training with the various stakeholders-social workers, GALs, lawyers, etc. Additionally, we hold an annual inter-disciplinary conference with our third to take place this September. The level of teamwork among the various agencies has increased a great deal which has improved case outcomes for children.”

http://www.ncsconline.org/Projects_Initiatives/Family/vol3No1.htm

14.) Chief Judge Stephen W. Rideout – Alexandria, Virginia (1995- 2005) – Judge Rideout “formed a core group of professionals involved in child abuse and neglect cases to help guide the direction of the Model Court. CASA was one of the first organizations he asked to join. Tangible outcomes of the project include a “one-judge, one-family” system—meaning that whenever any member of a family appears in court for any reason, they are before the same judge Jude Rideout also led Alexandria to become the first juvenile court in Virginia to implement a family drug court, a mediation program and Adoption Saturdays.” (p. 14)

http://www.nationalcasa.org/download/Judges_Page/0410_judges_awards_0036.pdf

15.) Judge Louis Trosch – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina (1995 - 2004) – “Judge Louis Trosch has been instrumental in spearheading and encouraging all court reform efforts, in particular the mediation program. He has this to say about recent innovations: ‘Our system now tries to use judicial leadership to collaborate with partnerships in the community in order to better meet the needs of our children and families. In the old model, the judge would wait for a case to be brought before him and he was working in a vacuum. We now strive to work with all agencies that are involved in that child’s life - we have to because of ASFA requirements and our goals of permanence. We do everything we can to cut down on contested litigation, and we try to put a case plan in place that is tailored to meet the needs of the family. Mediation is a wonderful tool and allows us to do just this.’”

“Mediation is a process that allows the GAL, the family, treatment providers for the family, the attorneys for the parents and the Department of Social Services to come together in a non-adversarial setting to discuss the petition and the facts of the case. During mediation, case plans are formulated with the involvement of all parties. Because a four-hour block of time is allocated for this process, mediation reduces the time spent in court. Mediation expedites permanency efforts, allowing children to reunify with their families or become free for adoption in a shorter time frame.”

“Another successful component of the court reform effort is family drug treatment court, which has been in place in Mecklenburg County since 1995. The family drug treatment court assists children in moving through the system in accordance with the ASFA timelines. Studies show that if the same court that works with a child and family works with the parent’s substance abuse issues, children are reunified or guided towards permanence in a shorter timeframe. Parents identified as substance abusers are given the option to participate in drug treatment at the very first hearing.”

http://www.nationalcasa.org/JudgesPage/Article_CasaPartner_7-04.htm

Foster Care

16.) Judge Deborah Schumacher – Washoe County, NV (2006) – Judge Schumacher serves as “lead judge” of the NCJFCJ’s “Model Court” project which works to improve the handling of foster care cases nationwide.

<http://www.ncjfcj.org/content/view/902/347/>

17.) Judge Michael Nash – Los Angeles, CA (1998, 2006) – “Judge Nash was recognized for his innovative vision and leadership which has led to major improvements benefiting the Edmund D. Edelman’s Children’s Court and the Los Angeles child welfare system. Judge Nash has overseen the creation of Los Angeles’ first juvenile mental health court and first juvenile drug court, as well as other notable improvements in services to at-risk youth and their families. Since Judge Nash implemented Adoption Saturdays in 1998, more than 9,000 foster children have been adopted at the Edelman Children’s Court.”

“Judge Nash has served on the Superior Court bench since 1989, and currently serves as Lead Judge in NCJFCJ’s Child Victims Act Model Court Project. The Los Angeles Juvenile Court is one of 31 Model Courts around the country that is implementing strategies designed to improve the courts’ handling of child abuse and neglect cases.”

<http://www.ncjfcj.org/content/view/798/347/>

18.) Judge Beth Bloom – Miami, FL (no date given) – County Court judge, Bloom is the founder and director of a program that assists foster children who are aging out of the system. “The focus of the program is to help children develop necessary life skills including seeking a job, managing a budget, and taking care of health and nutrition needs, as they leave the foster system and prepare to live independently.”

http://personal.law.miami.edu/hope/Site/Articles/beth_bloom.html

19.) Ohio Supreme Court committee of judges – Columbus, OH (2005) – These judges are “implementing a project called “Beyond the Numbers: the Ohio Courts' Response to the CFSR.” The goal of the project is to develop local improvement plans, with input from child welfare agencies, prosecutors, defense bar members and others, to systemically achieve improved outcomes for each child and family that comes before the court.”

