

The Sixth Judicial Circuit Court 1998 Annual Report



Oakland County, Michigan



The Circuit Court
for the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court
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DEPUTY COURT ADMINISTRATOR

May 1, 1999

Judges of the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court
Oakland County Board of Commissioners
Oakland County Executive
Citizens of Oakland County

I am pleased to submit the 1998 Annual Report of the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court. This year's theme - A Year of Transition - reflects not only our commitment to continuous improvements in the court's operations but also the constancy of change.

Nineteen ninety-eight was a transitional year for Circuit Court programs. Programmatic transitions included the implementation of the family division and the accompanying revisions for processing our general civil and criminal cases. These changes in turn afforded us the opportunity to review and revise our policies and procedures, including those regarding bench warrants, criminal assignments, and the personal protection order process. We initiated and expanded on innovative programs, including facilitative mediation, early intervention conferences, jury orientation, and many others.

The year was also one of transition in terms of people. Judge Robert C. Anderson and Sheriff John F. Nichols passed away; Lynn Allen retired as Clerk/Register of Deeds. These men were selflessly devoted to public service and are deeply missed.

A year of transition, a time of passage. We look toward a future of hope, promise, and dynamic achievements.



Very truly yours,

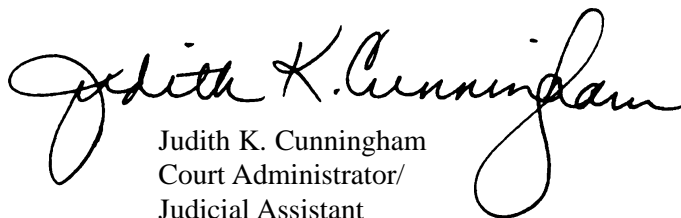

Judith K. Cunningham
Court Administrator/
Judicial Assistant

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Acknowledgments

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Sanders Printing of Pontiac, Michigan for its expertise in combining text, photos, and charts into the final product for printing and for its production services.

Kevin Oeffner, Libby Evans, and Anne Riopelle for developing text and charts used throughout the report.

INTRODUCTION - CHIEF JUDGE



The Honorable Edward Sosnick

The pages that follow offer the reader a glimpse of the variety and magnitude of changes that took place in 1998, a year of transition. Much of the planning and preparation for these changes occurred the previous year, but 1998 marked a new beginning - a watershed year where planning was put into practice.

No change occurred in the last several years, perhaps even the Court's history, the enormity of which can rival the creation of our family division. Cases previously heard by both the Circuit and Probate Courts were placed in the new family division of Circuit Court. More than 340 staff are assigned to the family division, ensuring that cases relating to matters of the family are handled timely and thoughtfully.

The year began with 13 general jurisdiction judges handling the civil, criminal and appellate cases previously heard by 17 judges. In spite of this extra workload, cases continued to be heard in a timely manner.

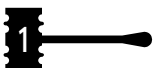
In addition, the facilitative mediation program continued to help litigants resolve business related cases in an expeditious and less costly manner. Visiting judges were utilized to try older civil cases and our drug court continued to hear serious drug-related cases.

To help resolve divorce cases in a more dignified way, the Court instituted early intervention conferences to bring litigants together early in the life of the divorce. These conferences allow the parties to discuss their disputes and the Friend of the Court to introduce litigants to an array of services.

The Court has aggressively developed mechanisms to handle the surge in Personal Protection Order (PPO) filings, nearly 4,000 in 1998. Private attorneys were hired to assist juvenile referees in reviewing PPOs. The Court enlisted the assistance of the Oakland Mediation Center to handle appropriate cases, including neighborhood disputes. We co-sponsored a PPO Summit to deal with enforcement issues. Step Forward, a new Community Corrections program, monitors persons violating PPOs. HAVEN implemented a pilot project to supervise the exchange of children in two local police stations. All of these efforts combine to create a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

We reviewed and revised our local administrative orders and chief judge directives in response to recent legislative mandates, court rule changes, and Supreme Court Administrative Orders. Hundreds of staff hours were dedicated to this project, culminating in revisions to many policies governing the Court's business practices.

As I complete my third year as chief judge, I'm uniquely aware of the talent, hard work and dedication exhibited by our team of judges and staff. This report is as much for them, to display their accomplishments and achievements, as it is for the reader who seeks information about our Court. I'm confident that we will continue to meet the challenges ahead with the same pride and commitment that defined 1998 as a year of transition.



SENIORITY OF THE JUDGES OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

The Honorable Richard D. Kuhn - Circuit Judge since 1973

The Honorable Steven N. Andrews - Circuit Judge since 1976

The Honorable Gene Schnelz - Circuit Judge since 1979

The Honorable Robert C. Anderson - Circuit Judge since 1981 (Deceased August 6, 1998)

The Honorable David F. Breck - Circuit Judge since 1982

The Honorable Fred M. Mester - Circuit Judge since 1982

The Honorable Jessica R. Cooper - Circuit Judge since 1986

The Honorable Edward Sosnick - Circuit Judge since 1988

The Honorable Barry L. Howard - Circuit Judge since 1989

The Honorable Deborah G. Tyner - Circuit Judge since 1991

The Honorable Rudy J. Nichols - Circuit Judge since 1991

The Honorable Denise Langford Morris - Circuit Judge since 1992

The Honorable John J. McDonald - Circuit Judge since 1993

The Honorable Alice L. Gilbert - Circuit Judge 1976 - 1992 and since 1995

The Honorable Nanci J. Grant - Circuit Judge since 1997

The Honorable Joan E. Young - Circuit Judge since 1997

The Honorable Wendy L. Potts - Circuit Judge since 1997

The Honorable Colleen A. O'Brien - Circuit Judge since 1998

JUDGES OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

Biographies



The Honorable Robert C. Anderson (Deceased August 6, 1998)

- Juris Doctor, Detroit College of Law, 1952
- Judge of the 51st District Court, Waterford Township, eight years
- Past President, American Judges Association
- Past President, Oakland County Bar Association
- Vice Chairman, Michigan Judges Association Rules Committee
- Chairman, Oakland County Community Corrections Advisory Board
- Director Emeritus, Oakland Family Services
- Member, American Judges Association, Long Range Planning Committee



The Honorable Steven N. Andrews

- Circuit Court Judge for 23 years, with three terms as Chief Judge and three terms as Chief Judge Pro Tempore
- Selected one of the Most Respected Judges of Michigan in lawyers poll in *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* and listed in Oxford's *Who's Who Among American Judges*
- One Man Grand Juror and Presiding Judge for the Oakland County Citizens' Grand Jury
- Received an Honorary Juris Doctorate from the New England Law School in 1986
- Served on Adrian College's Board of Trustees and Providence Hospital's Advisory Board and currently serving as Trustee, Oakland County Library Board
- Chancellor, American Inn of Court, Oakland County Chapter
- Guest Lecturer and Instructor at Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University
- Author of articles and periodicals on the First Amendment and the Public Trial Concept



