



# The Bench and Beyond

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

## MESSAGE FROM THE BENCH



Superior Court Judge  
Geronda V. Carter

Our Nation. Our State. Our County. Every level of government is faced with the awesome responsibility of decision making that affects the livelihoods of us all. At this critical time, it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to take a closer look at our lives. Sir Winston Churchill said, "You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give." If we do not make some critical changes or adjustments now, it will be harder to make a living or a life in the future.

On a daily basis, my colleagues and I come up close and personal with the realities of this day and age: children neglected and abused, marriages and relationships suffering, and businesses struggling. There is no better time than the present for us to re-evaluate our level of contribution to society and commitment to the well-being of mankind.

We owe it to our creator. We owe it to the ones our creator enabled us to create. We owe it to ourselves. It is not too late for us to leave this place called earth in better shape than we found it. Let's keep the faith. Let's get to work. Our Nation. Our State. Our Beloved Clayton County. They are all worth saving.

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) . ♦

## SOLICITOR'S OFFICE WORKS WITH LOCAL ART STUDENTS

JENITHA GOUCH, VICTIM SERVICES  
SUPERVISOR, SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

Victims of crime are often overlooked. The week of April 18-24, 2010, was declared National Crime Victims Rights week. Each year the Solicitor General Office sets out to remember victims of crime through community awareness activities. In honor of this national week, the Solicitor's Office teamed up with the Rex Middle School art club to design an art portrait of "The Lady Justice". The art displays this years' theme 'Fairness, Dignity, and Respect'. In the portrait, we hoped to capture expression from all types of crime victims and their emotions. The portrait can be seen in the main lobby area of the office, in hopes of sparking up conversation from those victims that may need to know more details about victim's assistance programs. ♦



## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

GARY DUBOSE, PROGRAMS DIRECTOR, D.A.'S OFFICE

As a component of the Community Investment Initiative, the District Attorney decided to engage our young people in the criminal justice process and laws applicable to the process. This was accomplished by having a poster contest that would depict an armed robbery scene with the caption "Armed Robbery 10 year minimum, real gun, fake gun, doesn't matter"; brought to you by Tracy Graham Lawson Clayton County District Attorney. The winner received a \$100 prize for their artwork which will be showcased in local schools and community venues. Two students from the Eula Perry Center for Learning teamed up and fashioned a winning poster.



*Armed Robbery Movie Cast*

The poster contest would be the source of what soon became a full fledged production. A talented student from Riverdale High School wrote a script and coordination of this film began. Included in the assembly of cast members were students, local law enforcement, Clayton County citizens and our very own superior court judge Albert Collier, to name a few. The cast worked diligently and the students and citizens marveled over the opportunity to work on a positive and informative project with the officers and judge.

The film debuted on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 at the Clayton County Performing Arts Center. All of the participants, their family members and friends were invited out to see the debut before it is shown to the public. The goal of the film was to educate the community about the harsh realities of committing this offense. This will be one of many tools used to educate our community on this and other offenses, and consequences for committing them. Others will be produced that will highlight major community concerns.

The film will be shown at schools, churches and other community events. ♦

## ANNUAL DUI COURT GRADUATION

The team members for the Clayton County State Court DUI/Drug Court Program were proud to honor seven graduates on January 7, 2010, at their annual DUI/Drug Court graduation. Members of the team also presented Judge Linda Cowen with a plaque recognizing her dedication and commitment to the program. The team members are: Judge Linda Cowen, Presiding Judge; Ms. Katrina Hood, Coordinator; Dr. Richard Highland, Treatment Provider; Ms. Sacha Green, Probation Officer; and Deputy Chief Greg Porter, Home Surveillance Officer.



