



**OAKLAND
COUNTY**

MICHIGAN

CIRCUIT & PROBATE COURTS



2019

Annual Report

*Sixth Judicial Circuit Court &
Oakland County Probate Court*



SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

Telephone: (248) 858-1000

Website: OakGov.com/courts/circuit

OAKLAND COUNTY PROBATE COURT

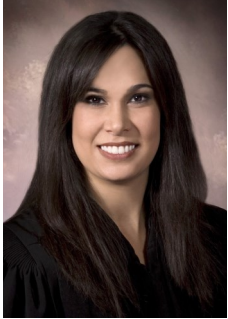
Telephone: (248) 858-1000

Website: OakGov.com/courts/probate

Table of Contents

Message from the Chief Judges	1
Historical Roster of the Courts	2
Judges of the Sixth Judicial Circuit	3
Judges of the Oakland County Probate Court	5
Judicial Investitures	6
Court Administration	7
Clerk Support.....	9
Circuit Court—Civil/Criminal Division	10
Administrative Support Unit.....	10
Case Management Office	12
Michigan Indigent Defense Commission Unit	13
Jury Office.....	13
Business Court	14
Adult Treatment Court.....	15
Combat Veterans Treatment Court	16
Circuit Court—Family Division	17
Friend of the Court.....	18
Judicial Support Services.....	20
Juvenile Court Referees.....	20
Clinical Services Unit	21
Juvenile Support Services.....	21
Juvenile Intake Unit.....	21
Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit.....	22
Personal Protection Order Office.....	22
Adoption Services Unit.....	22
Court Services	24
Casework Services	24
Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court	25
Youth Assistance	26
Probate Court Administration	27
Probate Court—Estates and Mental Health	29
Mental Health Unit	30
Guardianship and Conservatorship Unit.....	31
Estates and Trusts Unit.....	32
Business Division of the Courts	33
Administrative/Financial Unit.....	35
Data Technology Unit	36
Court Resource and Program Support Unit.....	37
Financial Reports—Circuit and Probate Courts	38
2019 Highlights	39
2019 MVPs (Most Valuable Persons)	41
Making a Difference	42
Milestones and Retirements	43
In Memoriam	44
Acknowledgments	44

Message from the Chief Judges



Hon. Shalina D. Kumar

Chief Judge of the Circuit Court

Elected Officials and Citizens of Oakland County:

On behalf of our judges and employees, we are pleased to present the 2019 Annual Report for the Circuit and Probate Courts. The pages that follow provide information about the courts and how they operate. They highlight our noteworthy achievements and describe our quest for continued improvement. This report is also intended to provide information to help the reader better understand the judicial system and how to navigate through the courts.

The Annual Report also serves as a mile-marker, so to speak, reminding us of where we have been and showing us where we are headed. It is a reminder of our foundational mission: to ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice and to enable reflection and introspection on how well we have performed in carrying out that mission.

The courts would not be able to realize these accomplishments if not for the expertise, hard work, and dedication of our judges and employees. Although challenges faced by large, high-volume courts are often complex with far-reaching consequences, time and time again our colleagues and employees seized the challenges and turned them into opportunities for innovation and improvement. We offer our thanks to the judges and employees who made these accomplishments possible.

We are proud of our accomplishments and productivity and we hope that this report enhances your understanding of how the courts serve the citizens of Oakland County.



Hon. Kathleen A. Ryan

Chief Judge of the Probate Court

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shalina D. Kumar".

Shalina D. Kumar
Chief Judge of the Circuit Court

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen A. Ryan".