The Honorable David F. Breck

- Awarded the State Bar's most coveted citation, "Champion of Justice" and Cranbrook School's "Distinguished Alumnus" award; Rated "Outstanding" by the OCBA, its highest rating; voted one of the best judges in the tri-county area in a *Detroit Monthly* poll
- Life member of NAACP; recipient of its Presidential Award for Judicial Service; received the Leon Hubbard award by the OCBA for "Fostering Awareness of Cultural Diversity and Enhancing the Quality of Life for all People;" Director, Horizons Upward Bound, a program for underprivileged high school students to attend college
- Past chairperson of Henry Ford Hospice; twice elected as Mayor of Birmingham; Graduate of University of Michigan Law School, Michigan State University; awarded Certificate of Achievement from American Academy of Judicial Education at Harvard
- District Court Judge, 1977 to 1982; Circuit Court Judge since 1982



The Honorable Jessica R. Cooper

- Elected to the Circuit Court in 1986
- Judge of the 46th District Court, Southfield, 1978-1986, two years as Chief Judge
- Founder, National Association of Women Judges - former national publication editor
- Member, National Task Force on Gender Bias in the Courts
- Adjunct Professor of Law, Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University
- Instructor, National Institute for Trial Advocacy, National College of Trial Advocacy, and Institute of Continuing Legal Education
- Board member, Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County
- Board member, Forgotten Harvest



The Honorable Alice L. Gilbert

- Circuit Judge for 21 years and served as Chief Judge Pro Tempore
- 48th District Judge for eight years and served as Chief Judge
- Graduate, Northwestern University School of Law, Wellesley College; postgraduate work at Harvard University, University of Michigan, Wayne State University School of Law, University of Detroit School of Law, and National Judicial College, University of Nevada
- Director: Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, Board of Trustees Vice Chair; National Crime Foundation; Lyric Chamber Ensemble; Trustee, United Health Organization
- Member, State of Michigan Board of Ethics; President, Michigan District Judges Association; Chairman, Oakland County Corrections Advisory Board; Chair, Providence Hospital Advisory Board; American Hospital Association Task Force
- Recipient of several honors and special recognitions; 3 children; 6 grandchildren



The Honorable Nanci J. Grant

- Elected to the Circuit Court in 1996; Graduated from the University of Michigan, with honors, and Wayne State University Law School, director of honors program
- Private practice attorney, specializing in commercial litigation
- Former member, Michigan State Bar's Representative Assembly
- Michigan Judges Association Rules Committee member
- Recipient of "Merit Award" from Citizens Alliance for Oakland County Probate Court; selected by Crain's Detroit Business as one of "40 under 40;" Board member of Women's Survival Center; member of Oakland County Bar Association, American Bar Association, American Judges Association, and National Judges Association



The Honorable Barry L. Howard

- Appointed to the Circuit Court, February, 1989
- Chief Judge Pro Tempore of the Oakland Circuit Court, 1996, 1997 and 1998
- Member, State Bar of Michigan, American Bar Association, Oakland County Bar Association
- Member, Executive Board, Michigan Judges Association, serving as Vice-President in 1998
- Faculty member, Michigan Judicial Institute (the teaching arm of the Michigan Supreme Court) and member of its Advisory Committee
- Private practice attorney for 15 years with emphasis on Labor and Administrative Law, plus litigation before state and federal agencies and courts; counsel to Police Officers Association of Michigan and Special Assistant Attorney General



The Honorable Richard D. Kuhn

- Oakland County Circuit Judge since 1973
- Chief Judge in 1979 and for two subsequent two year terms
- Delegate, 1961 Constitutional Convention
- Past President, Detroit College of Law Alumni Association
- Graduate, Michigan State University and Detroit College of Law
- Member, State Bar of Michigan, Oakland County Bar Association, American Judges Association and the American Judicature Society



The Honorable Denise Langford Morris

- Appointed to the Circuit Court in August, 1992
- Private practice attorney with extensive civil and criminal experience
- Former Oakland County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney and Assistant United States Attorney
- Founding member, D. Augustus Straker Bar Association
- Director: Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society; Help Against Violent Encounters Now (HAVEN); Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency governing board
- Chair, Corrections Committee; Director, Michigan Judges Association
- Member, Michigan Supreme Court Civil Jury Instructions Committee
- Member, Michigan Supreme Court Access to Justice Committee
- Member, William Booth Legal Aid Clinic (Salvation Army)



The Honorable John J. McDonald

- Oakland County Circuit Judge since 1993
- Former Oakland County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
- Former Oakland County Commissioner, 14 years
- Liaison, Circuit Court Mediation Selection Committee
- Member, American Judges Association, Michigan Judges Association, Oakland County Bar Association, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges



The Honorable Fred M. Mester

- Recipient: Earl W. Kintner Award, Federal Bar Association; Michigan Corrections Association Judicial Award; John N. O'Brien Memorial Award for Distinguished Community Activities; Centennial Award; Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree, Central Michigan University; NAACP 1997 Humanitarian Award
- President, Central Michigan University Alumni Association; President of Board of Directors, William Booth Legal Aid Clinic (Salvation Army); Chairman, Oakland County Community Corrections Board; National Council on Alcoholism, Detroit Board; Multiple Sclerosis Board; Founder, Reading to Reduce Recidivism
- Adjunct Professor, Oakland University, Madonna University, Oakland Community College; Author of articles pertaining to the law and ancillary to the law, i.e. *Guideposts*, October, 1996; Military service: Captain, United States Army; Former Chief of the Civil Division, United States Attorney's Office; Former Assistant United States Attorney



The Honorable Rudy J. Nichols

- Graduate, Michigan State University and Detroit College of Law
- General and municipal law practice - 1970s
- Former member: Michigan House of Representatives, Michigan Senate - 1980s
- Former chair, Michigan Senate Judiciary Committee
- Recipient of Outstanding Legislator of the Year by Michigan Judges Association
- Recognized as Legislator of the Year by the Police Officers Association of Michigan
- Author and co-author of articles published in professional journals, including "Overview of Michigan Rules of Evidence" and Michigan's "Domestic Violence Law" appearing in the *State Bar Journal* and in *Laches*
- Oakland County Circuit Court Judge - 1991 to present



The Honorable Colleen A. O'Brien

- Elected to Oakland Circuit Court in 1998
- Graduated from the University of Michigan (1978) and Detroit College of Law (1981)
- Private practice attorney specializing in civil litigation for 17 years
- Member, State Bar of Michigan, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, Michigan Judges Association; Past President, Oakland County Women's Bar Association



The Honorable Wendy Potts

- Appointed to the Oakland County Circuit Court, January 1998; elected November 1998
- Judge, Oakland County Probate Court, March 1997 - January 1998
- Secretary, State Bar of Michigan, 1996-1997; Commissioner, State Bar of Michigan, 1990 through present
- President, Oakland County Bar Association, 1994-1995
- Magistrate, 48th District Court, 1984-1995
- Current Board Member, Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland; Co-Chair, State Bar of Michigan's Children's Justice Committee (1995); Governor's Task Force on Domestic Violence (1994); Chair, Natural Resources Trust Fund (1994); Trustee, Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society; Fellow, Michigan Bar Foundation, American Bar Foundation



