

THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

THIRTEEN



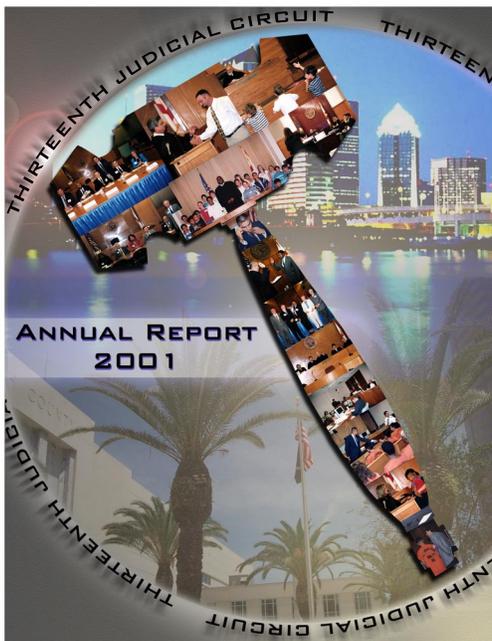
# ANNUAL REPORT 2001

THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

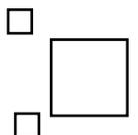
# Table of Contents

Letter from the Chief Judge	2
Circuit Information	3
Administrative Leadership	4
Constitutional Officers	5
Judiciary	6-9
Divisions of Court	10-14
Supplemental Judicial Resources	15-17
Fiscal Summary	18
Legal Department	19
Administrative Office of the Courts	19-20
Statistically Speaking	27-26
Highlights of 2002	28-32



## **COVER THEME**

The Hillsborough County Courthouse is absorbed into Tampa's skyline to provide a backdrop of the gavel collage, indicative of the mallet judges use to command attention in the courtroom. The composition reveals scenes from traditional court proceedings, educational experiences and celebration moments.



Dear Friends,

Like you, we have been reminded of our American heritage and the principles upon which our country was founded. During 2001, we continued our efforts to build public trust and confidence in our judicial system and to increase access to the courts. This has been a rewarding time for me as I have been more involved in activities outside of the courtroom which has provided me with a broader perspective of the daily operations that are required for us to dispense justice in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit.

One of the most visible aspects of our labor last year can be seen when you log on our new website at [www.flcourts13.org](http://www.flcourts13.org). Keeping abreast of technology, we revamped our website to provide more information and to allow for more interaction with internet visitors. We have seen tremendous results in the numbers of people who access information through this medium now and will continue to devote resources to improve our communication in this area.

I am hopeful that you will discover things about this circuit that you were unaware of as you read through this report. Like all courts across the state we have moved to a performance measures within our programs, which is reflected in the Administrative Office of the Courts section. If you are interested in more detailed descriptions of the various divisions of court or programs, please visit our website or contact us by telephone and we will provide additional information to you.

As is customary during this time we recognize our colleagues who have left the bench and welcome those who join us as members of the judiciary. We celebrated the retirement of our former chief judge last summer and bid farewell to F. Dennis Alvarez as he retired to forge another career in private practice here in Tampa. Other members of our judiciary returned to private practice, including Judge Robert Bonanno, Judge Dick Greco, Jr., and Judge Gaspar Ficarotta. Because of vacancies created in our circuit, several new individuals were appointed to the bench, including Judge Battles, Judge Timmerman, Judge Huey, Judge Bergmann, Judge Nazaretian, and Judge Black. In addition, Judge Pomponio was elevated to the circuit bench.

On behalf of the judiciary and staff in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, thank you for allowing us to serve the citizens of Hillsborough County. We are grateful for this opportunity and promise to continue to serve you faithfully.

With kindest regards,

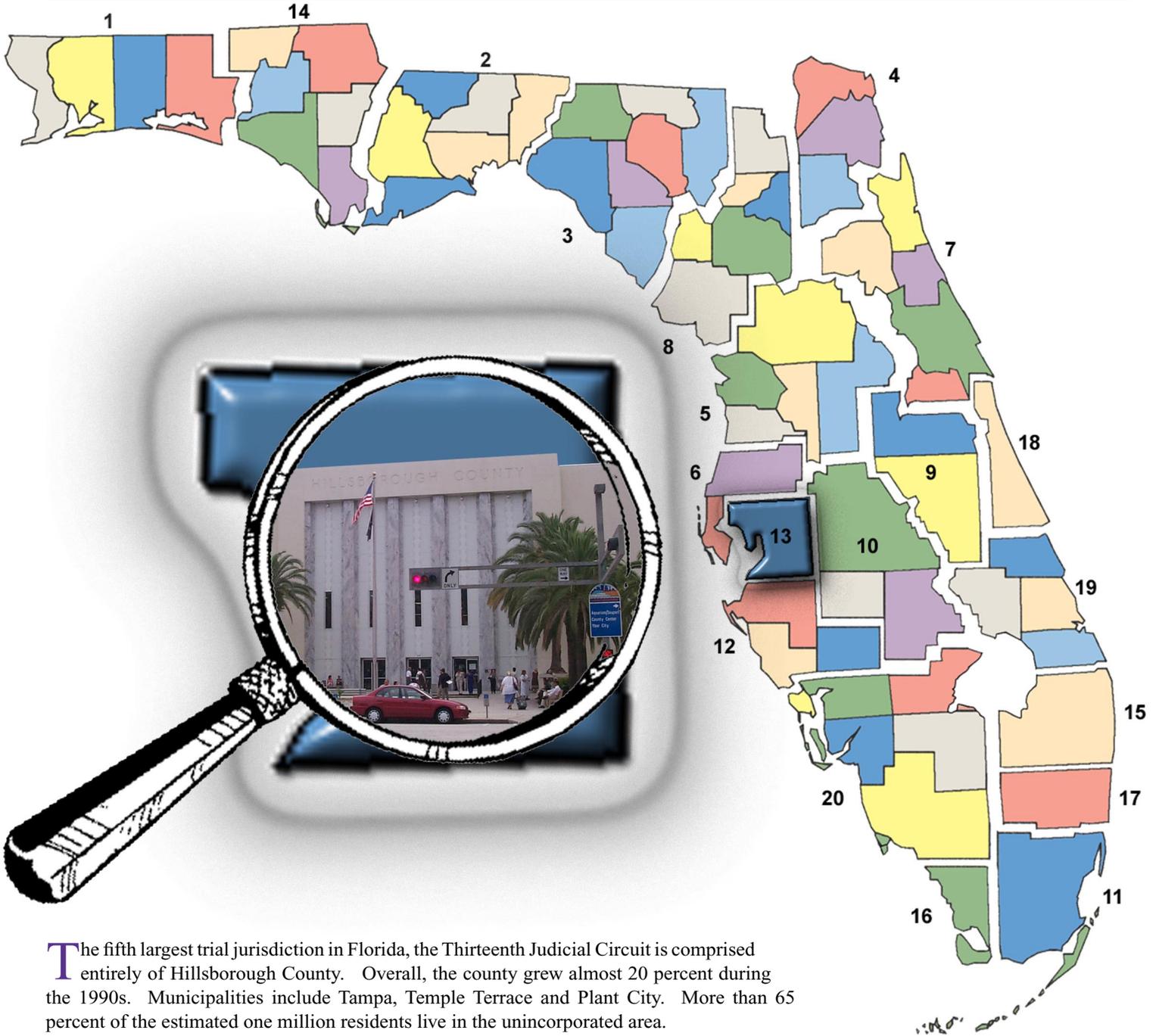


Manuel Menendez, Jr.  
Chief Judge

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## Circuit Information

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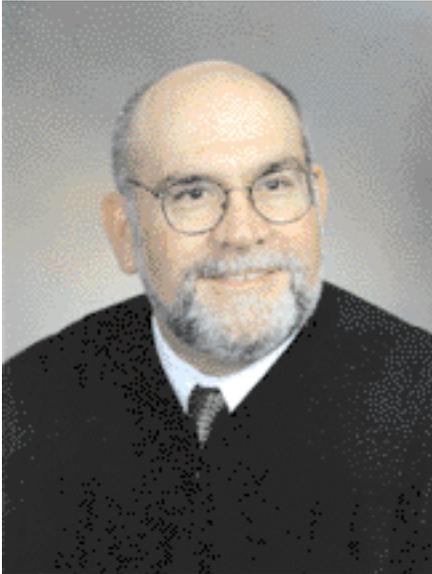
The fifth largest trial jurisdiction in Florida, the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit is comprised entirely of Hillsborough County. Overall, the county grew almost 20 percent during the 1990s. Municipalities include Tampa, Temple Terrace and Plant City. More than 65 percent of the estimated one million residents live in the unincorporated area.

Located midway along the west coast of Florida, Hillsborough County is home to the largest bay in the state opening into the Gulf of Mexico. The Port of Tampa is the largest tonnage port in Florida and the tenth largest port in the United States with respect to tonnage. Tampa is the largest city of Florida's West Central Coast, serving as the hub of finance, insurance, real estate, professional sports and cultural activities.

Hillsborough County has a diversified economic base including a large service sector, a large manufacturing sector and a thriving retail trade sector. The county's total agricultural production ranks fifth in the state. It is the nation's top producer of winter strawberries and tropical fish. Tourism is another major component of the local economy.

The Tampa Bay area is one of the largest media markets in the United States and ranks number 13 in the country, reaching over one and a half million households. As our population increases, so does the case load in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. The courts strive to meet the growing demand for justice related services in our community.

