



MACM MATTERS

MACM Matters

Spring / Summer 2024

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A Message from the MACM President

By: Jennifer Miller

Multi-County Court Administrator

Greetings MACM Members!

Spring is here in Minnesota! I hope everyone across the state has been enjoying some warmer weather. There are many things to update you on in this newsletter. You will see a variety of district updates and a few updates from the officers.

The officers and I have been meeting regularly over the winter. We have been brainstorming different ideas for the future of MACM. The monthly MACM Coffee Chats are one result of those efforts. We truly hope those who have attended one or more chats are finding them valuable. We welcome all feedback and are open to your thoughts for future coffee chats. Please reach out to myself, Angie Jonas, Megan Bergman or Aaron Williamson with any ideas.

Over spring break, I visited Tombstone, Arizona. The historic courthouse is now a museum, and the original courtroom remains on the top floor.



Although I have been to Tombstone before, I had never visited the courthouse. Most of the items in the courtroom are original. It was inspiring to visit and quite the history lesson. The museum holds many objects from the 1880s when Tombstone was bustling. Those items speak of a much different court system than we have today across the country. The

evolution of our court system was immediately apparent when I returned to the courthouses in the Sixth the following week. It took me on a journey through the past into the future of our branch.

As court employees, we can all tie our position descriptions and purposes to the mission and vision of the branch. It is important that we utilize what we have learned from the past to build for new beginnings. As leaders who continue to lead and support change, we have the daily opportunity to plan. Whether it is coming fast or slow, it is necessary to ground ourselves in our history and use that knowledge to guide what is ahead.

I look forward to seeing many of you up here in Duluth for our fall conference!



MACM Committee Updates

Education Committee Update

By: Angie Jonas, Committee Chair
Court Operations Supervisor, Ramsey County, Second District



The Education Committee has been working diligently to find and select speakers that we believe you'd all find value in seeing at our upcoming conference. We're excited to announce that we've confirmed nearly all our speakers for this year's annual conference!! I'm hoping that by the time you're reading this, we'll have a theme and that all content will be confirmed. This year's conference will be held October 22nd-24th, at the DECC in Duluth, MN. We're switching things up a bit for the third day...you won't want to miss it!

Have you attended one of the new MACM Coffee Chats? These chats are 30-minute sessions that take place on the third Thursday of each month at 12:00pm. The first four coffee chats focused on the MACM committees and allowed each committee chair to provide an overview of what their committee's duties were. We hope to bring you more learning and growth opportunities with subsequent coffee chats. If you have any suggestions on future topics and/or presenters, please contact any committee chair.

Legislative & Outreach Committee Update

By: Trisha Mernitz, Committee Chair
Multi-County Court Administrator, Seventh District



It's been another busy spring as the committee monitors legislative proposals through the different stages of the legislative process. For the second time since the pandemic, we held a successful in-person MACM Day at the Capitol in March, and our attendance at this event grew from last year. Those in attendance had a great time learning more about the legislative process, observing committee hearings, and networking with colleagues. We look forward to continuing to extend this opportunity to members in years to come, and making this an event in which all who are interested can participate!

In December 2023, the committee put on a successful Virtual Holiday Cash Drive, with a total of \$725 donated to [The Food Group](#) to help provide nutritious food to those in our community who need it most. The Tenth District earned bragging rights for having the highest total dollar amount raised, with a total of \$200! Thank you to all who participated!!

It's now that time of year again for the committee to turn its focus to the conference charitable campaign. We have identified several excellent organizations supporting the Duluth area, and will be working to decide on one in the coming months. Stay tuned for more info!

The Executive Board has also been busy coming up with ideas to engage MACM members throughout the year, including having Coffee Chats each month. In February, the Coffee Chat featured the Legislative & Outreach Committee and provided some brief information about what our committee does. If you were unable to attend the live Coffee Chat, a recording is available to check out at your convenience. Be sure to watch for announcements about future Coffee Chat topics!

MACM Committee Updates

Membership Services Committee Update

By: Megan Bergmann, Committee Chair
Court Administrator, Benton and Mille Lacs Counties

Membership Services: It's about the members

Imagine we have a dream and a vision. A dream to create an organization committed to the growth and well-being of Minnesota Court Management employees across the state. Picture this, a fancy committee title: Minnesota Association for Court Management. Succinct. Relevant. And makes for a good acronym (MACM). You design a logo, create a mission statement, and set up the meeting date. You are so excited to sit at the table with other Court Managers across the state to pursue education and empowerment alongside your colleagues. The date is all set. You drive to the meeting space with your piping hot cup of coffee. As you sip your magic motivation in a cup, you arrive at the door. Inhaling deeply, you walk into the room. To your dismay, it's empty. You quickly check your calendar. You are at the right location. It's time to start the meeting. But no one is there. You sit at the table and look around. The analog clock is ticking so loud in the quiet meeting room, that it sounds like a beating drum ringing in your ears. Where are all the people?