http://www.sconet.state.oh.us/Communications_office/Press_Releases/2005/fostercare_prog_081905.asp

Juvenile Justice

20.) Judge Michael Andrews – Clearwater, FL (no date) – Judge Andrews and other black judges from the community will be holding a conference to explore the “state of crisis” of young black males. The conference hopes to address “issues facing today’s youths, particularly young black males, to present the justice system in a positive manner, and to introduce himself and other African American judges as roles models that young people may choose to emulate.”
- Black Judges Schedule Forum With Young African American Males PDF

21.) Judge Maxine A. White – Milwaukee, WI (2003) – The program, “The Color of Justice” goals are “first and foremost, to encourage minority students to complete their high school diplomas, and secondly, to consider careers in law. A central topic that White will incorporate into the project are ideals from *Brown v. Board of Education*.” Another program, “Connecting Courtrooms to Classrooms,” spearheaded in part by her colleague, Judge Carl Ashley, pairs eighth-grade students from Milwaukee's public schools with members of the judiciary for one-on-one interaction, some of which is by e-mail and some is face-to-face. These students, however, are chosen in part by their achievement and are not ‘at-risk’”
- Dolan Media Newswires Wisconsin Law Journal (Milwaukee, WI), WORD

22.) Judge Nudelman – Chicago, Illinois (2006) – Judge “Nudelman came up with different programs to affect change... Nudelman helped create a communication and support system to bring people together to open up dialogue and create solutions. Working with a number of not-for-profits, churches and other organizations, Nudelman started the Community Courts Alliance for Progress. The program got other courts involved and started pairing clients with mentorships, job training, and even educating youth about the court systems. ‘By providing a common ground and motivating people in the community to come together we created win-win solutions. It just happened,” says Nudelman. “I found that through teamwork and caring it can be done, and it works.”
http://wcstrategies.com/PDF/Nudelman_Press_Release.pdf

23.) Judge Cindy Lederman – Miami, Florida (2005) – “With psychologist Joy D. Osofsky, PhD (a pediatrics and psychiatry professor at Louisiana State University's Health Sciences Center) Lederman launched the Miami Safe Start Initiative, an offering of innovative intervention programs under the court's umbrella that provide parent-support services, including transportation, GED classes and job placement services. The program also provides developmental screenings for all of its infants and toddlers and the first court-based Early Head Start program in the country. The program's centerpiece is an intensive 25-week one-on-one therapy program between mothers and their babies in which therapists help the mothers understand and relate to their children.

‘When a child comes into our court, everyone has failed the child,’ Lederman says. ‘The child's parents have a multitude of problems and their lives are full of deprivation and impoverishment. Our job is to clean up the mess that's left.’”
<http://www.apa.org/monitor/jun05/maltreatment.html>
Psychology, Public Policy and Law (Vol. 10, No. 1, pages 162–177)

http://fs.aleph.fcla.edu/F/49LHYIPXT92PHSEKSHJ1HS4FHGDN65VKH57B8AH6GBM9EXYKTI-03640?func=item-global&doc_library=FSU01&doc_number=002026906&year=&volume=&sub_library=FSMED

24.) Judge Michael Nash – Los Angeles, California (1998) – “Judge Nash demonstrates his commitment to CASA of Los Angeles by supporting local outreach efforts and making it a priority to personally swear in new volunteers. His leadership in Los Angeles County has had a marked effect on the quality of the child welfare system. Among other accomplishments, he was instrumental in driving collaborative and innovative efforts such as the court’s first juvenile mental health and drug courts, improving services offered to delinquent youth and their families and improving access to quality counsel for children.

Adoption Saturday was pioneered by Judge Nash in 1998, a program which has now expanded into a national effort. He consistently urges the continued support of children’s agencies in tough budget times.”

http://www.nationalcasa.org/JudgesPage/Article/judge_of_the_year.htm

Cultural Sensitivity

25.) Judge Doris Ling-Cohan – New York (1995) – “As a judge she has made demystifying the court system for immigrants and others a priority. In the past several years, she has co-authored three books, including one on how to represent oneself in court, and one giving advice to seniors about how to use the court system. She has conducted numerous workshops and outreach forums on law awareness and domestic violence for the Asian American community.”