**Chief Judge**



**Manuel Menendez, Jr.**

Chosen by circuit and county judges in the circuit, the Chief Judge has the administrative responsibility over all courts, judges and officers of the court. While he does not supervise judges as they are independently elected, the Chief Judge's primary goal is to develop an administrative plan for the circuit to run efficiently. Judges request specific division assignments, which the Chief Judge considers when assigning judges to courts/divisions throughout the circuit. In addition, the Chief Judge appoints an administrative judge in each division, assigns judges to temporary duty within the circuit, regulates use of courtrooms, requires status reports, examines the status of inmates in the county jails and handles other managerial tasks.

**Court Administrator**



**Michael L. Bridenback**

Chosen by circuit and county judges in the circuit, the Court Administrator assists the Chief Judge in carrying out administrative duties related to the operation of county and circuit courts. He performs a range of functions from management of court programs to facilities management. Other duties include jury and witness management, public information, case flow management, information systems, court reporting technology, certified process servers, dispute resolution alternatives, interagency coordination, analyses in criminal justice areas, judges' certifications, program performance audits, development of policies and procedures, new program and service proposals, contract negotiations and other administrative duties associated with day-to-day court operations.

**General Counsel**



**David Rowland**

The Court Counsel advises the judiciary in all legal matters, including ethics, trial procedure and judicial administration. He also provides general advice to the Chief Judge, Court Administrator and managers of the various court programs, including the review of personnel policies. He represents the local circuit and the Chief Judge in legal proceedings in the 2nd DCA and in the Florida Supreme Court. He is responsible for managing the Legal Department, which includes full-time attorneys who primarily assist the circuit and county court judges with case research and proposed orders.

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## *Constitutional Officers*

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Richard Ake



Julianne Holt



Mark Ober



Cal Henderson

### **Clerk of the Court**

The responsibilities related to the courts include ensuring that the courts' orders, judgements or directives are carried out within the parameter allowed by law; maintaining the courts' records; collecting and disbursing the court fines, fees and assessments; and collecting and disbursing court-ordered child support and alimony payments. The Clerk is also responsible for issuing marriage licenses, performing marriage ceremonies and issuing jury summons.

To learn more about Mr. Ake and the roles and responsibilities of the Clerk, log on to [www.hillsclerk.com](http://www.hillsclerk.com).

### **Office of the Public Defender**

The primary responsibility is to assure that effective, quality legal representation is efficiently provided to all indigent persons to whom the court appoints the Office of the Public Defender. At the discretion of the Public Defender, additional efforts also include identifying the causes of criminal behavior in an attempt to reduce the rate of repeat offending and promoting positive change in the lives of those "at risk" of entering the criminal justice system.

To learn more about Ms. Holt and the roles and responsibilities of the Public Defender, log on to [www.pd13.state.fl.us](http://www.pd13.state.fl.us).

### **Office of the State Attorney**

The primary responsibility is to represent the people in both capital and non-capital prosecutions for violations of state laws and related matters in state courts. As the prosecutor of criminal cases, the State Attorney also serves as chief advisor to the grand jury and represents the public interest in all criminal matters and cases that affect the community safety, peace and welfare. In addition, the State Attorney is responsible for conducting and coordinating all criminal investigations with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in the circuit concerning violations of state law.

To learn more about Mr. Ober and the roles and responsibilities of the State Attorney, log on to [www.sao13th.com](http://www.sao13th.com).

### **Sheriff of Hillsborough County**

Responsibilities related to the court are providing law enforcement and bailiff support for the circuit, responding to and providing for the security and welfare of more than 48,000 inmates appearing in court. In addition, the Sheriff is also responsible for meals, transportation and overnight accommodations for jurors. The Sheriff is responsible for the service and execution of court orders as they are issued by county and circuit court judges.

To learn more about Sheriff Henderson and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, log on to [www.hcso.tampa.fl.us](http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us).

The Constitution establishes a circuit court in each of the twenty judicial circuits, which are established by the Legislature. Within each circuit, there may be any number of judges, depending on the population and case load of the area. In 2001, 51 judges served the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit. Photographs portraying circuit and county court judges represent those who served during 2001, as well as those presiding at the time of publication.

**Circuit Judges**

The majority of jury trials in Florida take place before one judge in circuit court. The circuit courts are sometimes referred to as courts of general jurisdiction, in recognition of the fact that most criminal and civil cases originate at this level.

Judges are elected by the voters in nonpartisan, contested elections and serve six-year terms. In the event a judge cannot serve the remainder of his or her term, the governor of Florida appoints a judge to that position on the bench.

To qualify as a candidate for circuit judge, a person must be a resident-elect of Florida and must have been admitted to the practice of law in the state for the preceding five years.



Judge Espinosa talks about life on the bench with students during Law Week.



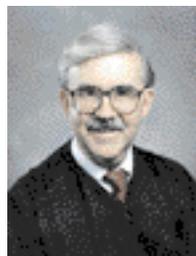
F. Dennis Alvarez



James D. Arnold



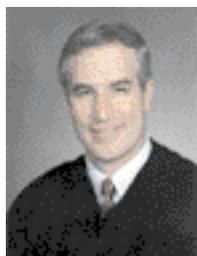
Rex M. Barbas



James M. Barton, II



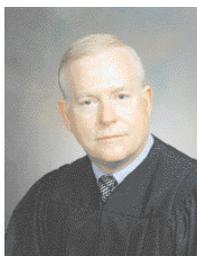
Emmett L. Battles



Herbert J. Baumann, Jr.



Debra K. Behnke



Charles Ed Bergmann



Anthony K. Black



Robert H. Bonanno



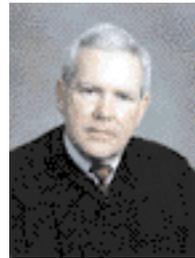
Marva L. Crenshaw



Jack Espinosa, Jr.



Katherine G. Essrig



Donald C. Evans



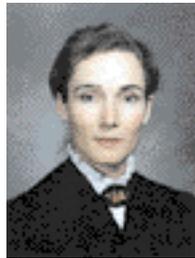
Gasper J. Ficarrotta



Ronald N. Ficarrotta



Barbara Fleischer



Florence Foster



Robert Foster



William Fuente



Dick Greco, Jr.



Frank A. Gomez



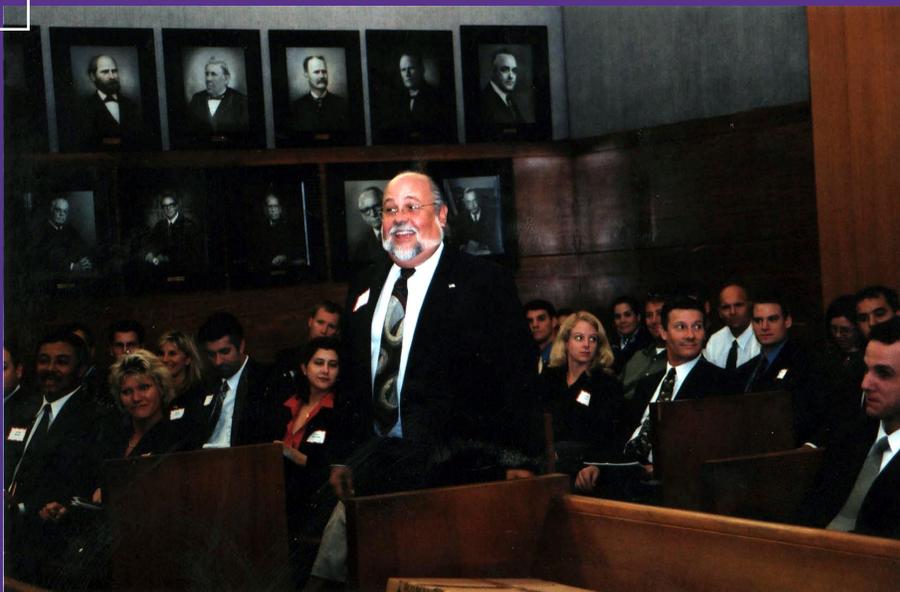
Gregory P. Holder



Cynthia A. Holloway



Charlene E. Honeywell



Judge Barbas briefs young lawyers in the Hillsborough County Law Association at an *Afternoon in the Courthouse*.



Claudia R. Isom



William P. Levens



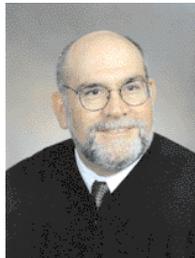
Judges Fuente, Wolfe, Barton, Pomponio and Espinosa preside in Moot Court to assist Stetson law students prepare for competition.



Perry A. Little



Vivian C. Maye



Manuel Menendez, Jr.



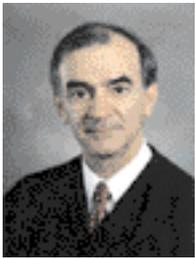
Bob Anderson Mitcham



Richard A. Nielsen



J. Rogers Padgett



Sam D. Pendino



Daniel L. Perry



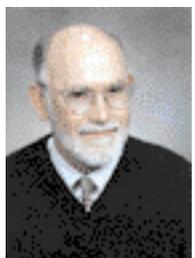
Denise Pomponio



Susan Sexton



Robert J. Simms



Ralph C. Stoddard



Chet A. Tharpe



Wayne S. Timmerman

**County Judges**

In contrast to circuit courts, the majority of non-jury trials in Florida take place before one judge in county court. A large part of this court's work involves citizen disputes, such as traffic offenses, misdemeanors, and relatively small monetary disputes.

The Constitution establishes a county court in each of Florida's 67 counties. As in circuit court, judges are either elected or appointed to the bench by the governor of Florida, and also serve six-year terms.



Judge Myers banters about the bench with students during Law Week.