People.

Now, thankfully, the above scenario does not apply to us. Our organization currently has over 420 members. What a beautiful opportunity we have to encourage and empower such a broad audience. So, we must remember this. MACM is not just a fancy acronym or resume builder. MACM is about the people. It's about our members. And as we move forward in our various committees, we have one main focus.

You.

The court leader. The court manager. The court analyst or human resource expert. It's all about you! As we look towards the future and ask ourselves what we can do to best serve our members all we have to do is take a step back and listen. Ask questions. Try harder. Do better. Be better. As we lean into this task of listening to our members and asking the right questions we look forward to the journey ahead. As we inch closer and closer to our Conference in October of 2024 in Duluth, we continue to be mindful of the various agencies we serve across the State of Minnesota and give you our best. Because you deserve it!

We have many exciting initiatives on the horizon. It's a wonderful time to be a MACM member (in my clearly biased opinion). As I tend to be overly optimistic, one last reminder. Future change can be painful. There's no change without growth and no growth that comes without some pain. As we continue to navigate change in the MACM organization we ask for your support, your feedback, and your patience.

At the heart of membership, the members are what makes the organization. So, thank you my esteemed MACM members. Thank you for trusting us in this pursuit of growth and betterment of our organization.

Cheers to our continued adventures!

MACM Committee Updates

Spring into Tax Season?

By: Megan Knapp
Finance Committee Chair



Ah, Spring is upon us. The time for plants and trees to start budding, dusting off the lawn equipment, and for seasonal allergies to flare up for some of us. But the one thing on everyone's mind is that dreaded April 15th tax deadline. Whether you're an early filer or tend to wait until the last minute one thing we all have in common in the Spring is tax season. But did you know that MACM does not file a tax return in the Spring? That's right, because of the type of organization MACM is our tax return is due in November instead of April.

MACM files a 990 return, which is for organizations exempt from income tax. The Taxpayer First Act, enacted July 1, 2019, requires tax-exempt organizations to electronically file information returns and related forms. Due to MACM's size we are not required to do so, however it is still highly recommended. E-filing is not new to some, but you may not be aware that an organization like MACM can e-File. There are some benefits to e-Filing for an organization like MACM:

- E-file is faster, easier and more accurate than filing a paper return.
- E-file makes compliance with reporting and disclosure requirements easier by eliminating the need to make copies, assemble all of the appropriate schedules and attachments, and pay for postage. Organizations can comply with public disclosure requirements by posting electronic forms on the web.
- E-file results in benefits for both IRS and taxpayers, including:
 - **More explicit error conditions** – New error code explanations pinpoint the location of the error in the return and provide complete information in the Acknowledgement File.
 - **Faster acknowledgements** – Transmissions are processed upon receipt and acknowledgments are returned in near real-time, but no longer than 24 hours. No more waiting for once or twice daily system processing cycles.
 - **Built-in accuracy checks** – Paper Form 990 returns have an average error rate of more than 25 percent. Built-in accuracy checks in electronic return preparation software catch the majority of taxpayer errors before the return is submitted.

Based on this list the other major benefit you gain is peace of mind. I guess you can say that e-Filing is the best option for everyone. Sure, you may not be able to mitigate 100% of errors; but getting an email confirmation that it was received, accepted, and was on time really does relieve a lot of the stress of tax season. Less time to worry about taxes equals more time to worry about which one of your plants are going to come back this year. Happy Spring!

District Updates

1st District

By; Vanessa Jeske

Announcing the retirement of Lori Hunstad!

Lori Hunstad, Dakota County Court Operations Manager retired on March 29, after **44** years of service. Lori was an exceptional manager. She demonstrated forward thinking leadership, meaningful mentorship, unwavering dedication, and optimistic encouragement to everyone she encountered. She led with confidence, sincerity, and integrity through days of controlled chaos. Lori held her team to a high standard yet was respected for her fairness. Lori was always a leader in change and encouraged her entire team to innovate and adapt to our ever-changing environment. She exhibited a high level of knowledge about the Judicial Branch and court operations, and formed excellent working relationships with judges, staff, and justice partners. We greatly appreciated all of her work and contributions to the justice system.



Jockey Backpack Program - Dakota County

By Kari Hill and Sue Eggert

In the summer of 2023, through collaboration from the Dakota County Juvenile Bench, Juvenile Protection and Adoption departments, and Dakota County Social Services, state ward children and their adoptive families are now receiving ongoing support from the Jockey Being Family foundation.