The Honorable Gene Schnelz

- Oakland Circuit Judge, 18 years; District Judge, 4 years, also serving as Chief Judge
- Graduate of Alma College, Detroit College of Law and National Judicial College
- Former attorney for Walled Lake, Wixom, Wolverine Lake, Milford, Milford Township and Walled Lake School District
- Recipient: Michigan State Bar's Robert P. Hudson Award for service to public and profession and Clarity Award for plain English writing; OCBA's Frances R. Avadenka Memorial Award for contributions outside the practice of law; Joint Resolution of Michigan Legislature for public service; Jewish Association for Retarded Citizens' Civil Rights Award; NAACP Presidential Award for Judicial Service; Alma College Distinguished Alumni Award
- Selected one of Michigan's Most Respected Judges by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* poll



The Honorable Edward Sosnick

- Chief Judge of the Oakland Circuit Court for the 1996-1997 term and the 1998-1999 term
- Recipient of the State Bar of Michigan's Champion of Justice Award
- Recipient of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Award for Meritorious Service to the Children of America
- Co-founder, Oakland County Circuit Court's SMILE. Program, an educational program for divorcing parents
- Recipient of Eleanor Roosevelt Humanities Award
- Twice voted one of Michigan's Most Respected Judges by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* poll
- Four-time honoree, Michigan State Police for Professional Excellence



The Honorable Deborah G. Tyner

- Elected to a ten-year term on the Oakland Circuit Bench in 1990; Graduated from the University of Michigan and Wayne State University Law School, with honors
- Former Wayne County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
- Former Partner, private law firm specializing in commercial litigation
- Graduate, National Judicial College
- Member: Michigan Judges Association Executive And Legislative Committee; State Bar of Michigan; Oakland County Bar Association; Board of Trustees of MS Society
- Co-Chair, Joint Bench/Bar Committee Re: Criminal Attorney Appointment System
- Co-Chair, 1997 Bench/Bar Conference
- Fellow, Adams Pratt Foundation
- Former Member, State Bar Representative Assembly



The Honorable Joan E. Young

- Appointed Circuit Judge, March 1997; assigned to Family Division, 1998 - present
- Probate Judge, January 1989 - March 1997; Chief Judge 3 years
- Chief Judge, 52nd District Court, 1996-1997
- Recipient, Oakland County Bar Association Distinguished Service Award; Women's Survival Center Wonder Woman Award; Honored by the Oakland County Women's Bar Association
- Member: Oakland County Bar Association; American Bar Association; National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; Inns of Court, 1996-1997
- Michigan Opera Theatre Trustee; Advisory Board of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc., Metro Detroit Chapter
- Frequent lecturer on legal issues affecting children and families

GENERAL JURISDICTION

Function

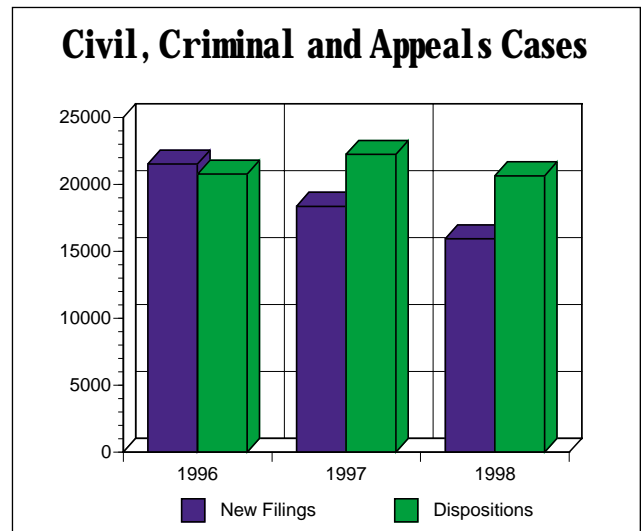
The Circuit Court experienced a transformation in 1998 with the assignment of four judges to the family division. Thirteen judges were left to handle the general jurisdiction cases previously heard by 17 judges.

The general jurisdiction judges handle civil cases, criminal cases involving felonies and high misdemeanors, and hear appeals from courts of lesser jurisdiction and administrative agencies. Judicial resources dedicated to the handling of these cases consist of 13 sitting judges and three visiting judges, one who tries drug cases exclusively and two who hear civil matters.

Major Accomplishments

- Disposed of 10,737 civil cases, 8,364 criminal cases, and 1,551 appeals.
- Worked with the Michigan State Police and the Prosecutor's Office to revise procedures regarding bench warrants.
- Established rules and procedures governing certain expenses incurred by court-appointed attorneys and expert witnesses.
- Approved revisions for scheduling arraignments to expedite the handling of criminal cases and help ease jail overcrowding.
- Worked to develop a method for handling civil cases affected by repeal of the remand statute. Included in this effort were several meetings and discussions with the chief justice and district court judges. A delegation of circuit judges also testified before the Supreme Court regarding this issue.
- Revised the criminal assignment procedures to include that attorneys appointed to probation violations must be eligible to receive criminal appointments.

- Collaborated with Community Corrections, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Oakland County Bar Association and others to conduct a training seminar on the new sentencing guidelines legislation.
- Processed 192 cases into the Court's facilitation project.



FAMILY DIVISION

Function

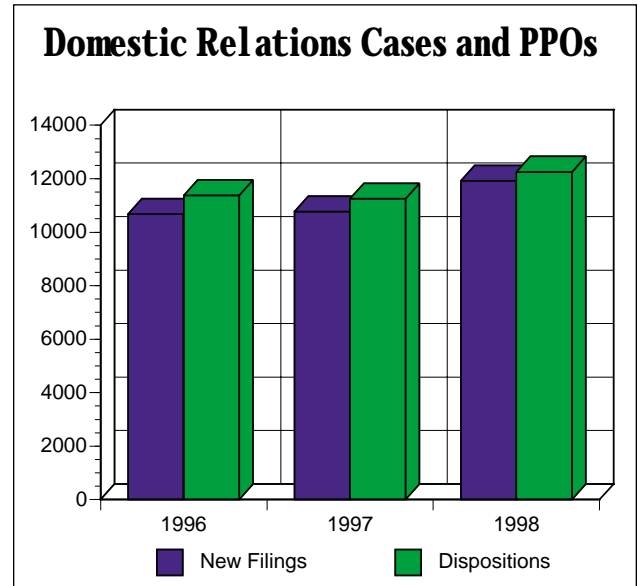
The family division of Circuit Court was created by Public Act 388 of 1996. On January 1, 1998, family litigation handled previously by the Circuit and Probate Courts was consolidated in the family division of Circuit Court. Cases involving a single family are assigned to, and remain with, one judicial team consisting of the judge, referees, case assistants and family counselors.

The family division consists of four Circuit judges and two and a half Probate judges. The division handles all cases involving divorce, adoption, juvenile delinquency, child custody, paternity and child support, abuse and neglect, personal protection orders, conservatorships and guardianships, and other cases involving matters of the family.

Major Accomplishments

- Commenced operation in January 1998. Central to this effort was the reassignment of more than 190 employees from Probate Court to the family division, and the creation of the family division bench consisting of 4 Circuit judges and 2½ Probate judges.
- Disposed of 12,251 domestic relations cases and personal protection orders.
- Disposed of 4,930 juvenile delinquency petitions, 305 child protective proceeding petitions, 423 adoptions, and 553 minor guardianships.
- Revised child protective proceedings to comply with legislation.
- Provided psychological testing and evaluation through the Psychological Clinic for 132 individuals referred in domestic cases, an increase of 412% from 1997.