Charlotte Anderson



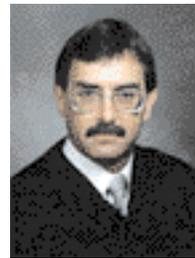
James V. Dominguez



Gaston J. Fernandez



Frank A. Gomez



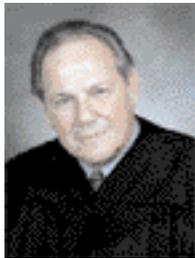
Walter R. Heinrich



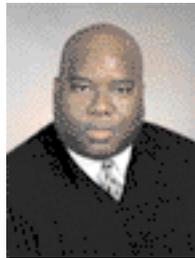
Paul Huey



Manuel A. Lopez



Elvin L. Martinez



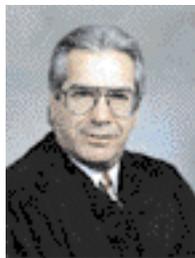
Eric R. Myers



Nick Nazaretian



Joelle Ann Ober



Raul C. Palomino, Jr.



Cherly K. Thomas



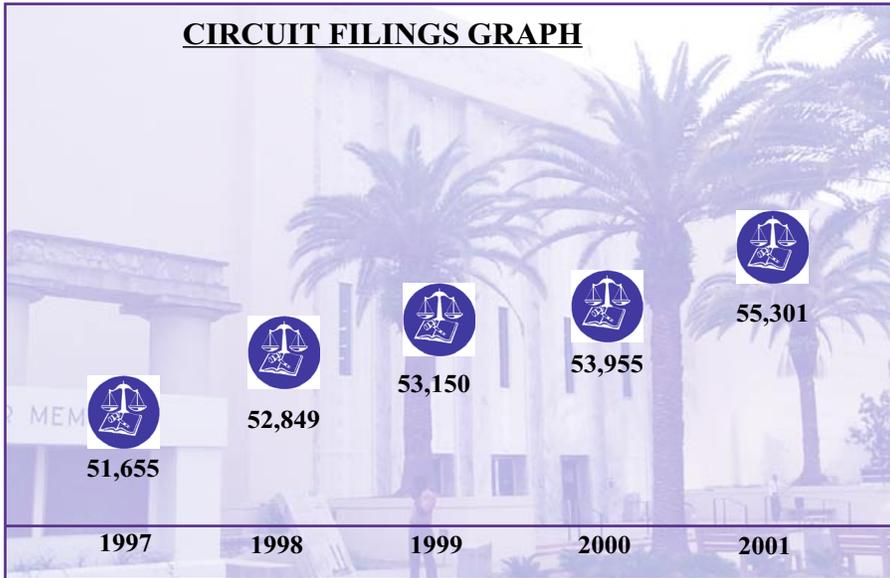
Christine K. Vogel



Mark R. Wolfe



## Divisions of Court



Circuit filings have increased seven percent during the last five years.

Circuit courts have general trial jurisdiction over matters not assigned by statute to the county courts and also hear appeals from county court cases. Thus, circuit courts are simultaneously the highest trial court and the lower appellate court in Florida's judicial system.

Data used throughout this section of the Annual Report is derived from the Florida Supreme Court Summary Reporting System (SRS) Report, which is used as a base for workload measures for judges.

The most dramatic rise in filings was in the Civil division (16%) and in the Family Law division (15%). Filings decreased (5%) in the Criminal Justice & Trial division.

### Juvenile Division

Juvenile proceedings are divided into dependency and delinquency divisions in this circuit. There are three judges and two general masters assigned to the Juvenile Dependency Division; the Honorable Katherine G. Essrig is the Administrative Judge. There are also two judges assigned to the Juvenile Delinquency Division; the Honorable Richard A. Nielsen is the Administrative Judge. *(For more information on Juvenile Diversionary Programs, see page 22.)*

<b>FAST FACTS</b>	
<b>2001</b>	
<i>Fast Facts on Juvenile Delinquency Division</i>	
<u>Complaints</u>	10,840
<u>Petitions</u>	4,743
<u>Reopened</u>	1,065
<u>Dispositions</u>	
Dismissed prior to petition	5,502
Petitions disposed	6,250
Certified to criminal	1
Direct files to felony	246
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,999</b>
<u>Detention Hearings</u>	5,607

<b>FAST FACTS</b>	
<b>2001</b>	
<i>Fast Facts from Dependency Division</i>	
<u>Reopened</u>	7,025
<u>Petitions</u>	1,437
<u>Dispositions</u>	1,049
<u>Other</u>	
Foster Care Review	10,356
Shelter Hearings	1,234
Termination of Parental Rights Filed	251

### Juvenile Drug Court Division

The Honorable Jack Espinosa, Jr., is the Administrative Judge of this single judge division. Statistics are included in the Juvenile Delinquency Division. This diversionary program is treatment-based and lasts from nine to eighteen months. *(For more information about Juvenile Drug Court Programs, see page 23.)*

**Criminal Justice & Trial Division**

There are ten judges assigned to this division; the Honorable J. Rogers Padgett is the Administrative Judge. Because of the staggering statistics of drug related crimes, separate divisions were established. One judge in this felony division also hears cases related to sexual offenses.



**Drug Crimes represented almost 30 percent of all cases in the Criminal & Justice Trial Division.**



***Sexual Battery and Child Abuse Cases***

A felony court division was created in 2000 to handle sexual battery and child abuse cases in Hillsborough County. In addition, Involuntary Civil Commitment of Sexual Violent Predators are heard in this division. Formerly known as the Jimmy Ryce Act, Florida statute allows the State Attorney to file petitions in Circuit Court, seeking to have persons who have been previously convicted of a “sexually violent” or “sexually motivated” offense involuntarily committed as “sexually violent predators” upon their release from prison. The Honorable Jack Espinosa, Jr., presides in this division. Statistics are included in the Criminal Justice & Trial Division.



## FAST FACTS

### 2001

*Fast Facts from Criminal Justice & Trial Division*

<u>Filings</u>	
Violent Crimes	2,639
Property Crimes	5,642
Drug Crimes	3,945
Other Felonies	<u>1,351</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,638</b>

<u>Dispositions</u>	
Pleas	10,652
Trials	289
Other	<u>2,959</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,900</b>

<u>Reopened</u>	6,121
<u>Post Conviction Relief Motions Filed</u>	601
<u>Probation Revocation Hearings</u>	10,503
<u>Bond Hearings</u>	8,414
<u>Adversary Preliminary Hearings</u>	1,026



Judge Evans congratulates Drug Court graduate.

***Adult Drug Court and Drug Divisions***

There are three judges assigned to this felony court division; the Honorable Donald C. Evans is the Administrative Judge. This division includes both a Pre-trial Intervention Program, established in 1992, and Drug Court divisions, established in 1994, for more serious drug offenders who request treatment and agree to plead guilty to the charges against them. Statistics are included in the Criminal Justice & Trial Division. *(For more information about Drug Court Programs, see Page 23.)*

**Guardianship, Mental Health, Probate & Trust Division**

There is one judge and one general master assigned to this division; The Honorable Susan Sexton is the Administrative Judge. While filings in this division grew only five percent, Guardianship filings grew more than 15 percent. Almost 94 percent of reopened cases are Guardianship because of statutory requirements for annual reviews.



Judge Sexton joins Mike Bridenback and EJC staff as they celebrate receiving the National Association of Court Management award.



**FAST FACTS**  
**2001**

*Fast Facts from Guardianship, Mental Health, Probate & Trust Division*

<u>Filings</u>		<u>Dispositions</u>	
Probate	2,558	By Judge	1,622
Guardianship	548	Non Jury Trial	1,275
Trust	48	Before Trial	<u>1,622</u>
Baker Act	1,624	TOTAL	5,530
Other Mental Health	<u>586</u>		
TOTAL	5,364		
<u>Reopened</u>	4,684		

**General Civil Division**

Ten judges are assigned to this division, with the Honorable James M. Barton, II, serving as Administrative Judge.

Filings increased almost 13 percent in 2001. While only 280 product liability cases were filed, these types of cases grew 45 percent in one year. Mortgage foreclosures continued to represent more than one-third of cases filed in this division.



**FAST FACTS**  
**2001**

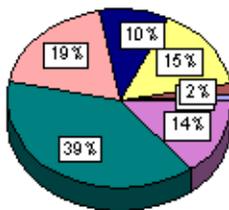
*Fast Facts from General Civil Division*

<u>Filings</u>		<u>Dispositions</u>	
Mortgage Foreclosure	4,409	Jury Trial	102
Contract	2,084	By Judge	5,276
Auto Negligence	1,737	Before Hearing	3,971
Other	<u>3,086</u>	Other	<u>1,536</u>
TOTAL	11,316	TOTAL	10,885

Reopened 3,779

Appeals from County Court 102

**GENERAL CIVIL FILINGS**



- Professional Malpractice
- Product Liability
- Auto Negligence
- Other Negligence
- Contract Indebtedness
- Mortgage Foreclosure

**Family Law Division**

There are six judges, three general masters and two support hearing officers assigned to this division. Two of those judges hear Domestic Violence injunctions. The Honorable Marva Crenshaw is the Administrative Judge.

Filings increased almost 9 percent in 2001. More than one-quarter of the filings were for Domestic Violence and repeat violence cases. Dissolutions represented one-third of the cases.

 <b>FAST FACTS</b> <b>2001</b>			
<i>Fast Facts from Family Law Division</i>			
<u>Filings</u>		<u>Dispositions</u>	
Dissolutions	6,327	By Judge	16,619
Domestic Violence	4,487	Before Hearing	877
Other	7,989	TOTAL	17,496
TOTAL	18,803		
<u>Reopened</u>	6,387		



Plant City Courthouse serves cases located east of Highway 301 or the cause of action occurred in this area or the property is located in this area.

County courts are sometimes referred to as the “people’s courts,” because they often involve citizen disputes, less serious criminal matters (misdemeanors), and small monetary disputes less than \$15,000. As with circuit courts, data in this section of the Annual Report is derived from the Florida Supreme Court Summary Reporting System (SRS) Report, which is used as a base for workload measures for judges.