The Jockey Being Family foundation is a non-profit 501c(3) that was established in 2005 by Debra S. Waller. This foundation strives to support and strengthen adopted families not only at the time of adoption but also long term. They consider adoption not as an event but instead a lifelong journey. In 2007, the foundation began providing teddy bears to the children.

The foundation grew and became more established across the country. In 2015, the Jockey Backpack Program was launched. The Jockey Backpack Program provides post adoption services to state ward children and their families. The children and siblings receive a monogrammed backpack that includes the beloved foundation teddy bear, a blanket, and books based on each child's age, interests, and family status. The parents receive a tote filled with resources and contacts to support the family in their lifelong journey.

Since the foundation's inception, the Jockey Being Family foundation has provided support to over 405,000 families. Additionally, through the Jockey Backpack Program, there have been over 98,000 backpacks donated to state ward children and siblings and 54,000 totes provided to parents.

The collaboration between the agencies in Dakota County has resulted in the backpacks being ordered and delivered to the courthouse prior to the adoption hearing. At the time of the finalization, the Juvenile Judges and Social Services present the backpacks and totes to the children, siblings, and parents. This program has brought a tremendous positive value to this already special day and the feedback from the families has been priceless.

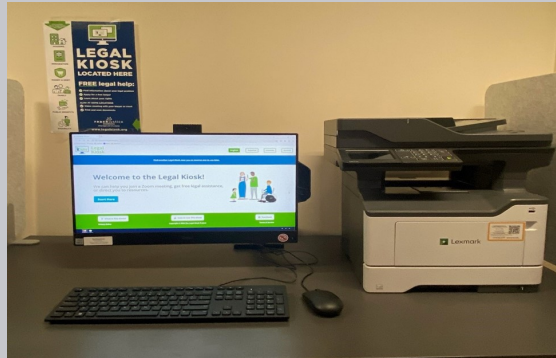
To quote the Debra S. Waller, founder of Jockey Being Family, "with your help we can keep the promise of a "forever family" alive for thousands of children and families." For more information on the Jockey Being Family and Jockey Backpack Program, please visit www.jockeybeingfamily.com

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District Updates

1st District Continued

Legal Kiosks Providing Access to Free Legal Help Now Available in All First Judicial District Courthouses



Implementation of FJD Veteran's Treatment Court – hearings will be held in Dakota and Scott Counties

Dakota Updates:

- New judges – Judge Adam Johnson, Judge Krista Marks
- Promotions – Shawanna Kramer from Court Operations Supervisor to Court Operations Manager, Heather Hauschildt from Staff Generalist I to Office Assistant IV, and Jordan Sonstegard will be filling the Dakota County Court Operations Supervisor position.
- Held first MNDES Jury Deliberation Pilot case, March 2024
- Added technology in jail to allow for PD application process to occur prior to court

2nd District

By: Eli Hart

Community Service Award

Judge Nicole Starr, Judge Maria Mitchell, and Assistant Chief Judge Sara Grewing were awarded a Minnesota District Judges Foundation Community Service Award. These judges were recognized for their creation of The Women's Community Group, a weekly group that provides a safe space for women to talk about their experiences and the issues and obstacles that continue to challenge them and their families.

Oral Arguments at Humboldt High School

On March 25, 2024, Judge Edward Sheu, in agreement with counsel from both parties, held a civil motion hearing at Humboldt High School. The event was attended by over a hundred students. After the motion hearing, Judge Sheu and the attorneys, Gwen Upton (Criminal Division Administrator), and Anna Vue (Civil Case Manager Lead Worker) remained to answer questions regarding the court process and the roles of the participants. This effort was lead by Judge Thomas A. Gilligan who began the discussion with leaders at Humboldt High School and coordinated with the Civil Bench. It was a great opportunity to educate students and encourage them to consider a career in the Minnesota Judicial Branch. Given the success of this event, the Second District is considering making this an annual part of its community outreach.

Continued on next page

District Updates

2nd District continued

Veterans Treatment Court Commemorates Ten-Year Anniversary

The Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) celebrated its ten-year anniversary with an event held on February 23, 2024. The recognition event was attended by representatives from the VTC team including Judges, Court Administration, and officials from Ramsey County, the City of St. Paul, other supporting agencies, current and past court participants, the media and the community. A graduation ceremony for a VTC participant was held during the event, and comments were offered by Ramsey County Chief Judge Leonardo Castro, Ramsey County Judge Nicole Starr, Ramsey County Board Chair Trista Martinson, Ramsey County Veterans Service Officer/Mentor Coordinator Larry Fonder and a former graduate of the program.

Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court was founded in 2013 after the Ramsey County Attorney's Office identified a need for a court serving justice involved veterans and service members. It was initially a track of Adult Substance Abuse Court before becoming its own court in 2014. VTC works to promote public safety through enhanced supervision and individual accountability. The court works to connect eligible veterans who have been charged with a crime to services that can address underlying problems they may be experiencing as a result of their military service. The court relies on volunteer veteran mentors who understand the issues unique to those that participate in the program to encourage, guide, and support the participants. Ramsey County Veteran's Services produced mentor recruitment videos in partnership with the court that show the impact that both the mentors and the VTC have on the participant's life. Links to those videos and information on volunteering as a mentor can be found on the [Ramsey County Veterans Treatment Court website](#).

Flexible Courtroom Concept

In 2023, Ramsey County joined Becker and Meeker Counties in piloting the Flexible Courtroom Concept (FCC). The FCC provides court users and hearing participants the ability to choose how they appear for hearings, either in-person or remotely via Zoom. The FCC was applied specifically to Adult Criminal and Juvenile Delinquency calendars, impacting all hearings outside of trials, sentencings and treatment court proceedings.

A total of 4,279 hearings were held in Ramsey County during the course of the pilot, which lasted from February - December, 2023. Of those hearings, 52% of court participants in juvenile proceedings opted to appear remotely, while 32% of minor criminal and 25 % of major criminal participants appeared remotely. Much of the litigant feedback received about the FCC pilot was positive. Almost all remote participants said joining by Zoom was easy and that they had no difficulties attending the remote hearing. Separately, justice partner feedback was mostly positive, with jails and secure detention facilities providing the most varied commentary.

Ramsey's Adult Criminal Division discontinued its flexible appearances on December 15, 2023, due to a planned judicial officer rotation. The Ramsey Juvenile Office continues to hold flexible appearances and may even expand the concept to additional calendars in the future.

Rule 20 Specialization

On January 1, 2024, the Second District Calendar Committee created a new Behavior Health Services assignment. The Behavior Health Services assignment operates with three judges and consists of Treatment Court, Rule 20 Competency calendars, and Civil Commitment calendars.

As part of this transition, the Second District created a dedicated calendar for Rule 20 returns in the fall of 2021 and for Rule 20 Review hearings in January 2024. These dedicated calendars have allowed for both judicial officers and partner agencies to develop expertise on the legal issues surrounding Rule 20 cases as well as the complicated challenges that often face defendants who are navigating the criminal process, along with their own mental or chemical health challenges.

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District Updates

2nd District Continued

With the creation of the Behavioral Health Services assignment, judicial officers and partner agencies are now able to better collaborate across case types and throughout the life of a case. This allows defendants who are found incompetent to experience a smoother transition to Commitment Court, and defendants who are found competent to be referred to Mental Health Court.

Additionally, the expertise developed through these calendars and their supporting workgroups has helped the Second District prepare for the implementation of the new competency legislation which went into effect April 1st.

3rd District

By: Shannon Asselin

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Third District has been active in supporting the Minnesota Judicial Branch's (MJB) core value of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). All employees in the Third District including judicial officers, court reporters, and law clerks have completed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) which is an assessment tool used in building cultural competence. IDI provides feedback on how to engage in cultural diversity and identifies possible issues that may limit our ability to bridge cultural differences more effectively.

The Third District formed a group called BEInG (Belonging, Equity, and Inclusion Group). Membership in this group is open to all employees. The BEInG committee has been instrumental in creating several opportunities to increase cultural awareness including:

- Developing a SharePoint page titled Culture Corner which is updated monthly and provides employees access to DEI content.
- Offering quarterly 30-minute BEInG Talks which focus on a DEI topic and gives employees an opportunity to share and learn.
- Offering BEInG Presents, which is a one-hour presentation titled Say my Name. The first one focuses on Spanish and helps employees understand Spanish names, pronunciation, dates of birth, etc.
- Creating a list of DEI related resources such as books, articles, short videos, podcasts, movies, and documentaries for employees as they embark on their intercultural competency journey.

Employees can earn diversity education credits for participating in BEInG sponsored events and learning related to their intercultural development plan.

Jury Pilot

The Third District jury pilot fully launched July 2023. The scope of this pilot was to translate jury summons, questionnaires, and Fail to Respond Notices into Spanish, Somali, Hmong, and Karen. Evaluation of the pilot is underway, and a report will be provided to Judicial Council this fall for possible statewide expansion.

DiSC

To continue to inspire continued personal and professional growth and development, additional DiSC sessions are being offered to leaders and employees. Sessions for leaders include Your Management Style, Direct and Delegate, Motivation, Develop Talent, and Managing Up. Sessions for employees include What Drives You, You and Other Styles, and Build Better Relationships.