- Developed a voluntary family self-assessment questionnaire to be completed by parents at Early Intervention Conferences and SMILE programs.



THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

Function

The Court Administrator's Office handles all business operations of the Circuit Court, including personnel, education and training, caseload management, finance and budgeting, records management, press and media relations and information management. The office also advises on legal issues affecting court operations.

The Court Administrator serves as the chief executive officer for the Court and oversees the operations of the Friend of the Court, the Assignment Office and the Jury Office, and acts as the liaison to county and state government offices and departments, as well as other courts.

Major Accomplishments

- Added the Farmington Hills, Ferndale, and Waterford District Courts to the Integrated Justice Data System. The system transmits criminal case information electronically between the circuit and district courts.
- Developed the Court's new juror orientation video to prospective jurors. The video incorporates two objectives designed to assist those called to jury duty: a reminder of our constitutional obligation to serve as jurors; and an introduction to the events involved in jury selection.
- Assisted in the development of the Courthouse Master Plan, thereby paving the way for the Board of Commissioners to select an architect.
- Assisted Oakland County in acquiring nearly \$1.2 million in revenue due from the Department of Corrections. The DOC withheld statutory payments to Oakland County for prisoners held at the jail, claiming that the judgments generated for enhanced sentences did not reveal coding necessary to effectuate payment. Although the codes used in such circumstances conformed to statutory requirements, the Court reprinted nearly 1,200 judgments to assist the County in its rebilling efforts.
- Initiated a comprehensive review of all administrative orders and chief judge directives and presented recommended revisions to the bench. This effort was necessary due to the legislative initiatives regarding court reorganization and development of the family division.
- Developed an Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations policy. The policy governs the Court's handling of accommodation requests by qualified individuals having a legitimate interest in attending court proceedings.
- Hired an information technology specialist and three judicial law clerks.
- Received bids on the Court's proposed Judicial Information Management System (JIMS) and attended vendor demonstrations.
- Received 7,017 bindovers from the district courts and appointed 5,651 court-appointed attorneys for indigent defendants.
- Trained staff on the new Human Resource and Financial Information System (HRFIS).
- Administered grant funding for the continuation of the drug court.

COURT FINANCES

Revenue Summary

Circuit Court General Fund — Court costs and fees; reimbursement for court-appointed attorneys; and mediation fines.

Judicial Salaries — State share of circuit judges' salaries.

Friend of the Court Fund — Federal/state share of fees and 3% incentive payment on child support collections.

Grants — Federal and state funding for operation of the Drug Court and enforcement of medical insurance provisions and payments through Friend of the Court.

CRP Contract — Federal funding to offset costs borne by Friend of the Court for child support enforcement and the enforcement of parenting and custody time.

Expenditure Summary

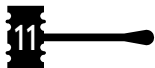
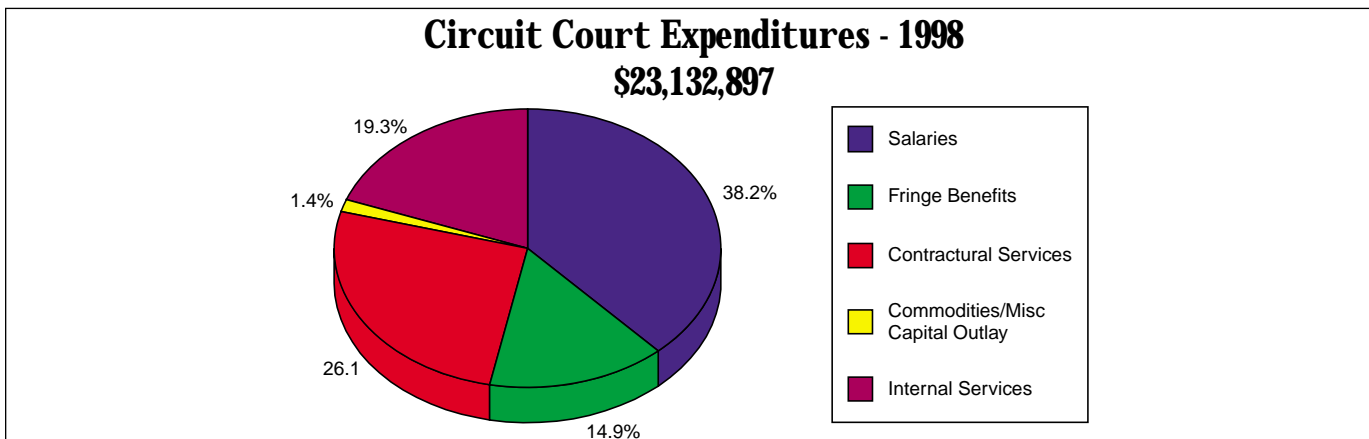
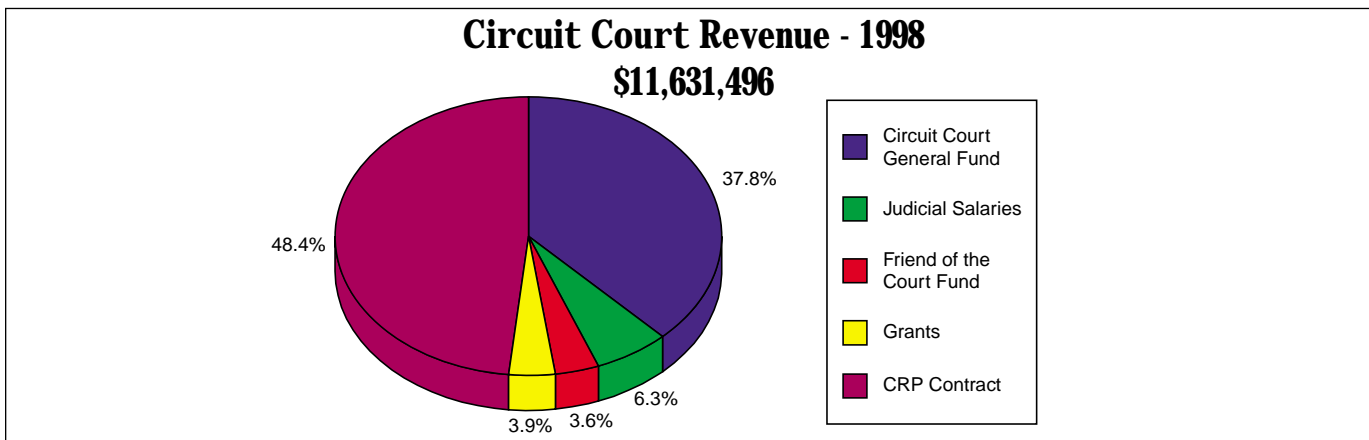
Salaries — Cost of salaries for judicial, administrative and Friend of the Court staff.

Fringe Benefits — Cost for fringe benefits for judicial, administrative and Friend of the Court staff.

Contractual Services — Payments for defense attorneys and mediators, juror payments and mileage, equipment, furniture, travel, conferences, professional services, case-related payments, and other items central to administration and operation of the court.

Commodities/Miscellaneous Capital Outlay — Primarily postage and office supplies used by the court in the disposition of its responsibilities.

Internal Services — Non-controllable costs borne by the court for such items as office space rent, computer services, equipment rent, printing, utilities and liability insurance.