**East County Divisions**

One full-time circuit judge is assigned in Plant City to hear a varied docket, including general civil, family law, and probate cases. There are no felony or juvenile cases heard at the Plant City Courthouse. The Honorable Ralph Stoddard was temporarily assigned as Administrative Judge of this circuit division.

Two full-time county judges are assigned to handle varied dockets, including county civil and criminal cases, comprising both misdemeanor and traffic offenses. The Honorable Christine Vogel is the Administrative Judge.



Judge Dominguez joined with county officials and other judges for a memorial service after 9-11-02.

**County Civil Division**

Four judges are assigned to this division; the Honorable Charlotte Anderson is the Administrative Judge. Small claims filings grew almost 25 percent in one year, representing more than 45 percent of all filings in this division. While eviction cases grew more conservatively at less than eight percent, they represent more than one-third of cases in this division.



## FAST FACTS

### 2001

*Fast Facts from the County Criminal Division*

**Information was unavailable at  
time of the report**

**County Criminal Division**

Six judges are assigned to this division; the Honorable James V. Dominguez is the Administrative Judge. One judge is assigned to hear misdemeanor domestic violence charges and any probationary charges of participating defendants. Civil Traffic Hearing Officers are also assigned to this division. Sixty percent of cases heard by Hearing Officers were traffic arraignments, resulting in more than 28,000 hearings. Another 6,300 traffic hearings were conducted. Water use violations represented more than 12 percent of hearings.



Julie Holt takes a turn at the Public Defender's table during First Appearances Court.



## FAST FACTS

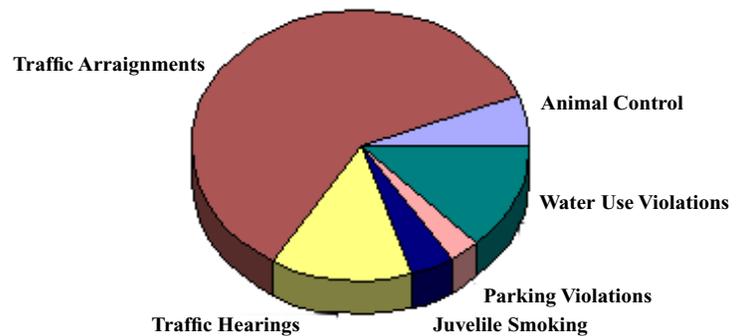
### 2001

*Fast Facts from the County Civil Division  
(excludes civil infractions, such as traffic violations)*

<u>Filings</u>		<u>Dispositions</u>	
Small Claims	26,666	Trial	7
Evictions	9,657	By judge	6,456
Other	409	Settlement	10,681
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,009</b>	Default	8,129
		Other	556
		<b>Total</b>	<b>25,829</b>
Reopened	7,486		

**HEARING OFFICERS CASES HEARD**

**FY 2001**



**Emergency Division**

Florida statutes mandate that inmates have the right to appear before a judge within 24 hours of their arrest. A fiber optic link connects the jail and the courthouse via closed circuit television, to conduct First Appearances or Preliminary Presentations (P.P. Court) on all criminal cases, bond and ROR motions, arraignment hearings for incarcerated defendants, misdemeanor violation of probation hearings and other emergency criminal matters.

**MASTERS AND HEARING OFFICERS**

Quasi-judicial officers conduct formal court hearings to assist in the case load of a division. Specific authorization for the duties are outlined in administrative Orders. The masters and hearing officers serve under the direction of the administrative judge of the respective divisions. General Masters in the Dependency Division were established in 2001 as part of the Model Dependency Court Initiative.

**General Masters in Family Law Division**



Roxie Crowell



Marshall Farkas



Martin Proctor

**Child Support Hearing Officers in Family Law Division**



Michael Coffee



Joe Navarra

**Special Master in Guardianship, Mental Health & Trust Division**



Nick Ficarrotta

**General Masters in Dependency Division**



Jon Johnson



Joan Montagno

**Civil Traffic Hearing Officers**

Independent contractors appointed by the chief judge hear all civil traffic infractions except those filed in conjunction with criminal traffic offenses or cases involving personal injury or death or cases transferred to a county judge pursuant to Florida Statutes. In addition, these hearing officers also hear cases related to county ordinances for water violations or animal control.

Daniel L. Castillo	Vicky L. Kaufholz
Bruce P. Curry	Lawrence A. Lempert
David A. Dee	Nancy A. Lorenzo
Maurice M. Feller	Vicki L. Reeves
William J. Foster	Kim K. Seavy
Donald R. Gillette	Bradley D. Souders
Damon C. Glisson	J. Benton Stewart, II

**Senior Judges**

Retired judges who wish to remain active and offer assistance to this circuit are approved for recall by order of the Florida Supreme Court. These senior judges are vested with all necessary powers to complete judicial assignments. They are used for lengthy trials or special category cases; educational, professional or personal absence of a presiding judge; vacancies; and cases requiring out-of-circuit judges.

Horace A. Andrews	Roland Gonzalez
Edward R. Bentley	John P. Griffin
Richard W. Carr	Robert F. Michaels
Frederick A. DeFuria	William A. Norris
Carl C. Durrance	Robert W. Rawlings
Daniel L. Gallaher	Harry Stein
John M. Gilbert	Ralph Steinberg

**County Judges on Special Assignment**



Judge Fernandez, far right, attended GAL Light of Hope ceremony, along with Judge Battles, Judge Gomez and other staff.

County judges are sometimes appointed as circuit judges to address the circuit court as special need and case load dictates at first appearance division and civil domestic violence, overflow trial dockets in circuit court, or absence of the presiding judge.

Judge Raul Palomino and Judge Eric Myers were assigned to the Family Law Division; Judge Palomino heard domestic violence cases. Judge Gaston Fernandez was assigned to the Dependency Division and Judge Manuel Lopez was assigned to the East County Division.



People pass through the Magnetometers more than 14,000 times each day.

### County Security

Hillsborough County Security Services provides support at the courthouse 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. Personnel provide protection for visitors, employees and property. They respond to requests for assistance, handle lost-and-found items, and enforce parking regulations on county property.

Five controlled access points are strategically located throughout the courthouse complex, including the Plant City Courthouse. People pass through Magnetometers more than 3.5 million times during 2001. The Twiggs Street entrance to the Courthouse Annex was the most frequently used gateway, representing more than one-third of the traffic flow into the courthouse complex.

### Bailiffs

Law enforcement and bailiff support for the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit is provided by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Court Services Section. Specifically empowered to maintain the security of the jury, the bailiff's duties also include protection of judges, courtroom personnel and the public. They provide for the security and welfare of nearly 43,000 inmates appearing in court, as well as being responsible for meals, transportation and overnight accommodations for jurors. The Court Services Section is staffed by 88 detention deputies, 6 supervisors, 2 law enforcement deputies and 1 civilian employee.

**Bailiffs took over 2,300 persons into custody on court orders or arrest warrants at the courthouse in fiscal year 2000-2001.**

### Judicial Assistants

Each judge in the circuit and county courts has a judicial assistant to manage office operations and coordinate case activity. Commonly referred to as a J.A., these employees work under the direction of the individual judge. Administrative duties include scheduling court proceedings, preparing court orders, coordination of support personnel, providing information to the public and court system employees and maintaining the judge's private library.

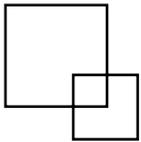


Judicial Assistants attended the Judges Meeting in June 2001 to express their appreciation for the leadership of former Chief Judge F. Dennis Alvarez.

## Fiscal Summary

The Thirteenth Judicial Circuit traditionally receives funding from diversified sources, including revenue from the State of Florida and Hillsborough County. In general, the state budget operates on a continuous process and the county works on a modified zero base budget. The funding source dictates the fiscal year; the state operates from July-June, while the county operates from October-September. The financial summary below represents the county fiscal year 2001-2002.

State revenue accounted for more than 42 percent of funding for the circuit and county courts, while Hillsborough County provided 21 percent of the allocated funds. Although Trust Funds and Grant Funds represent only 18 percent of the budget, this category of funding has continued to increase each fiscal year with the rise in Fine & Forfeiture revenue.



### Funding Sources

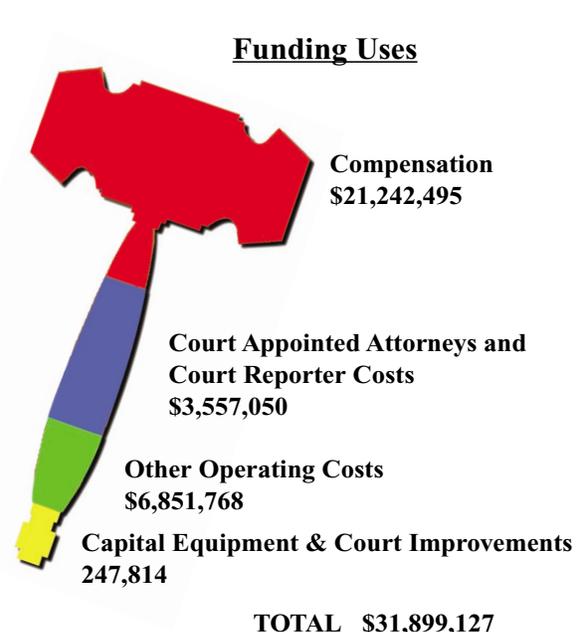
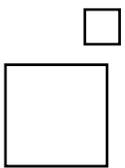


State funding provides salaries and benefits of judges, judicial assistants and law clerks, as well as positions in the Administrative Office of the Courts, including family court support positions, Alternative Sanctions Coordinator and Guardian ad Litem staff. In addition, the state allocates funding for the Dependency Court Improvement project, Civil Traffic Hearing Officer costs, Drug Court improvements and technology positions.