Kathleen A. Ryan
Chief Judge of the Probate Court

Historical Roster of the Courts

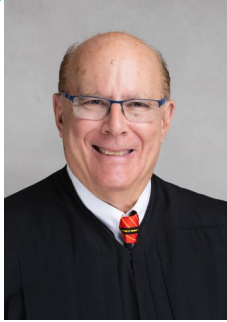
Sixth Judicial Circuit Judges

Sanford M. Green	1848–1852	Farrell E. Roberts	1967–1982	Nanci J. Grant	1997–Present
Joseph Copeland	1852–1858	Daniel C. Devine	1966–1966	Joan E. Young	1997–2016
Sanford M. Green	1858–1870	Robert L. Templin	1967–1996	Wendy L. Potts	1998–2018
James S. Dewey	1870–1874	William P. Hampton	1970–1976	Colleen A. O'Brien	1998–2015
Levi B. Taft	1873–1876	Richard D. Kuhn	1973–2004	Patrick J. Brennan	2001–2004
Aug C. Baldwin	1876–1880	John N. O'Brien	1973–1993	Rae Lee Chabot	2001–Present
Silas B. Gaskill	1880–1882	Robert B. Webster	1973–1982	James M. Alexander	2001–Present
William Stickney	1882–1888	Steven N. Andrews	1976–2008	Michael Warren	2002–Present
Joseph B. Moore	1888–1896	Alice L. Gilbert	1978–1992	Daniel P. O'Brien	2003–Present
George W. Smith	1896–1917	Alice L. Gilbert	1995–2002	Martha D. Anderson	2003–Present
Kleber P. Rockwell	1916–1921	Francis X. O'Brien	1977–1997	Mark A. Goldsmith	2004–2010
Frank L. Covert	1919–1933	Hilda R. Gage	1978–1996	Cheryl A. Matthews	2005–Present
Glenn C. Gillespie	1922–1934	Bernard L. Kaufman	1979–1979	Leo Bowman	2007–Present
Frank L. Doty	1927–1960	Gene Schnelz	1979–2007	Shalina D. Kumar	2007–Present
Goodloe H. Rogers	1935–1935	George LaPlata	1979–1985	Lisa Gorcyca	2009–Present
George B. Hartrick	1935–1958	Robert C. Anderson	1981–1998	Mary Ellen Brennan	2009–Present
H. Russel Holland	1935–1963	David F. Breck	1981–2000	Phyllis C. McMillen	2010–Present
Clark J. Adams	1956–1973	Fred M. Mester	1982–2008	Karen McDonald	2013–2019
William J. Beer	1958–1980	Norman L. Lippitt	1985–1989	Lisa Langton	2015–Present
Theodore Hughes	1959–1959	Jessica R. Cooper	1987–2000	Hala Jarbou	2015–Present
Stanton G. Dondero	1959–1965	Edward Sosnick	1989–2012	Jeffery S. Matis	2015–Present
Frederick C. Ziem	1959–1986	Barry L. Howard	1989–2001	Victoria A. Valentine	2017–Present
Arthur E. Moore	1963–1976	Deborah G. Tyner	1991–2006	Julie A. McDonald	2019–Present
Philip Pratt	1963–1970	Rudy J. Nichols	1991–2015	Jacob James Cunningham	2019–Present
James S. Thorburn	1963–1988	Denise Langford Morris	1992–Present	Kameshia D. Gant	2019–Present
William R. Beasley	1966–1976	John J. McDonald	1993–2010		

Oakland County Probate Judges

Dr. William Thompson	1821–1823	Junius Ten Eyck	1872–1873	Eugene A. Moore	1967–2010
Nathaniel Millerd	1823–1826	Joseph C. Powell	1873–1876	John J. O'Brien	1975–1988
Smith Weeks	1826–1827	James A. Jacokes	1877–1880	Barry M. Grant	1977–2008
Gideon O. Whittemore	1827–1828	Joseph C. Powell	1881–1884	Sandra G. Silver	1988–2000
Williams F. Mosely	1828	Thomas L. Patterson	1885–1900	Joan E. Young	1989–1997
Ogden Clarke	1828–1832	Joseph S. Stockwell	1901–1909	Wendy L. Potts	1997–1997
Stephen Reeves	1832–1844	Kleber P. Rockwell	1909–1917	Linda S. Hallmark	1998–Present
M. LaMont Bagg	1845–1848	Ross Stockwell	1917–1928	Elizabeth Pezzetti	2001–2016
Michael E. Crofoot	1849–1856	Dan A. McGaffey	1928–1937	Daniel A. O'Brien	2009–Present
Oscar F. North	1857–1861	James H. Lynch	1937–1938	Kathleen A. Ryan	2011–Present
Harry C. Andrews	1861–1863	Arthur E. Moore	1938–1963	Jennifer Callaghan	2017–Present
Zephaniah B. Knight	1863–1868	Donald E. Adams	1960–1977		
Alfred Crawford	1869–1872	Norman R. Barnard	1963–1988		