The DUI/Drug Court Program has been operating since February, 2007, and has had 50 people graduate over the three-year period. The graduates, with the assistance of the team, work hard over a period of at least twelve months to change their lives. All participants are multiple DUI offenders. The DUI/Drug Court Program has had no graduate re-offend with another DUI thus far. The success of the DUI/Drug Court Program is a wonderful achievement. ♦

**FOR THE RECORD \*****SUPERIOR COURT**

- 841 criminal filings
- 1,542 domestic relations filings
- 258 general civil filings

**STATE COURT**

- 2,899 civil filings
- 4,317 criminal filings
- 6,860 traffic filings

**ADULT FELONY DRUG COURT**

- 4 participants in Phase I
- 5 participants in Phase II

**DUI COURT**

- 67 participants in Phase I
- 22 participants in Phase II
- 12 participants in Phase III
- 8 participants in Phase IV
- 7 participants graduated

**INTERPRETERS**

- 407 interpreter hours billed
- \$24,299 billed
- 13 languages used

**ADR MEDIATION**

- 186 cases closed
- 58% cases mediated
- 64% reached full or partial agreement

**ADR PARENTING**

- 6 seminars held
- 145 cases referred
- 211 seminar attendees

\*for 1st quarter of 2010

**THINK PINK!**

The employees of the Clerk of Superior & Magistrate Courts spotlight a different charity each month through their "Jeans for Charity" program. For a donation of \$2.00 per week, employees may dress casually on Thursdays. Since its inception in October 2007, the employees have raised over \$8,900 for local as well as world-wide charities.

No month's achievement has been greater than April 2010 when the employees raised money for breast cancer awareness in honor of Sandy King, the wife of local attorney, Larry King. Through employee donations, public contributions and Chick-fil-A biscuit sales, the employees raised over \$2,500.00 for Komen Atlanta.

Employees' enthusiasm was catapulted each week with a new theme: Foolishly Pink, Pretty in Pink, Tickled Pink, Fight Like a Girl and Totally Pink. Employees were encouraged to "dress the part" to match the theme each Thursday. All month long, the offices and cubicles were decorated in an abundance of pink. The colorful displays were instrumental in bringing about attention to customers who often gave a contribution to the cause.

The Clerk's office would like to thank those who contributed or offered support throughout the event. ♦

**NEW PROBATION COMPANY FOR COURTS**

The Clayton County Superior, State, and Magistrate courts now have a new misdemeanor probation management company serving the Circuit. Judicial Correction Services (JCS) recently opened its office doors to misdemeanor probationers at its Clayton County location at 409 Arrowhead Blvd, Suite A-4 in Jonesboro. While new to the Clayton Circuit, JCS and its management team combines more than 25 years in the probation industry, 70 years in law enforcement, and more than 25 years in business management.

For more information about JCS and its probation management model please call 678-829-1474 or visit <http://www.judicialservices.com/>. ♦

**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

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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 : R A Q U E L G O N Z A L E Z

Raquel Gonzalez is the coordinator for Clayton County's newly created Adult Felony Drug Court. She began working with the program in January of this year. As the coordinator, Raquel oversees the program and is in charge of case management. This is her first position within Clayton County. Prior to coming to Clayton County, she worked at the Administrative Office of the Courts of Georgia. During her five years there, she served as a project assistant for the Georgia Alliance for Drug Endangered Children Project (GADEC), data coordinator for GADEC, and as a data coordinator for the Accountability Courts project.

Raquel was born in Yokosuka, Japan, and lived in various parts of the world with her military family. She moved to Georgia to attend Spelman College, and graduated in 2005 with a degree in political science. She is the proud mother of Michael, who is four years old and "the greatest son in the whole entire world!"



Raquel is a member of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and the Georgia Council of Court Administrators. She is very active in her local community and volunteers with organizations servicing at-risk youths, such as the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Atlanta. She is also an active alumna with Spelman College.

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

Running with my son. We run around the neighborhood and local parks

nearly every day. At first, I just wanted to tire him out before bed, but now it's become an activity we both look forward to. Sometimes, the neighbors even cheer us on.

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

My dream vacation...? Probably touring the Mayan ruins of Belize. I would also really enjoy taking my son on an American rail adventure, such as the Grand Canyon Railway/Verde Canyon Railway (he loves trains).

**What is the strangest job you have ever had?**

I've never really had a strange job, but the hardest job I had was running a Learning Center at a local Boys and Girls Club. While I absolutely LOVED the kids, trying to convince them learning was fun during summer camp was more of a challenge than anyone could ever imagine! ♦

*Congratulations to Sue Leary, who retired this month after 20 years of service to the Clayton County courts. Sue served as judicial secretary in both Magistrate and Superior Court.*

**L E G A L  
L I N G O**

**"Tenancy at Sufferance"**

*When a landlord has not yet demanded that a tenant vacate the premises after a lease has expired*