County funding provides operating expenses of judicial offices and the Administrative Office of the Courts. In addition, the county allocates funding for legal research support for judges, technology support and Court Business Center operations. Positions are also funded through the county in Family Intake Unit, Child Custody Investigations, Guardian ad Litem Program, Indigent Screening Unit, Elder Justice Center, Drug Court treatment, Domestic Violence programs, court appointed attorneys, court reporting and court interpreters' costs.

### Funding Uses

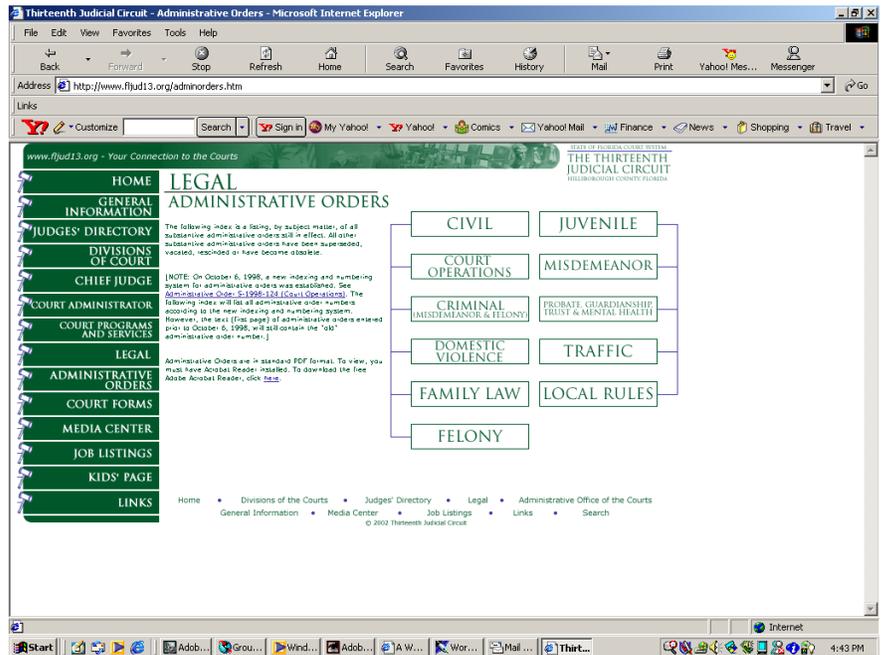
Compensation for judges and staff accounts for two-thirds of the budget. More than 10 percent of expenses are applied to costs for court-appointed Attorneys and court reporters. Approximately 20 percent of expenses are associated with other operating costs and capital equipment and court improvement.



**LEGAL DEPARTMENT**

Under the Court Counsel's administrative leadership, full-time and part-time attorneys, law clerks and support staff perform various legal research projects under his direction. Staff attorneys also assist the judges with proposed orders, pending cases and administrative orders. Law clerks provide research on criminal post-conviction relief motions and assist with case disposition in the probate division. Interns also assist with research under the supervision of the judges and staff attorneys.

Under the authority of the Chief Judge, granted by Rule 2.050 of the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, the Court Counsel and staff attorneys draft administrative orders that are applicable to local practices.



**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**



Senior Managers meet monthly with the Court Administrator. First row: Marty Merrell, Nancy Yanez, Rick Melendi, Paul McGuire, Ron Szyal, Angie Smith. Second row: Abdiel Ortiz, Jill Ibell, Mike Bridenback, Sharon Noll, Kirby Jungers, Heather Thulberry.

To assist the Trial Court Administrator in fulfilling his responsibilities, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) employs staff who are dedicated to assisting the Chief Judge and other members of the judiciary in carrying out constitutional and administrative duties. Departments within the AOC were established to organize these efforts in an efficient manner, with senior management staff leading the activities within specialized areas. The largest departments, Court Operations and Mediation Programs, employ a Senior Management Team to oversee the operation of specialized court divisions, certain quasi-judicial resources, manage contracts for privatized services and provide guidance to Program Coordinators.

For more information about program descriptions, visit our website at [www.flcourts13.org](http://www.flcourts13.org) or contact the Office of Public Information to request written material.

**Organizational Chart**

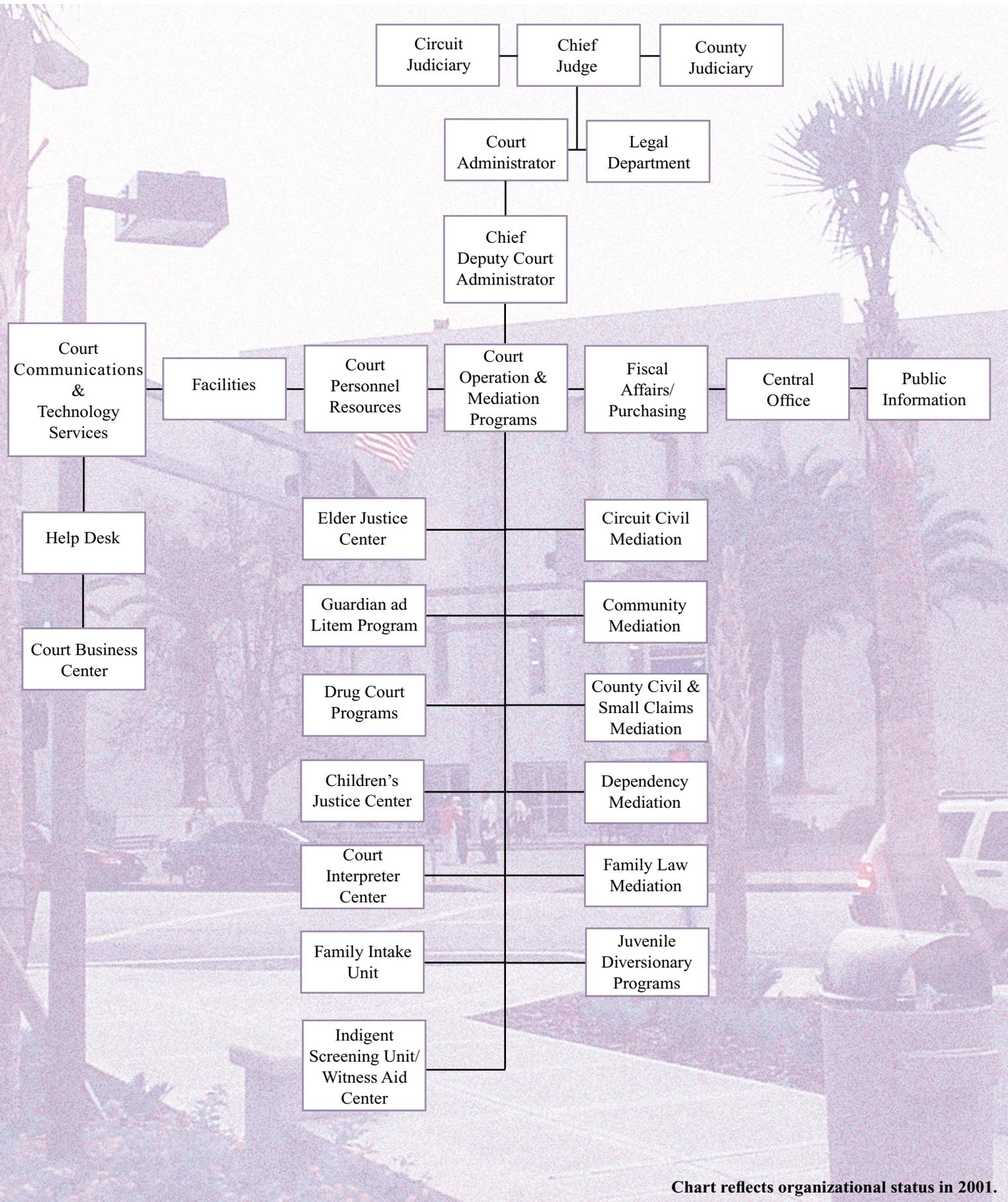


Chart reflects organizational status in 2001.

### Central Office

The Performance Measures Team has worked with service departments and Program Coordinators during the last two years to establish performance measures and to provide technical training in a common spreadsheet language. The team met individually with Program Coordinators and Senior Managers on a quarterly basis. Incremental achievements, leading to a comprehensive quality performance framework have been accomplished. Performance measures were created to document processes, generally by volume or cost. Outcome measures range from satisfaction surveys to time measures to effectiveness percentages.

This section of the report, *Statistically Speaking*, will feature some of the data collected as a result of the implementation of this quality assurance effort.

### Court Operations

Eight programs are included in this department, as well as other areas of management such as Domestic Violence. In addition to serving the judiciary, staff provide direct service to the public.

### Children's Justice Center

Supervised visitations continue to represent the overwhelming majority of services rendered at the Children's Justice Center. A slight increase from FY 2000, the number of supervised visitations grew to 1,669, an average of 139 visits each month. More significantly, the increase in reports and testimony to the courts escalated 30 percent to more than 240 occasions.

Because forensic interviews and supervised visitations are videotaped, technology allows professionals access to the service events without further trauma to the child. While the number of tapes released increased 30 percent, the most dramatic increase in services was on-site review of tapes; this service snowballed almost 60 percent, accounting for more than 900 tapes viewed at the CJC.

Staff and contractual child custody investigators logged almost 6,000 hours of investigations, with 130 investigations ordered in 2001. Approximately 70 percent of the investigations were completed within 75 days from the date the payment was received and the cases were assigned. Almost \$76,000 was collected for services rendered, which represents 80 percent of the billing.