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District Updates

3rd District continued

Centralized Processes

- The Third District celebrated the 2nd anniversary of the Centralized Administrative File or Appear process for Probate cases.
- The Combined Imprest Account project has been completed. The Third District went from 11 different imprest accounts to three imprest accounts.
- The Central Region, consisting of Dodge, Mower, and Freeborn Counties, have successfully implemented a centralized Call Center.

Retirements and Promotions

- Judge Leahy retired on May 3, 2024, after serving as a Winona County District Court judge for 18 years.
- Carrie Huffman was promoted from Court Operations Associate to Court Business Systems Coordinator.

4th District

By: Araceli Leana-Mejia

The 4th Judicial District has had an eventful year thus far. The Juvenile Division deployed the MNDES Retention Pilot on March 25, 2024. Since the implementation of MNDES in October 2022, there have been exhibits uploaded on 226 juvenile cases. During the next 60 days, court administration clerks will be working diligently to move uploaded exhibits through the MNDES retention/deletion queues.

The Juvenile Division is now offering LiveHelp Now messaging service (e.g., chat). Juvenile is the second department offering this service, joining the Contact Center. The messaging system will provide court customers with an additional way to access the courts. Through LiveHelp Now, court customers can chat directly with court clerks Monday through Friday during normal business hours.

The 4th Judicial District has initiated the integration of Mitel, a State Court hosted phone system. Most court employees have MiCollab softphones software installed and are now being moved into a fully Mitel supported phone system. As of today, Ridgedale, Brookdale, Centralized Services, and the Public Safety Facility have been successfully integrated into the new phone system, with the Juvenile Justice Center next on the list.

The Education, Onboarding and Development Team is offering a Learning Table Series which consists of departmental overviews and panel discussions. At the Learning Tables, employees have the opportunity to obtain better insight into the different court areas, ask questions and network. Thus far, Learning Tables have been offered by the Civil Division, Treatment Courts, Juvenile Courts, Criminal Centralized Unit, and Human Resources. These sessions were recorded and are now offered on demand through Cornerstone.

The Fourth District welcomed three new judges at the beginning of 2024. Dean Eyler, Kristen Marttila and Dominick Mathews received their Governor's appointment on November 28, 2023, and took the bench on January 8, 2024. The newest judges repeated their oaths of office as they were ceremonially sworn in March 22, 2024, before family, friends, and colleagues. Following weeks of new judge training, all three judges began hearing cases on the downtown criminal team.

District Updates

5th District

By: Therese Kadrlik

Shelby Lucht was sworn in as Nobles County Court Administrator on Wednesday, January 17th.

The Fifth District is focusing on wellness for both judges and employees! Judges and employees have taken the DiSC Assessment, learned about their own DiSC style, and debriefed results with their teams. Wellness retreats are planned for judges and employees this spring, with Patty Beck with A Balanced Practice is presenting tips for wellness, mindfulness, and self-compassion for both groups.

The 5th District continues to work on specialization of work districtwide. The expanded specialized teams have been created to include more lines of business. They are as follows:

- Criminal/Delinquency
- Probate/Guardianship/Conservatorship
- Civil/HRO/Judgments
- Family/Child Support/Adoption

The district has been meeting weekly to conduct business process mapping which is proving to show areas where efficiencies could be reached.

Redwood County and Cottonwood County were involved in the MNDES mock jury trial pilot.

6th District

By: Lindsay Snustad

The People:

The leadership in our district has had some change this year. The district has welcomed two new judicial officers this year, Judge Nicole Hopps and Judge Steven Hanke. We also welcomed a new Referee, Kathryn Bergstrom. Amy Turnquist announced her retirement and the district hired Jennifer Miller as our new Multi-County Court Administrator.

Our district saw multiple promotions this year, and the inclusion of new roles we have not had in our district historically. We welcomed Carissa Mundy as a Project Coordinator and Dan McLaughlin was promoted as an IT Supervisor. We are in the process of recruiting for an A/V specialist to support our increased technology footprint. Court administration also welcomed two new supervisors, Janine Morrison, and Courtney Thieling.

The Progress:

The district continues to work through its major criminal backlog efforts and developing continued improvements to our hearing frameworks. To enhance access to justice, our district has continued to implement technology in courtrooms and has launched a remote public counter to serve the public in times of unexpected challenges in our buildings. We also launched a pilot in our district for a flexible courtroom for our CHIPs parents and justice partners.

The district continues to be committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our local EJC committees are researching juror response rates, conducting community conversations and courthouse tours, and have also held multiple events for students to visit the courthouse to explore careers within the justice system.