FRIEND OF THE COURT

Function

The Friend of the Court is an office of the Circuit Court with responsibilities for assisting in domestic relations cases. The office investigates matters involving custody, support, and parenting time in contested cases. Once the court orders specific obligations, the Friend of the Court ensures the orders are upheld.

The Friend of the Court also offers free programs to persons involved in family law cases such as SMILE, an educational workshop designed for divorcing parents, and family counseling programs aimed at reducing the stress of divorce. The office also provides speakers to local groups.

Major Accomplishments

- Implemented Early Intervention Conferences in all new divorce cases with children to provide parties with information, identify issues, and encourage use of less adversarial methods to resolve cases.
- Expanded our Jobs Program to assist individuals required to pay child support in finding employment.
- Replaced and upgrading the electronic imaging filing system used since 1992. Began conversion of 7.3 million pages of documents currently on electronic file.
- Participated in the Michigan Non-Support Special Project, a pilot program using a multi-disciplinary work group to increase child support collections by identifying, analyzing, investigating, and prosecuting delinquent high-profile child support cases.
- Collected \$159 million in support payments, \$622,066 in service fees and \$45,977 in court costs.
- Selected a new Chief Assistant Friend of the Court.

FAMILY COUNSELING SERVICES

Function

The office assists families in domestic relations matters through mediation, counseling and investigation of issues pertaining to custody and parenting time.

Family Counseling Services sponsors educational programs to promote understanding of the effects of separation and divorce on families. The goal is to help everyone make positive adjustments to dramatic changes in the family unit.

Major Accomplishments

- Developed and implemented *Forget Me Not*, an educational program for unwed parents living separately and raising children. This program provides information to parents about the importance of both parents' involvement in the lives of their children and how to create a positive environment for their children's growth and development.
- Instituted a second monthly SMILE divorce education program to accommodate a greater number of parents.
- Provided mediation in 2,501 domestic relations cases and assisted parents to voluntarily resolve custody and parenting time disputes in 1,921 of those cases.
- Implemented a pilot program using a family self-reporting assessment tool to be completed by parents at the Early Intervention Conference. This questionnaire helps parents identify needs that may require specialized counseling services. FOC refers parents to appropriate community resources.
- Provided dispute resolution counseling at motion call for all family division judges to assist domestic relations litigants in resolving custody and parenting time issues prior to hearing.

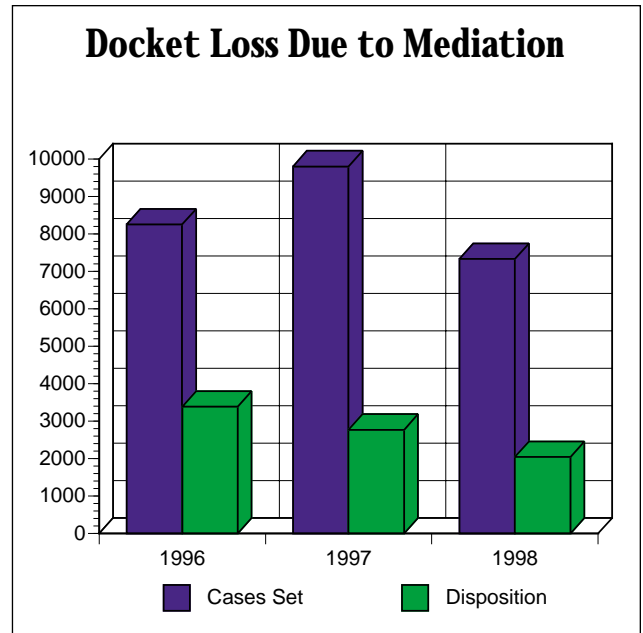
ASSIGNMENT AND MEDIATION OFFICE

Function

The Assignment Office tracks both civil and criminal cases from start to finish and sets dates for court appearances. The office also oversees the Court's mediation program, used as an alternative to trial. Almost 28% docket loss was attributable to mediation in 1998.

Major Accomplishments

- Created a miscellaneous docket for cases mediated under \$25,000.
- Updated computer technology to participate in the courthouse security program.
- Assisted in coordinating information for a random/rotation mediator selection process.
- Implemented services to the new family division of the Circuit Court.
- Created and filled an Assistant Assignment Clerk position.
- Began coordination of cases and services for Settlement Week 1999.
- Distributed \$177,655 to the Law Library from late fees assessed to mediation.



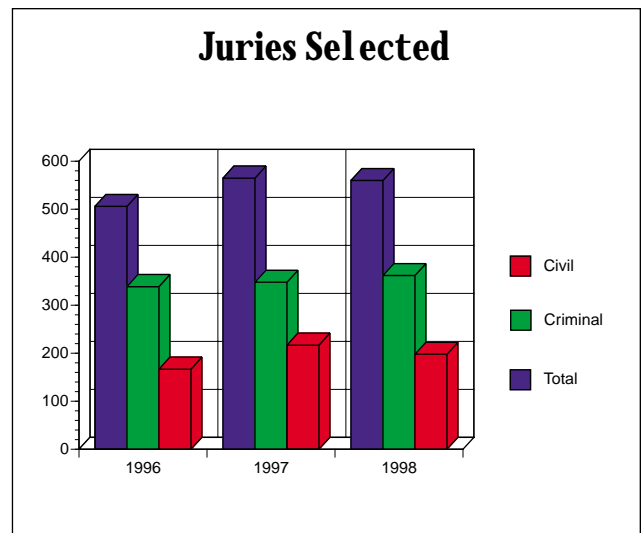
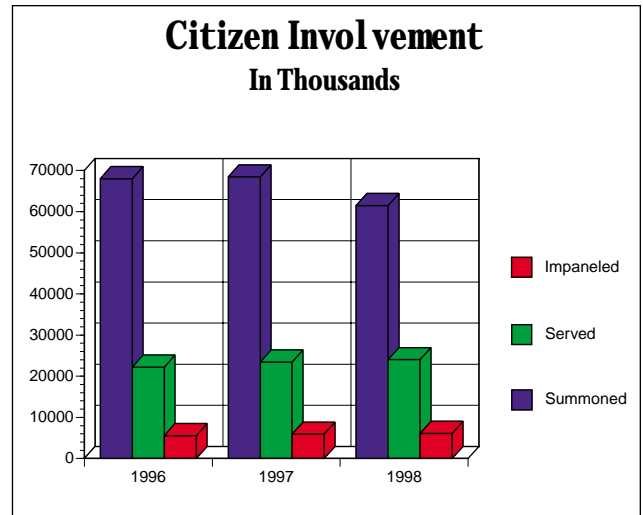
JURY OFFICE

Function

The Jury Office summons potential jurors for the Circuit and Probate Courts as well as all district courts throughout the county. Of the 61,510 citizens summoned during 1998, more than 24,042 served.

Major Accomplishments

- Developed and implemented a new juror orientation video to educate jurors on what to expect during jury duty.
- Updated electronic equipment by installing two new televisions and a VCR to accommodate the new video. Implemented a new telephone system providing information regarding jury service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Assisted in the selection of a Citizens Grand Jury, convened to investigate unsolved murders and felony drug cases.
- Processed all jury functions and provided jurors to courts for 198 civil trials, with an average trial duration of 5.5 days.
- Processed all jury functions and provided jurors to courts for 362 criminal trials, with an average trial duration of 3.5 days. Of those trials, 104 were capital offenses.
- Hired a new jury clerk and deputy jury clerk.