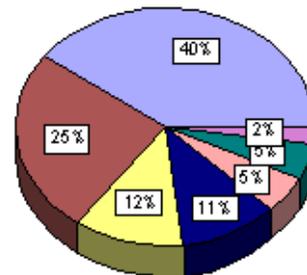
Two staff members were involved in a pilot program for six months, which led court administration to enter into formal contracts with the employees to allow them to tele-commute to increase efficiency of operations.

### Family Intake Unit

The number of walk-in clients swelled to 13,637, representing a 25 percent increase from the previous year. Dissolution of Marriages was the primary issue cited by walk-in clients, with 5,500 requests related to this subject. More than 3,000 cases were set for hearings by staff in the Family Intake Unit.

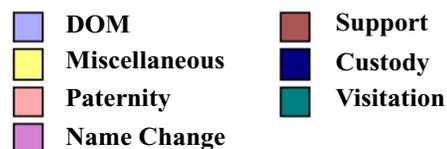
### FAMILY INTAKE UNIT

Walk-In Issues



**Fifty-seven percent of cases in the Family Intake Unit were disposed of less than 90 days during 2001.**

Surveys were distributed to pro se litigants in all divisions in May 2001. Results indicate 95 percent of respondents would use the Family Intake Unit again. Simplicity of the case was the number one reason cited for the decision to use their assistance. Almost three fourths of respondents indicated the instructions for using the forms were helpful to very helpful.



***Court Interpreter Center***

Equal access to the courts is not available if participants cannot understand the proceedings because of a language barrier. One out of five defendants is Spanish speaking. Staff and freelance interpreters provided Spanish interpreting and translating services for more than 14,000 cases in 2001. Less than four percent of the cases were related to sign language or other languages.



Court Interpreter translates from the jail in First Appearance Court.

***Domestic Violence***

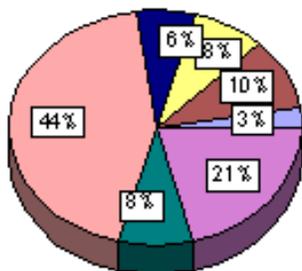
A USF Harrell Center Study researched program participants who completed the curriculum a minimum of two years before and found that 94 percent of them have not been rearrested for domestic violence.

***Juvenile Diversionary Programs***

Almost two-thirds of the juveniles who participated in arbitration were between the ages of 15-18. Less than one percent of the hearings represented juveniles under age nine.

Petit theft was the most common charge related to arbitration hearings, accounting for more than 40 percent of the charges. Battery represented 10 percent of the charges. Domestic violence charges grew almost 10 percent during 2001, representing the third largest category of charges with 8 percent. Because of state budget cuts related to JASP, referrals increased for third-degree felonies with more than 130 charges; these felonies include battery, burglary, false identification, grand theft and possession of weapons.

**JUVENILE ARBITRATION HEARINGS**



- Alcohol
- Battery-DV
- Petit Theft
- Other
- Battery
- Marijuana
- Felonies

**An average of 20 community work service hours were sanctioned each month in 2001; more than 19,000 hours were actually completed.**

Petit theft was also the most common charge in Teen Court, representing more than 60 percent of charges. The number of students who volunteered for Teen Court grew 10 percent in 2001.

**Volunteers contributed almost 5,000 hours, with three-fourths of hours contributed by students in Teen Court.**

### Guardian ad Litem Program

Data derived from the December statistical report revealed that Guardians ad Litem volunteer 7.1 hours per case each month. Calculated at the volunteer hourly market value of \$15.39, the estimated costs to replace volunteer labor with employee labor is \$171,190 monthly.

**190 Guardians ad Litem represented 681 children in December 2001, resulting in a net savings of more than \$170,000.**

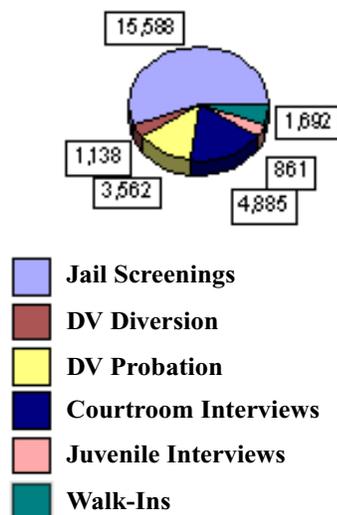
### Elder Justice Center

EJC staff spoke with 55 community groups about the program's services, as well as issues related to the prevention of guardianship proceedings. Another 25 groups toured the courthouse to become more acquainted with the facilities and services of the program. Case management was divided into two categories: victim case management and guardianship reviews. There were less than 60 clients who received victim case management in the first three quarters of the fiscal year, as opposed to almost 2,000 reviews of guardianship cases. More than 25 of those cases resulted in the court appointing staff as monitor of the case.

### Indigent Screening Unit/Witness Aid Center

Almost 30,000 defendants were interviewed by ISU staff during 2001. Fifty-six percent of the screenings were completed in preparation for First Appearances Court each day. Witness Aid Center staff also contacted citizens and law enforcement more than 37,000 times in 2001 to provide information on the status of trials and court appearances. Witnesses were placed on stand-by more than 97,000 times. Less than three percent of witnesses subpoenaed were not needed once arriving to court.

#### INDIGENT SCREENING UNIT Financial Screening for Indigency



DACCO, one of the original drug court treatment providers, includes acupuncture in the rehabilitative program.

### Drug Court Programs

Evaluation updates completed in the Drug Court Division escalated to 3,436; in addition, more than 1,000 initial evaluations were completed. Pre-trial Intervention staff completed 284 intakes; more than 100 defendants successfully completed or "graduated" from the program. Recidivism rates indicate that 81 percent of graduates are not rearrested. There were 333 active cases in the Pre-Trial Intervention Program at the end of the year. Juvenile Drug Court staff completed 291 intakes; more than 100 defendants "graduated" from the program. Statistical reviews indicate that more than 85 percent of graduates from Juvenile Drug Court do not re-enter the criminal justice system. There were 269 active cases in the Juvenile Drug Court division at the end of the year.

### ***Mediation and Diversion Services***

More than 5,600 cases were mediated in 2001; almost 60 percent of the cases were resolved. Family Law and County Mediations represented almost three-fourths of the referrals. The newest mediation program, School Attendance Mediation Initiative (SAMI), had the highest resolution rate as 100 percent of these truancy cases resulted in agreements for all parties.

### ***County Mediation***

More than 4,000 referrals were received from the court in this division, resulting in almost 2,200 mediations. The resolution rate was 47 percent. Contract disputes represented 30 percent of the cases, while auto repair, landlord/tenant, and recovery of money/property each represented 15 percent. The remaining 25 percent included miscellaneous civil issues.

### ***Dependency Mediation***

Almost 50 referrals were received from this division. Twenty-five percent of the referrals were made at the time of Shelter/Detention, while three-fourths of the referrals were at the Arraignment stage of the dependency process. The resolution rate was 63 percent.

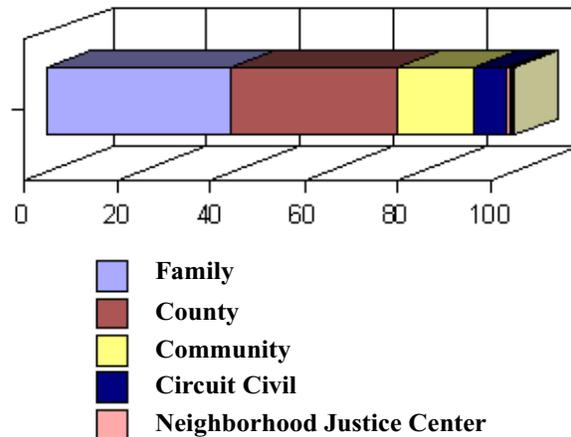
### ***Family Mediation***

More than 4,400 referrals were received from this division, resulting in almost 2,500 mediations. Forty-seven percent of the referral sources were walk-ins. The resolution rate was 66 percent. While modifications of court orders represented the overwhelming majority of cases (65 percent), other disputes included child support (15 percent), Spousal Support, custody & visitation, and attorney fees (5 percent each) The remaining issues were related to equitable distribution and paternity.

### ***Community Mediation***

Almost 2,000 referrals were received for situations involving parties that had disputes, prior to their cases being filed in the court system. The resolution rate was 62 percent. Recovery of money/property represented almost half of the referrals, while consumer cases represented 25 percent of the cases. The Neighborhood Justice Center in Riverview, Florida, also received more than 50 referrals. The resolution rate was 81 percent.

### **MEDIATION REFERRALS**



### ***Circuit Civil Mediation***

More than 600 private mediators were available to assist litigants in resolving disputes. With almost 800 referrals, more than 500 resulted in mediations. The resolution rate was 51 percent. Auto negligence was the primary dispute, representing 29 percent of the referrals.



Paul McGuire, Vince Lodato and Joan Noble at Clairmel Elementary School “teaching teachers about truancy mediation” at the School Attendance Mediation Initiative.

**Court Communications and Technology Services**

The Training Team logged more than 650 hours, providing ongoing support to judges and staff, while the LAN administration logged more than 1,000 hours. More than 1,500 hours were devoted to developing software systems for Mediation programs. Other significant projects in 2001 included Drug Court application/database coordination, Court Cost Assessments, Court Interpreter Center forms, reports and field adjustments, Witness Aid Center technology improvement and duplication of tapes for the Children’s Advocacy Center. Other results operating under the umbrella of this department are described below in the Help Desk and Court Business Center sections.