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District Updates

6th District Continued

The district continues to be dedicated to a can-do attitude with a focus on innovation. Sara Taylor became a member of the Artificial Intelligence Response Committee, which will learn about and guide the development of A.I. in the Branch.

Hilary Huntley, Kathy McFarlane, Mark Hoyne and Dan McLaughlin worked closely with Carlton County in the creation and building of a new justice center. This new building will house multiple justice partners in one location and will add a higher level of security for judges, staff, and the public. We are scheduled to move into the new building in late summer/early fall 2024.

The Proud Moments:

To best serve the wellness of our judges and staff, the district engaged in a targeted yearlong wellness initiative. Judges and staff received training on the eight elements of wellness and participated in activities to practice what they learned. The Wellness Committee continues to work within our district providing opportunities for judges and staff to focus on their own wellness, as well as celebrate each other as members of one unified team.

The Veteran's Treatment Court, presided over by Judge Dale Harris, celebrated its' 10-year anniversary on April 22, 2024. The court celebrated with the court participants, service providers and the community. The court's importance was acknowledged through a proclamation of the mayor, naming April 22, 2024, as Veteran's Treatment Court Day in the City of Duluth.

The North ICWA Court in Virginia, presided over by Judge Michelle Anderson, was honored with a cultural ceremony, pipe ceremony and flag presentation by the White Earth Nation and the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa to acknowledge the court's commitment to the sovereignty of tribal nations, commitment to enhance practices to ensure effective application of ICWA and MIFPA, and desire to improve outcomes for Indian Children and their families.

7th District

By: George Lock

The Seventh continues to keep the pandemic backlog at bay; we are currently more than 400 cases below our initial target. District Administrator Deb Mueske and Deputy District Administrator Marcia Setrum initiated a district-wide Traveling Town Hall Tour in summer 2023. They put their tour t-shirts on and hit the road. They met with court operations associates and lead workers in each county seeking input on items such as changes that have positively or negatively impacted their work, local wellness activities, and suggestions to enhance the quality of the workplace. Feedback from these sessions will inform our district's efforts to maintain a quality work environment.

Innovations

Flexible Courtroom Concept: Becker County continued its participation in the Flexible Courtroom Concept which provides parties, attorneys and interested parties the opportunity to choose how they wanted to appear for certain criminal and juvenile delinquency hearings. The goal is to provide open, accessible, and transparent courtrooms. Recommendations have been made to OHI. Becker County continues to hold flexible hearings.



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District Updates

7th District continued

MNDES Jury pilot implementation: Stearns and Clay counties were identified as pilot counties to test the new digital exhibit system. Stearns conducted several training sessions with justice partners and to date has had one successful trial.

Centralized teams: The Centralized Probate Team is now a new unified hybrid team with a dedicated supervisor. Review of financial reports was centralized effective April 1st, and we are looking at expanding our multi-county regionalized housing court beyond Stearns and Wadena Counties.

Wellness activities

The District is currently rolling out DISC to all counties. We are approximately half-way done. There are many wellness activities throughout the District including celebration of National Days e.g. BBQ on national eat outside day, staff birthday recognition, staff shout out boards, special daily activities during the holidays including cubicle decorating contests, gingerbread houses, special games, ugly sweaters, favorite jacket day, movie trivia, photo booth, cookie exchange, and donation Fridays. We celebrated the clearing of the criminal backlog by holding district wide breakfast and luncheons with our justice partners.

Many counties dressed up for Halloween. Becker held a helium filled balloon contest to see whose balloon stayed afloat the longest.

Staffing Updates:

- Kathy Ouren, multi-county court administrator for Otter Tail and Wadena counties retired in December 2023 after an impressive 43 years working with the courts, 37 of them with The Minnesota Judicial Branch.
- Shari Kris, Court Operations Supervisor in Morrison County retired May 3, 2024. Shari has worked in the court system for an equally impressive 43 years. For the last 35 years she has been the Supervisor in Morrison County. Shari's leadership and devoted public service will be greatly missed.
- Trisha Mernitz promoted to multi county court administrator in Otter Tail and Wadena counties
- Heidi Rasmussen promoted to Court Operations Supervisor with the centralized probate team
- Leslie Burggraff promoted to Court Operations Supervisor in Morrison County
- Vanessa Burton promoted to Court Operations Supervisor in Otter Tail
- Kelly Shepersky promoted to Court Operations Supervisor in Wadena
- The District has also added an HR Coordinator position, District Staff Attorney, CHIPS Specialist for Clay, Becker, Otter Tail & Wadena Counties and lead-workers in Becker, Douglas/Morrison/Todd and Benton/Mille Lacs
- Chief Judge Hennesy was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court
- Benton County Judge Jesse retires in July and Benton County Attorney, Karl Schmidt, was appointed as the new judge



District Updates

8th District

By: Lindsay Listul

Last fall we were able to hold an assignment area team training session with a deep dive into our DiSC profiles. Connie Gackstatter spent some time with each of our three assignment areas, on separate days, to teach us more about how to work as a collaborative team even with the differences in our DiSC styles. This training was appreciated by all as it brought together not only staff and management, but also the Judges, court reporters, and law clerks.