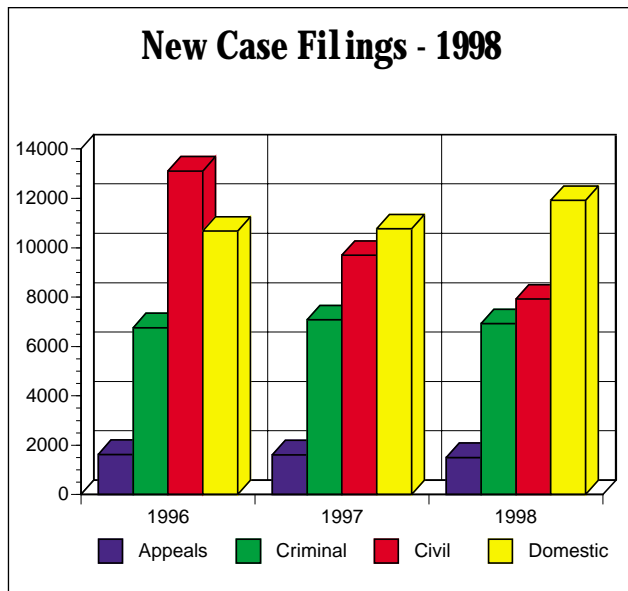
CLERK/REGISTER'S LEGAL DIVISION

Function

The Legal Division of the Oakland County Clerk/Register's Office maintains the records of all civil and felony criminal cases, as well as district court appeals and transcripts. The records for the family division of the Circuit Court are also maintained by the Clerk's Office.

Major Accomplishments

- Reorganized office and added two supervisors.
- Opened over 2,800 files previously handled by the Probate Court.
- Processed nearly 4,000 personal protection files; 3,263 personal protection orders were granted.
- Focused on the deployment of an upgraded optical image system in early March; continued working towards our goal of 100% scanned documents by the year 2000.
- Validated or closed 6,000 outstanding bench warrants on the Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN).
- Welcomed a new Clerk/Register of Deeds.



REIMBURSEMENT DIVISION

Function

This division, under the County Executive, is responsible for collecting all costs and fees ordered by the court and mandated by law.

Major Accomplishments

- Increased the number of writs of garnishment against state tax refunds by 35%.
- Automated process for filing 1,310 writs of garnishment with the Clerk's Office.
- Increased services to crime victims by accepting restitution payments from the Michigan Department of Corrections.
- Coordinated efforts with the Prosecutor's Office and the Probation Department to enhance services to crime victims.
- Focused staff efforts on identifying and attaching defendant assets to satisfy court ordered fees.

REVENUE COLLECTIONS

Summary

Restitution — Court-ordered monetary judgments against defendants to compensate for injuries suffered by crime victims.

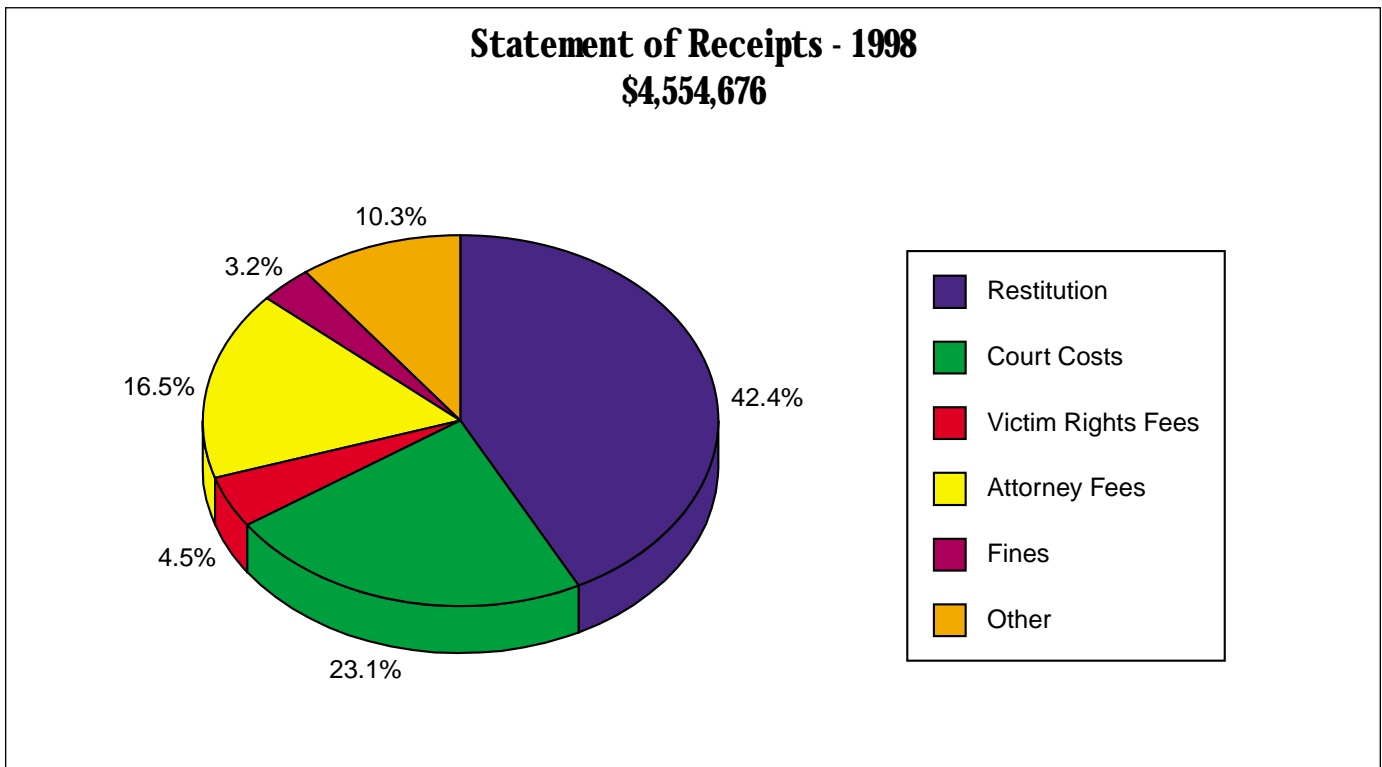
Court Costs — Court-ordered fines and fees assessed against litigants for court costs.

Attorney Fees — Fees collected from defendants for court-appointed attorneys.

Fines — Statutory fines assessed against litigants.

Victim Rights Fees — Statutory fees assessed against defendants in criminal matters.

Other — Fees for inmate board and care; forensic lab expenses; extradition expenses; paternity blood tests; and psychological testing.



ADAMS-PRATT LAW LIBRARY

Function

Under the auspices of the Oakland County Library Board, the Law Library serves the legal information needs of county and court personnel, attorneys, students, and the general public.

In addition to maintaining its own comprehensive collection of federal and state legal materials in various formats, the Library orders and processes legal materials for the Circuit, Probate and some district courts, as well as the Prosecuting Attorney's Office and Corporation Counsel.

The Library operates a Jail Inmate Program, providing inmates with copies of case law and statutes and maintains on-site legal collections as mandated by federal and state courts.