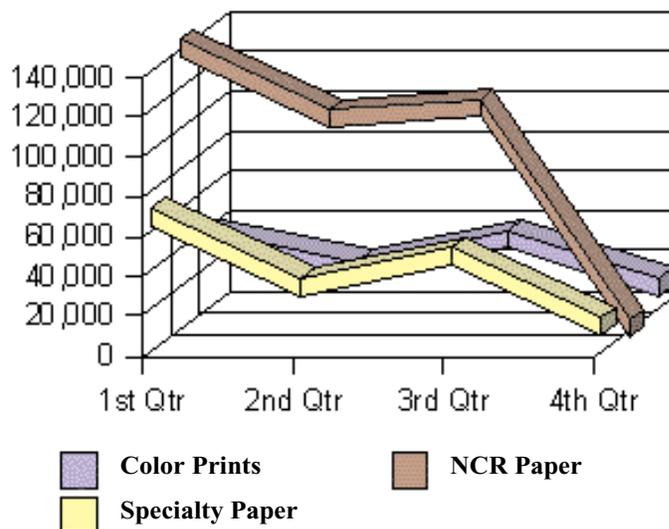
***Court Business Center***

The private vendor selected through an RFP in 1998 has \$2.5 million capital investment in equipment at the Court Business Center. The Xerox Docutech 6135 is used for black & white prints, producing up to 6,000 impressions per hour. In 2001, the CBC produced more than 7.8 million black & white prints.

**Black & White prints produced at the CBC in 2001 totaled 7,883,592.**

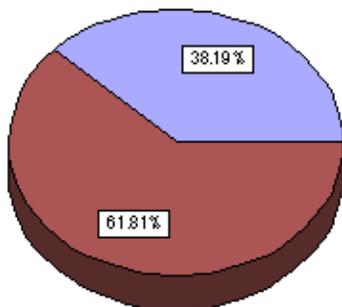
Counter services for other customers resulted in recoup of expenses, including more than \$4,400 for audio/visual rentals, almost \$6,300 for copies and more than \$1,900 for audio duplications.

**COURT BUSINESS CENTER SERVICES**



**HELP DESK CALLS**

**FY 2000-2001**



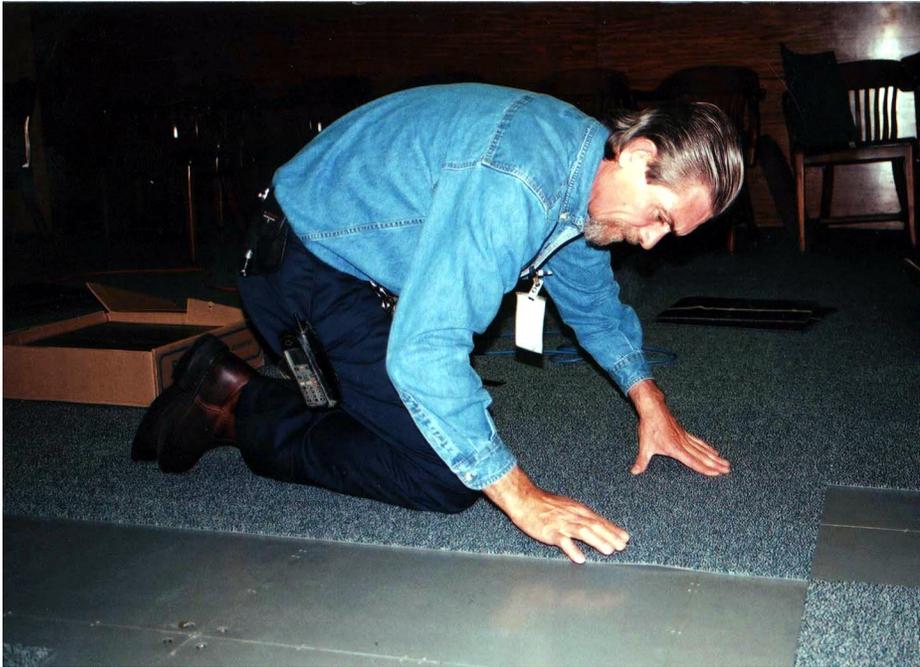
■ Level 1 calls      ■ Escalated Calls

***Help Desk***

The total number of calls to the Help Desk in Fiscal Year 2001 exceeded 11,000. More than 6,800 calls escalated beyond the first level, requiring a technician with special skills to resolve the issue. Ninety percent of these calls were technology related, while facilities related issues represented the remaining percentage. The most frequent subjects for requested assistance were:

- Miscellaneous Facilities
- Corel Wordperfect
- Groupwise
- Network Password Issues

**The Help Desk received 11,096 calls during Fiscal Year 2001.**



Gordon Perkins, from Court Facilities restores carpet in Courtroom 1.

### Court Facilities

More than 70 percent of the calls for service involved requests related to moving furniture. Other calls included requests related to the phone network or Telecom and security requests related to card readers. Calls for video assistance were related to maintenance and installation of video, while wiring projects were primarily related to the jail and HCSO.

### Office of Public Information

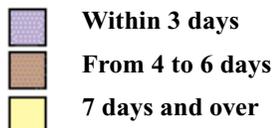
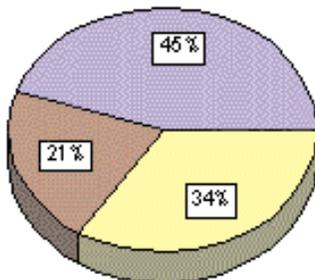
The web site was revamped during the summer of 2001. In July 3,000 “hits” were recorded on the site; in January 2002 the number of “hits” increased to 30,000.

### Court Personnel Resources

With 51 judges and 206 employees, Court Personnel Resources processed 201 Personnel Actions Requests (PAR) and 230 Benefit Actions.

Internal recruitment for vacant positions is the initial step when positions are vacated. In addition Court Personnel Resources was responsible for 25 active recruitments, resulting in almost 300 applications processed. Reports indicate 20 promotions from within the organization and 30 employees were new hires.

### FISCAL AFFAIRS



### Fiscal Affairs

Staff processed more than 9,400 court reporter bills in FY 2001, totaling more than \$613,000.

The average cost for competency exams was \$389, resulting in more than \$619,000. More than 560 cases required Special Public Defenders due to conflicts, costing less than \$1,000 on the average. Guardianship costs averaged \$219 per case, resulting in almost \$106,000. The average cost for dependency contract attorneys was \$675 per case, while off-contract costs averaged \$2,840, totaling more than 1.25 million.

More than 45 percent of direct pay invoices were processed within 3 days; slightly more than one-third of the invoices took longer than 7 days to process. Almost 900 hours of staff time were devoted to grant monitoring.

## Highlights of 2001

### Law Week

Courthouse tours have become a tradition during Law Week each year for students across Hillsborough County. In fact, more than 1,300 fifth graders from across the area came to the courthouse this year to talk with judges, staff and attorneys. Guiding these students through the courthouse maze were members of the Hillsborough County Bar Association's, Young Lawyer's Division.

### Bring Your Child to Work Day

Court Personnel Resources staff organized the annual event, offering the judges and staff an opportunity for their children to get a glimpse of the work that occurs each day in the courthouse. More than 100 children attended in 2001.

### In the Best Interest of the Child Judicial Town Hall Meeting

Focusing on issues related to the legal standard, "best interests of the child," Diane Pertmer, on loan from WFLA TV Channel 8, moderated the Town Hall Meeting on April 30, 2001. Judge Ralph Stoddard, Judge Marva Crenshaw, Judge Bill Levens and Court Administrator Mike Bridenback responded to questions that the audience had. Staff also presented a mock mediation to give the audience a new perspective on this court process.



Bailliff Juan Reno invites questions about the technology used in First Appearance Court, which is an infamous stop on courthouse tours.

### Kids in Court Town Hall Meeting

Three hundred children crowded into Courtroom 1 on April 30, 2001, to participate in the first Judicial Town Hall meeting designed to educate the youth about the court system. Gayle Sierens, news anchor on WFLA News Channel 8, volunteered to serve as moderator. Judge Ralph Stoddard, Public Defender Julianne Holt, and Assistant State Attorney Pam Bondi interacted with the students after a mock detention hearing.



Dave Rowland narrates a package for *The Justice Files*.

### Justice Files Debuts on Government Access Television

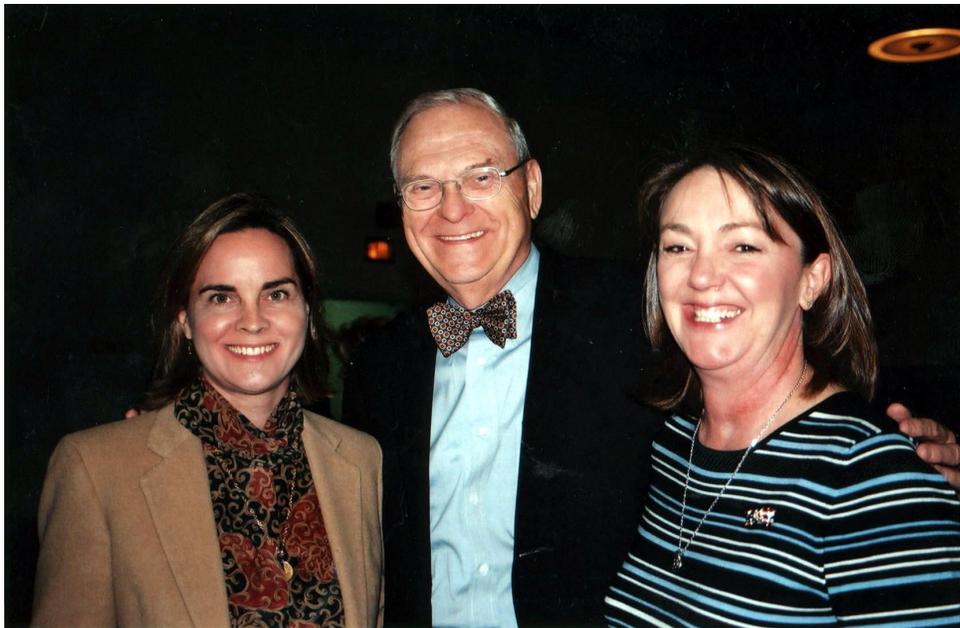
The monthly television magazine show is produced by the Office of Public Information. The program airs on local government access channels and features information about court programs, court processes, and other justice system organizations. *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* is a game show, which provides viewers with a scenario that leads to court proceedings and then presents the question, "which division of court would this case be heard?" A judge in that division then explains some of the jurisdictional issues associated with that division.