“The background of being Chinese and the child of immigrants sensitized me to the need to do something as simple as writing down on a piece of paper their next court date to make sure they understand it,’ she says. ‘Or I stop and explain things for them so that they understand what the next step is. Being in court is scary - even for those who were born in this country.’”

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=5983647&BRD=1841&PAG=461&dept_id=507617&rfti=6

26.) Judge Nancy W. Campbell – Washington County, Hillsboro, OR (2005) – “Judge Campbell is committed to increasing awareness of the special issues and needs surrounding domestic violence in sexual minority relationships. Judge Campbell has given numerous presentations on the subject to audiences-including most recently to the American Judges Association. She is also the chair of the "Working Toward Equality: Responding to Sexual Minority Domestic Violence" Conference held December 2, 2005, in Wilsonville, Oregon.” When working with issues that in LGTB relationships, Judge Campbell suggests “Reflect and model a sense of community and culturally appropriate responses and interactions. Other suggestions I have:

- Don't assume it is "mutual combat." Garner some knowledge about the dynamics and use factual information to determine who the victim is and who the abuser is.
- Try not to "out" them in the process of the case.
- Don't make a big deal about it being "same sex."

- Communicate clearly to other staff and court personnel that making fun is NOT acceptable!
- Have written materials readily available that address or include domestic violence in sexual minority relationships.”

http://www.ncsconline.org/Projects_Initiatives/Family/vol_4.3.htm#Campbell

Problem-Solving Courts / Links to the Community

27.) Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye – New York (2005) “Judge Kaye has spearheaded numerous initiatives to make the court system more efficient and more responsive to the needs of all New Yorkers. Her groundbreaking initiatives include: the development of problem-solving courts which have resulted in more effective outcomes for victims of domestic violence, individuals with substance abuse and mental health problems, and many other individuals who face particular burdens in navigating the justice system; the “Adoption Now” program that has produced faster adoptions and more streamlined procedures for children in Foster Care and their families; the creation of the Commercial Division which has eased the court process for commerce claims and helped create a better climate for business in New York. These court improvements, in combination with countless others, have improved the justice system for all New Yorkers and produced a justice system renowned for its innovation.”

http://www.moderncourts.org/News/pr_11_05_05.html

28.) Judge Margulis – New York (2006) – Judge Margulis has teamed up with the Bronx Community Solutions to offer services to the litigants. “[T]he court continues its same daily operations, but with a problem-solving feel. In small but important ways, Judge Margulis says he has changed how he operates. For example, he notes that he is careful to instruct defendants to report immediately to the Bronx Community Solutions intake office, even asking court officers to escort them when a BCS staff member isn’t available. ‘What I’ve learned is that having defendants report immediately is a major part in having them complete,’ he said.

Before court comes up in the morning, I review the daily docket and identify cases that I feel are appropriate for a community-based sanction. Judge Margulis tells me that he has come to rely on these recommendations, and has even begun to offer sentencing alternatives like inpatient drug treatment on his own. ‘Now I have options that didn’t exist before,’ he said. ‘My choices aren’t just 10 days jail or a straight conditional discharge,’ a sentence which allows offenders to walk out of court without any additional obligations imposed on them.

In a courtroom where over half of misdemeanor offenders plead guilty to their charge, this flexibility gives Judge Margulis some important tools for addressing problems (like drug addiction, homelessness and unemployment) that may have led to an arrest. The goal is to halt the revolving door that brings people back into court again and again. ‘In a courtroom like this, I feel I am successful if I only see a defendant once’ Judge Margulis told me. ‘Since BCS has started, I don’t see as many people coming back.’”

<http://changingthecourt.blogspot.com/2006/05/judges-perspective.html>

Creative Sentencing

29.) Judge Michael A. Cicconetti – Ohio (2005) – “Cicconetti said he began offering creative sentencing when he was getting lots of cases of people speeding in school zones. Eventually he got sick of it, and thought why not force these people to confront the danger they are creating?

He offered violators a choice: Have their license suspended for 90 days, or have it suspended for a shorter period and spend one day working as a crossing guard. He said those violators who spent a day shepherding schools kids across the street never appeared in his courtroom for speeding again, even if they previously had multiple offenses.”

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/LegalCenter/story?id=1322751>

30.) The American Bar Association Materials: The ABA published a book entitled Judicial Outreach on a Shoestring, including over a dozen programs created by judges across the U.S. Forms, templates, and instructions on replicating the programs are included in the book. Available through the ABA.