Major Accomplishments

- Provided an up-to-date legal reference collection as well as legal reference assistance to 48,500 visitors in 1998.
- Reorganized and moved the entire collection of books and periodicals for easier access. This was accomplished with the help of WAM (Weekend Alternative for Misdemeanants, a Community Corrections program).
- Used a \$5,852 grant from the Oakland County - Adams Pratt Foundation to install 28 additional CD-ROM drives. This increased the capacity for patrons to perform automated legal research at no charge.
- Prepared a bibliography of legal web sites for the July issue of the Michigan Bar Journal and tailored it for use as a State Bar of Michigan Annual meeting handout; also added it to our web site (www.oakland.lib.mi.us/oakllaw.htm).
- Provided staff assistance to the Detroit Area Libraries Network for a 21st Century online library catalog to be used by multitype libraries serving the metropolitan region and beyond.

CIRCUIT COURT PROBATION

Function

This office is part of the Michigan Department of Corrections, Field Operations. The law requires probation agents to prepare a presentence investigation on each felon awaiting sentence. When the court grants probation, probation agents also supervise these felony offenders.

In cooperation with other criminal justice agencies this unit ensures there is a range of sentence options available to the Court, which involve both economical and safe supervision.

Major Accomplishments

- Supervised more than 650 low risk offenders in residential inpatient programs or on electronic monitoring. The majority of these offenders would have otherwise been confined in much more costly jail facilities.
- Upheld high standards for monitoring offenders as indicated by an independent caseload compliance audit completed in October 1998 of 4,173 cases under supervision. The audit revealed a 99.2% compliance rate in meeting our strict supervision standards.
- Assisted in the arrest and arraignment of more than 900 probationers who had absconded.
- Monitored the completion of more than 80,000 hours of community service by probationers for non-profit agencies in Oakland County as a condition of probation.
- Participated in an ongoing pilot and facilitation of the "Reading to Reduce Recidivism" program.
- Prepared more than 6,000 Presentence Investigation Reports for the Circuit Court.
- Enforced as a special condition of probation the collection of costs, attorney fees, fines, restitution and victim rights fund monies.

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS DIVISION

Function

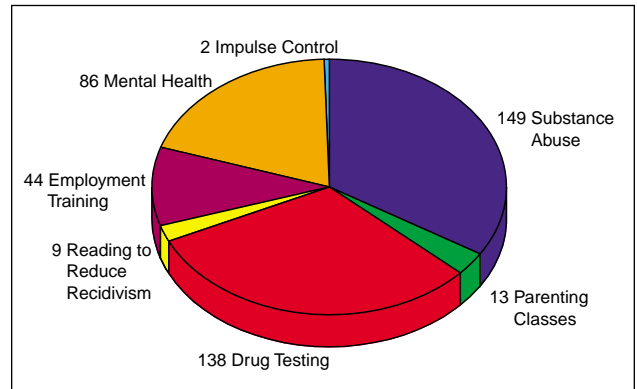
This division funds community-based programs that provide alternatives to jail which meet the needs of nonviolent offenders. These efficient and effective programs protect the public and are considerate of victim impact.

Major Accomplishments

- Established Step Forward, a highly structured intensive day reporting center which serves as an alternative to jail and offers clients an array of services. Many of the services are free of charge, including substance abuse treatment readiness groups, mental health services, career training and placement courses, parent education and anger management classes. Considered a “one stop shop,” the client is also able to access food, clothing, and shelter.
- Expanded the Court Community Service Unit (CCSU). At the end of the reporting year, the CCSU had received 714 new offender referrals from the Circuit Court and Michigan Department of Corrections Probation. The total number of hours completed by offenders was 37,493, saving non-profit agencies almost \$300,000 in paid labor. In addition, the CCSU collects a total of \$22,069 in reimbursement funds.
- Offered Alternative Incarceration Centers (AIC), a community-based, residential sentencing alternative for use by Circuit Court judges. Individuals sentenced for non-violent felony offenses to an AIC must adhere to strict supervision and behavior standards, participate in various therapeutic interventions (e.g., substance abuse and/or mental health counseling), as well as contribute financially to their care once employed. AICs are encouraged to establish partnerships with community agencies to further assist offenders in meeting a multiple of needs. There were 72 beds allotted to contracted AICs. By the end of the year, an average of 80 beds had been utilized.

- Expanded the WAM program (Weekend Alternative for Misdemeanants), a sentencing program used by District Court judges as a sentencing alternative. Offenders sentenced to WAM perform weekend community service work at local non-profit organizations.

**Step Forward Services
Defendants Referred by the Court**



Step Forward Services were first offered in March 1998

**WAM FISCAL YEAR REPORT
OCTOBER 1997 - SEPTEMBER 1998**

New Registered Defendants1245
Labor Saved\$451,776
	(\$8 per hour x # of days saved)
Jail Days Saved7059
Tax Dollars Saved	\$550,602
Revenues	\$71,185

1998 Highlights

1998 State of the Court

On May 7, 1998, Chief Judge Edward Sosnick delivered his State of the Court address to commissioners, elected officials and staff at the regular meeting of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. The following are excerpts from his speech:

My speech is entitled "Working Together." I chose this theme because almost everything I will share with you involves our judges and staff working with colleagues in county and state government, as well as collaborations with private entities, volunteer groups and others. We recognize and appreciate that we are interdependent and that only by working together can we fulfill the vision of the Michigan judiciary to provide leadership for the continuous improvement of our justice system . . .

[W]e have revised our procedures on Personal Protection Orders or PPOs for short. Our efforts to streamline the processing of PPOs involve many players in our justice community . . .

"We are truly blessed in this county to have the unique rapport and relationships among and between so many different people and entities."

With the assistance and approval of the County Executive and County Commission, our drug court has continued to operate and effectively resolve hundreds of felony drug cases.

Let me turn now to our responsibilities for handling general civil cases. We have created innovative programs to deal with these astonishing number of cases . . . For example, we instituted a facilitative mediation program as a form of alternative or concurrent dispute resolution . . .



Let me also mention the county-wide initiatives with which we are intricately involved.

The Judicial Information Management System, JIMS for short, is an effort to have an integrated justice system for the Circuit, Probate, and 52nd District Courts . . . Hopefully, within the next few years, we will see an entire new computer system for our courts and other justice related agencies.

We are currently very much involved in working with the county Facilities Department on the courthouse master plan, a collaborative effort to provide the citizens of this county with an up-to-date courthouse . . .

We are truly blessed in this county to have the unique rapport and relationships among and between so many different people and entities . . . Others in county and state government look to us as an example of efficient and effective government . . . We take pride in the quality of our elected officials and their superb staffs. Working together, we have accomplished much. As we approach the end of this century and begin the next, we will continue to join in a common purpose to meet the diverse and changing needs of the public we serve.

Employee of the Year

The Oakland County Circuit Court has recognized outstanding service by its employees annually since 1984. Nominations of persons who have made a distinctive contribution to the Court's work are sought from employees throughout the Court. Nominees have characteristically performed their jobs faultlessly and have demonstrated service that far exceeds their written job descriptions.

In 1998 one employee was recognized by his peers as having attained the stature of distinguished public service to the Court and the citizens of Oakland County.