**Professionalism Seminar**

Justice Harding was the guest speaker at a Professionalism Seminar in the fall, organized by Judge Claudia Isom, for local State Attorney and Public Defender staff.

**New Technology for Court Interpreters**

Headsets added a measure of safety for court interpreters assisting in First Appearance court. The interpreters use the technology as they are at the jail with the defendants, but appear before Judge Heinrich in video court proceedings.



Judge Isom, Justice Harding and Denise Nix pause for a moment before the Professionalism Seminar.

**Drug Court Graduation**

Chief Justice Wells and Governor Jeb Bush offered remarks at this local ceremony via video conferencing in May 2001. Chief Judge F. Dennis Alvarez spoke to the graduates, as did Judge Jack Espinosa and Judge Florence Foster, before awarding certificates to the graduates from their respective divisions.

**United Way Campaign**

Court Personnel Resources spearheaded a campaign to raise \$10,678.10 for the United Way. Activities included raffles, pizza and donut sales, and “\$ for Jeans Day” supplemented the traditional pay-roll deduction pledges.



Chief Judge Menendez administered the oath at General Master Jon Johnson’s swearing in ceremony. Johnson is part of Model Dependency Court.

**Model Dependency Court Established**

The Florida Legislature provided \$500,000 funding allocation to implement the pilot program to relieve the overwhelmed dependency courts. General Masters and Case Managers began work in October 2001.

**Telecommuting Project**

Child Custody Investigations and Civil Traffic Hearing Officer Program initiated a telecommuting pilot program.

**Courthouse Construction**

Former Chief Judge Alvarez and Chief Judge Menendez, along with other county officials and members of the George Edgecomb family, turned over the ground to mark the beginning of the new courthouse on April 19, 2001. By December, the fourth floor was completed and the east end of the fifth floor was poured. Portions of the ground floor slab were poured and masonry work, air conditioning duct work started on the 2nd floor and mechanical/electrical trades continued rough-in work.



The new civil family courthouse is the cornerstone of a package of major renovations and improvements to our court facilities. The new building will continue to be called the George Edgecomb Courthouse because of the late judge's contributions to the community.

**Courtroom Technology Presentations**

The Hillsborough County Bar Association and the JADS (Judicial Automation Data System) Committee joined together on March 16, 2001, to provide local attorneys an opportunity to witness the technology available in this circuit. Receiving Continuing Legal Education Credits, participants listened to information about the historical overview of the JADS committee and the use of technology in this circuit. Judge Barton served as moderator of the event and was joined by Judge F. Foster, Judge Sexton and Judge Fuente. Participants also had the opportunity to receive "hands on" demonstrations of the technology by AOC and CBC staff.



John Tomasi demonstrates the technology used in Courtroom 1 for local attorneys.

### **Legal Secretaries' Training**

On January 19, 2001, 48 Legal Secretaries attended a seminar, "Communication with Legal Secretaries and Judicial Assistants: Let's All Work Together." Judicial Assistants Margie Bridenback and Sharon Cosby organized and presented during the seminar which focused on the family law and civil divisions.

### **EJC Receives National Award**

Court Administrator Mike Bridenback received the Justice Achievement Award from The National Association of Court Management at their annual conference in New Orleans in July. The award was established to publicly recognize courts and related organizations for meritorious projects and exemplary accomplishments that enhance the administration of justice.

### **Mediation Week**

On November 5, staff and mediators were honored during an annual breakfast ceremony. Candi Rowen received the Joseph Kleinbaum Award and W. David Brewer received the Robert A. Baker Award. Information was also distributed to the public during the week, both at the courthouse and downtown Tampa.



Suzanne Parker talks about the GAL program.

### **Light of Hope Event**

GAL Program hosted the "Light of Hope" event at the Westshore Mall on April 5, 2001. Blue ribbons were distributed to mall patrons in honor of Child Abuse Prevention month. Students from across Tampa Bay provided entertainment.

### **Barrister Ball**

The HCBA and the Hillsborough County Bar Foundation hosted the annual Barrister Charity Ball to honor colleagues with 50 plus years of service and to benefit the GAL Program and Bay Area Legal Services on May 5, 2001.



CJC and GAL staff pinned blue ribbons on lapels to commemorate Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

### **Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Tampa Mayor Dick Greco proclaimed April 5, 2001, as **Guardian ad Litem Advocate Day**, in observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

### **L.A. Times Reports on Sex Abuse Division**

This felony court division made national headlines. "Tampa's Sex Court is an attempt to be more humane in the quest for justice and punishment, as well as more efficient," Dahlburg wrote in an article featured in the L.A. Times on August 6, 2001.



Lucy Carroll leads efforts at NAB in Town 'n Country.

### **Neighborhood Accountability Boards**

The first NAB docket heard in the State of Florida was held on September 15, 2001, in Town 'n Country. Shortly afterward, the second pilot program was implemented in the West Tampa neighborhood. NAB is part of a collaborative effort with the AOC and community leaders, including representatives from:

- Department of Juvenile Justice,
- State Attorney's Office,
- Public Defender's Office,
- Juvenile Justice Board,
- Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office,
- Tampa Police Department, and
- Hillsborough County Neighborhood Watch Association.

Each board is reflective of the community they serve, as they take an active part in providing an outlet for reparation for victims of neighborhood offenses.

### **Urban Court Administrators**

Administrators from across the nation toured the facilities and took a brief look at some of the innovative programs, including the Office of Public Information, the Court's Business Center and the Elder Justice Center.

### **Communication Goes On-line**

Office of Public Information increased efficiency by electronically disseminating the internal newsletter, the Courts Connection.

Moving toward a more interactive Internet web site, users can now log on to [www.fljud13.org](http://www.fljud13.org). In July 2001, there were 3,000 visits on the site; six months later there were 30,000 visits. Most popular areas on the site are the Information section, the Judges' Directory and the Forms Section.

### **Children's Justice Center Grand Opening**

Forensic interviewing and deposition services were relocated to the renovated space in the Main Courthouse in May. The space is more child-friendly because of contributions from the community and the CAC Foundation, a non-profit organization. Young artists from the Prodigy Program contributed to original illustrations which were used in the decoration scheme. On May 18, 2001, the grand opening welcomed elected officials, justice system professionals and other community residents.

### **Truancy Mediation Established**

The newest mediation program, School Attendance Mediation Initiative (SAMI) was developed in cooperation with Hillsborough County Schools. The first pilot site was implemented at Palm River Elementary School in January.

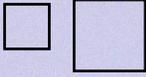
### **Great American Teach-In**

Twenty-five judges and staff transformed classrooms into courtrooms during the Great American Teach-in during November.



CJC staff arrived early for the grand opening ceremony.

You are hereby issued a WRIT to learn more about the  
*Administrative Office of the Courts*  
in the  
*Thirteenth Judicial Circuit!*



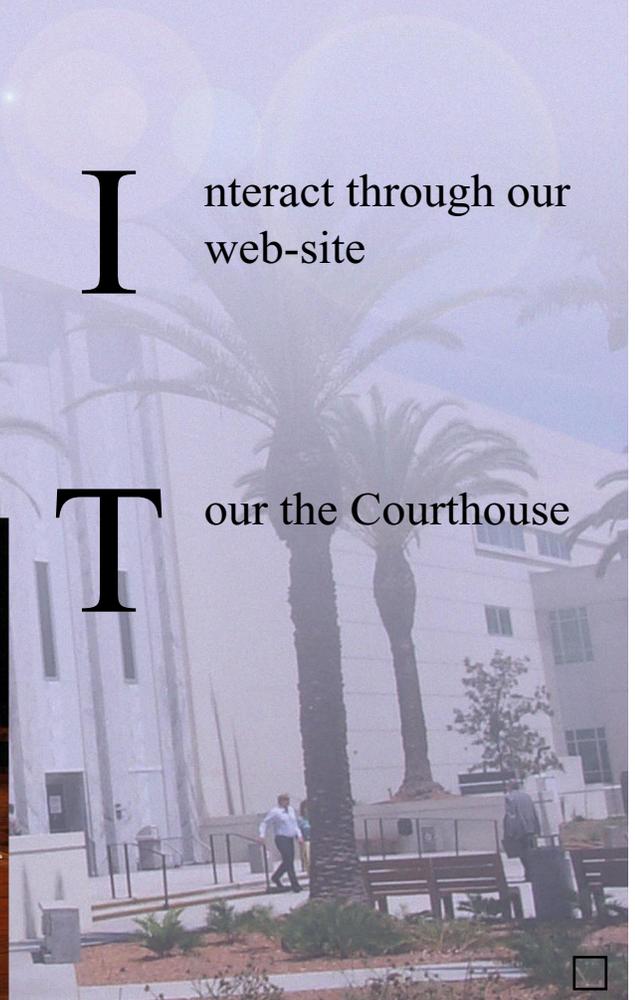
**W**atch *The Justice Files*

**R**ead the *Legal Pad*



**I**nteract through our  
web-site

**T**our the Courthouse



**2001 Annual Report  
Thirteenth Judicial Circuit**

CHIEF JUDGE Manuel Mendendez, Jr.

COURT ADMINISTRATOR Mike Bridenback

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