Our newest centralized team for Conciliation order processing was fully implemented last Fall and has been running great. This team reviews hearings and processes orders for all thirteen counties in the district.

Proudly representing the 8th District, two of our Court Administrators were nominated for and received MACM awards at the Fall 2023 conference. Katie Bloch received the Champion of Change Award and Lindsay Listul received the Early Career Excellence Award.

Chippewa County had the privilege to host the Supreme Court Oral Argument in October 2023 at the local high school in Montevideo. There was a community dinner with the Supreme Court Justices the evening before arguments and many of our judges and staff were able to attend along with community members. The Justices were also given a tour of the Chippewa County Courthouse along with a group of high school students who were able to show them around their school and have lunch with them.

Each month our Business Process Specialist and our three Specialists hold a MJB News meeting. Here they share updates from The Source, CAPS, Branching Out, and any other big changes for staff to be aware of. This has been a great way to assure staff are up to date on things and gives them an opportunity to ask questions to the specialists and leaders.

We created an 8th District Happenings Newsletter, and the first issue was shared December 2023 and the second issue in March 2024. We plan to continue issuing these quarterly to share information about new employees, retiring employees, birthdays and work anniversaries, and anything else exciting happening throughout the district.

To encourage and promote wellness for our staff, we developed a districtwide fun committee that rolled out in 2024. The group is called Energizing the 8th! Our business process specialist and three supervisors send out daily emails with encouraging quotes, trivia questions and riddles, and other fun games. The group also celebrates national days which gives an opportunity for everyone to share photos and get to know one another better.

This winter our Judges began using batch signing folders for reviewing and signing of orders. With the help of our IT department creating a script and setting up the folders, the Judges have enjoyed fewer clicks and the ability to sign multiple documents at one time. We began with some simple criminal documents, moved into some probate and guardianship/conservatorship documents, and are now exploring conciliation and family documents for use in the batch signing folders.

In February 2024, Judge David Mennis and his court reporter Renee Cannon retired from Swift County Court. He was replaced with the appointment of Judge Allison Whalen and her court reporter Tina Haugen who both started in March.

We are currently in the process of rolling out a districtwide Judge on-call schedule. A single phone line has been set up through our VoIP phones and the Judges will rotate weekly to be available for after-hours contact from our partner agencies.

District Updates

9th District

By: Pamala Shaw

The Ninth has many experienced and skilled staff that have received promotions. Congratulations All!

- Krista Smith became the new Court Administrator for Beltrami and Cass Counties.
- Andrew Schmieg was hired as a new Court Operations Supervisor for Beltrami and Cass Counties.
- Kristine Oslund was recently promoted to Lead worker for Roseau, Kittson, Lake of the Woods and Marshall Counties.
- Sara Fields was hired in January as a Court Operations Supervisor for Aitkin and Crow Wing Counties.
- Jennifer Sullivan was hired as a new Court Operations Supervisor for Polk and Red Lake Counties.

The Ninth District says goodbye to years of experience. Best Wishes!

- Patti Bolstad is retiring on July 12 after 25 years with the MN Judicial Branch. Her position has been posted.
- Sue Haugen retired after 31 years of service with the MN Judicial Branch.
- Judge Schluchter retired and Matti Adam has been appointed to replace her.
- Judge Rivera-Spalla is retiring and Seamus Duffy has been appointed to replace her.

Beltrami County Court Administration has started a self-help clinic that has shown great success. Clinics are held the third Wednesday of every month from 12PM to 2PM. Itasca County held an open house and dedication for the New Jail/Justice Center Building. The Ceremony and Tour for the press and public took place on Friday, April 26th.

Koochiching County held an in-person Law Day event on Friday, May 3rd, with two separate school districts in the County and over 200 students participating. The Law Day theme this year is Voices of Democracy. In the spirit of the theme, 7th grade students held a protest on the front steps of the courthouse regarding the current debate on the use of cell phones during school hours. Before the protest, the students received information on the background of Law Day and what this year's theme means. Law Day included a mock arrest and a mock trial which took place in the courtroom with Judge Shermoen. Also, the local Bar Association participated with the students and court staff. Law Day continues to be held in Roseau, Kittson and Lake of the Woods Counties with a combined total of over 200 kids for all the counties attending.