Bruce Brakel, Judicial Staff Attorney

- Employed as a judicial staff attorney for 11 years.
- Recognized for his hard work and willingness to help others.
- Respected for his knowledge and understanding of the law.



At its annual awards ceremony in December, the Circuit Court recognized its employee of the year, judicial staff attorney Bruce Brakel. Pictured with Bruce Brakel are Court Administrator Judith Cunningham and Chief Judge Edward Sosnick.

Contributions

The Bench approved contributions to two non-profit organizations that have worked for years to improve the lives of victims of domestic violence. These funds are available through the Circuit Court's Family Counseling Services Fund comprised of designated monies generated by marriage license fees. These Pontiac-based groups were recognized at the Court's Employees Award Ceremony:

- **HAVEN**, Oakland County's only shelter for battered women and children. Executive Director Hedy Nuriel accepted the contribution on behalf of HAVEN.
- **Women's Survival Center**, dedicated to providing counseling for abused women. The contribution was accepted by Gloria Danna, Executive Director of the Women's Survival Center.

Special Thanks

The Court recognizes that people from other County offices make valuable contributions to the Court. Their efforts have earned them special respect and admiration. These people have spent many hours assisting the Court in matters related to facilities, budget and collections, personnel, information technology, courthouse security, case management and record keeping, legal assistance, and others. Their expertise, knowledge, and cooperation is greatly appreciated by the judges, administration, and staff of the Circuit Court.

Special Programs

Law Day 1998: *Celebrate Your Freedom*

Law Day provides us with the opportunity to celebrate our freedom and understand the laws and justice system that protect our civil rights and liberties. It is a time to reflect on our legal heritage, the role of law in our society, and the rights we enjoy under the Constitution. Incumbent with this year's theme is our continuing obligation to advance the liberties bestowed upon us through the Constitution of this great land. As Thomas Paine explained, "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must undergo the fatigue of supporting it."

On May 1, 1998, 100 middle school students visited the courthouse to celebrate Oakland County's 15th Annual Law Day. The students spent the day learning about the justice system and how the Court functions.

Program Accomplishments

- Conducted tours of the Oakland Circuit and Probate Courts which included discussions with judges and their staffs.
- Gave video presentations on topical issues involving the law.
- Arranged for guest speakers from the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office and Sheriff's Department.

New Lawyers Admission Ceremony

Twice each year, in May and November, the Circuit Court, in conjunction with the Oakland County Bar Association (OCBA), conducts a formal New Lawyers Admission Ceremony. This session of Court is held in the Commissioners' Auditorium and is presided over by the Chief Judge. In 1998 Chief Judge Edward Sosnick presided over the admission of 169 new lawyers to the practice of law.

Brown Bag Lunch Series

The OCBA and the Circuit Court bench began a series of informal brown bag lunch meetings to discuss issues of mutual concern and to improve court operations. At the first meeting the OCBA presented a framed copy of the Lawyer's Oath to be prominently displayed at the courthouse.

Oakland County Bench/Bar Conference

On May 15, 1998, the OCBA and the Circuit Court bench sponsored the 4th Annual Oakland County Bench/Bar Conference with more than 130 judges, attorneys and court personnel in attendance. The theme was "Court Reorganization in the New Millennium," and the event was co-chaired by Judge Denise Langford Morris and Director Rae Lee Chabot. At workshops on criminal, civil, and family law, participants addressed significant issues and concerns confronting the Court and legal community.



Judge Denise Langford Morris and OCBA Director Rae Lee Chabot, co-chairs of the 1998 Bench/Bar Conference, pictured with OCBA President Edward Pappas.

IN MEMORIAM

JUDGE ROBERT C. ANDERSON

On August 6, 1998, Circuit Judge Robert C. Anderson passed away after a long illness. Judge Anderson was elected to the Circuit Court in November 1980, and served as Chief Judge, Chief Judge Pro Tempore, and Supervising Judge for the Oakland County Citizens' Grand Jury. Prior to his tenure as circuit judge, Judge Anderson served as judge of the 51st District Court in Waterford Township.

During his distinguished career, Judge Anderson was president of the American Judges Association and the Oakland County Bar Association. He also served as vice chairman of the Michigan Judges Association Rules Committee, and chairman of the Oakland County Community Corrections Advisory Board.

Judge Anderson was committed to community service. After sitting on the Oakland Family Services board for more than 15 years, he was declared Director Emeritus. He was a member of the Parent - Teachers Association for over 40 years, Boy Scouts of America Executive Compensation and Benefits Committee, Pontiac Elks, and Pontiac Lions Club.

At Judge Anderson's funeral, Chief Judge Edward Sosnick reflected on the qualities that made Robert Anderson special, "Common sense was his trademark . . . He always had a kind word and a smile for everyone. All were equal in his eyes . . . He treated all who came before him, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, with the same dignity and respect . . ." Judge Robert C. Anderson was deeply dedicated to the judiciary, legal profession, and public service. He was a special man who will truly be missed.



THE COURT'S NEWEST JUDGE

COLLEEN A. O'BRIEN

In 1998 the voters of Oakland County elected Colleen A. O'Brien to the Oakland County Circuit Court Bench. Judge O'Brien's investiture ceremony was held on December 16, 1998, in the Board of Commissioners' Auditorium.

Prior to joining the circuit bench, Judge O'Brien was in private practice for 17 years, specializing in civil litigation. Judge O'Brien brings a wealth of legal knowledge and experience to the bench. She is actively involved in the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, a past president of the Oakland County Women's Bar Association, and has served on the Oakland County Bar Association Task Force to Improve the Justice System in Oakland County.

The Court extends its warmest welcome to Judge O'Brien and wishes her a long and illustrious judicial career.



Judge O'Brien is joined at her investiture by husband Tom Cory, daughter Meghan, and sons Johnny and Matthew.

IN MEMORIAM

SHERIFF JOHN F. NICHOLS

On December 18, 1998, Oakland County Sheriff John F. Nichols passed away at the age of 80. Sheriff Nichols dedicated more than 56 years to law enforcement, serving 14 of those years as head of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department. John Nichols' accomplishments during his tenure as Sheriff included expansion of the Inmate Services Unit, construction of the new Jail Annex, and implementation of programs for inmate employability, sentence reduction, zero tolerance and boot camp.

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson stated at Sheriff Nichols' funeral, "... John Nichols was the right man at the right time to lead the Oakland County Sheriff's Department and to mold it into a highly respected, professional, effective crime-fighting machine." Sheriff Nichols epitomized the very best in law enforcement.



RETIREMENT

LYNN ALLEN, CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

Lynn D. Allen retired as the Oakland County Clerk/Register of Deeds after serving the citizens of Oakland County for 30 years. Mr. Allen was president of the Michigan Clerks Association and parliamentarian of the International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers. Lynn Allen was named "County Clerk of the Year" by the Michigan Clerks Association and "Man of the Year" by the Pontiac Jaycees. He also received the American Legion Americanism Award.

As County Clerk, Lynn Allen helped design and implement Oakland County's on-line computer court system, as well as on-line systems for land recording and campaign finance reporting.

The Court extends its thanks to Mr. Allen for his years of dedicated service to the Court and people of Oakland County.

In November 1998 the Circuit Court judges appointed Deputy Clerk/Register of Deeds G. William Caddell as the new County Clerk/Register of Deeds.