In June 2024, Roseau will be hosting a Wedding day where Judge Dixon will perform wedding ceremonies at no cost to couples who register.

Crow Wing is near the completion of building a flexible/pandemic friendly Courtroom and Jury Deliberation Rooms.

The Ninth District is also about to begin working on the Combined Imprest Account project in early June 2024. Seventeen counties will be grouped into three imprest accounts by end of September 2024.

10th District

By: Erin Boettcher

The Tenth District continues to stay busy and is ready to start a new (fiscal) year! We have been working hard on our Strategic Plan and have established subgroups comprised of individuals from various lines of business and various court positions. Each subgroup has a different topic they are focusing on, such as remote work, employee satisfaction, DEI&B, or our mandates services budget. Chisago, Pine, Kanabec, and Isanti Counties continue to refine their centralized case processing. Anoka County was provided an amazing opportunity to hire and create a hearing officer program which has seen great success in it's initial stages. Sherburne County has made great strides clearing their criminal backlog, reducing their backlog by 70% in the last year.

Continued on next page

District Updates

10th District continued

Washington County is nearing the completion of audio / visual upgrades in six courtrooms. In addition to upgrading the technology throughout the courtrooms, they added cameras in the courtrooms for hybrid hearings, added monitors at the witness stand and counsel tables for viewing exhibits, and added a media box in one of the courtrooms. Finally, Wright County has facilitated a variety of team engagement exercises, such as Speed Networking, Scavenger Hunts, and Guess the Pet. We are excited for the next year and where our progress leads!

SCAO

By: Jamie Majerus

What is happening at State Court Administration in St. Paul? These processes, events, or bodies of work are high profile/high demand priorities for this quarter (April 1, 2024 – June 20, 2024) in the State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO).

- The oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative (OHI) Steering Committee will develop its final recommendations on a state-wide framework for remote and in-person hearings. The final recommendations will be presented to the Judicial Council at its June 2024 meeting.
- The Court Information Office led by Kim Pleticha will release the MJB 2023 Annual Report.
- Chief Justice Natalie Hudson and State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba continue to advocate for the branch's budget and policy initiatives requested as part of the 2024 legislative session. The 2024 session concludes on May 20. Funding for mandated services, enhancing cyber security, safe and secure courthouse grants, and judicial and staff safety and privacy top the list of branch's budget and policy items. You can find updates on Courtnet [Legislative Updates \(state.mn.us\)](https://legislativeupdates.state.mn.us) or reach out to Callie Lehman, the SCAO Intergovernmental Legislative Liaison with questions.
- Dan Ostdiek, SCAO Finance Director, will kick off FY26/27 biennial budget planning with the Judicial Council at its April 2024 meeting. The Judicial Council will finalize the branch request at the September 2024 meeting. The request must be submitted to the Governor in October.
- The SCAO Court Services Division hosted the 2024 Court Business Conference May 1-2 at the Rivers Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud. This year's conference theme revolves around Innovation and Engagement.
- Dana Bartocci, SCAO Human Resources & Development Director, is leading implementation of the new HR Workforce Information System, Oracle. Oracle presents a one-stop solution for accessing HR-related information, training resources, and completing tasks with ease. Managers stand to benefit from centralized tools for recruitment, onboarding, performance management, and more, promising increased efficiency, reduced errors, and enhanced reporting capabilities. Key Dates to Remember:
 - May 14, 2024: launch of Oracle Employee Portal, Recruiting, Onboarding, and Compensation modules
 - June 17, 2024: Launch of learning and Performance modules
- Work is underway on a draft FY26/27 Branch Strategic Plan. Katie Schurrer and Aaron Lauer from the SCAO Strategic Planning and Projects Office are supporting the committee chaired by Judge Michelle Lawson, Vice Chair of the Judicial Council. A draft plan will be presented to the Judicial Council at its June 2024 meeting.

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District Updates

SCAO continued

This list of new hires, promotions, and retirements in SCAO covers the period from April 1, 2023 through April 1, 2024.

New Hires:

- Cecilia Shaw, IT Supervisor, Information Technology Division
- Callie Lehman, Intergovernmental Relations Liaison, Executive Office

Promotions:

- Dan McLaughlin, IT Supervisor, Information Technology Division
- Adrian Wick, IT Senior Manager, Information Technology Division
- Chris Wiebe, IT Manager, Information Technology Division
- Rebecca Carter, Court Operations Supervisor, Court Services Division
- Sheldon Clark, Deputy Director, Court Services Division
- Eric Kunde, IT Supervisor, Information Technology

Retirements:

- Doris Karlisch, IT Supervisor, Information Technology Division
- Janet Marshall, Intergovernmental Relations Liaison, Executive Office

MACM MATTERS



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