Judges of the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court



Hon. James M. Alexander
Business Court



Hon. Martha D. Anderson
*Chief Judge Pro Tem
Business Court*



Hon. Leo Bowman
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Mary Ellen Brennan
*Presiding Judge of
the Family Division*



Hon. Rae Lee Chabot
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Jacob James Cunningham
Family Division



Hon. Kameshia D. Gant
Family Division



Hon. Lisa Gorcyca
Family Division



Hon. Nanci J. Grant
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Hala Jarbou
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Shalina Kumar
*Chief Judge
Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Denise Langford Morris
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Lisa Langton
Family Division



Hon. Jeffery S. Matis
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Cheryl A. Matthews
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Julie A. McDonald
Family Division



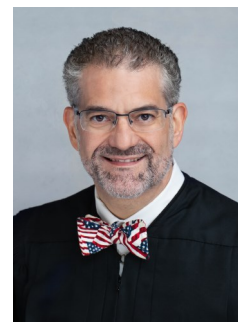
Hon. Phyllis C. McMillen
*Presiding Judge of
the Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Daniel Patrick O'Brien
*Civil/Criminal
Division*



Hon. Victoria A. Valentine
Family Division



Hon. Michael Warren
*Civil/Criminal
Division*

Judges of the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court



Circuit Court Judges

Front row (left to right): Judges Michael Warren, Rae Lee Chabot, Denise Langford Morris, Nanci J. Grant, and James M. Alexander

Middle row: Judges Phyllis C. McMillen (Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division), Martha D. Anderson (Circuit Court Chief Judge Pro Tem), Cheryl A. Matthews, Julie A. McDonald, Lisa Langton, Hala Jarbou, Kameshia D. Gant, and Victoria A. Valentine

Back row: Judges Lisa Gorcyca, Daniel Patrick O'Brien, Jacob James Cunningham, Leo Bowman, Shalina D. Kumar (Circuit Court Chief Judge), Mary Ellen Brennan (Presiding Judge of the Family Division), and Jeffery S. Matis

Judges of the Oakland County Probate Court



Hon. Jennifer Callaghan
Estates Division



Hon. Linda S. Hallmark
Chief Judge Pro Tem of the Probate Court



Hon. Daniel A. O'Brien
Guardianship/Conservatorship/Mental Health



Hon. Kathleen A. Ryan
Chief Judge of the Probate Court



Probate Court Judges

*Front row (left to right): Judges Linda S. Hallmark (Chief Judge Pro Tem) and Kathleen A. Ryan (Probate Court Chief Judge)
Back row: Judges Daniel A. O'Brien and Jennifer S. Callaghan*

Judicial Investitures

Judge Julie McDonald joined the Circuit Court bench on January 1 after being elected by the citizens of Oakland County in November of 2018. She filled the open seat in the Family Division that was created through a new judgeship in 2019.

Judge McDonald was no stranger to the courthouse as she held a temporary judicial staff attorney position for former Judge Karen McDonald, and her father, the late Judge John (Jack) McDonald, was a retired Oakland County Circuit Judge. At her investiture, the Honorable David Groner made the Motion for Administration of the Oath and her father officially swore her in in front of her colleagues, family, friends, and dignitaries.

Prior to joining the bench, Judge McDonald had 24 years of experience in the legal field, most recently as a staff attorney assigned to Judge David Groner of the Third Judicial Circuit. Prior to that position she handled criminal, family, probate and general civil matters in her own law practice.



**Hon. Julie A.
McDonald**
Family Division



**Hon. Jacob James
Cunningham**
Family Division

Judge Jacob James Cunningham was also elected in November of 2018 and began his career as an Oakland County Circuit Court Judge on January 1. Judge Cunningham has a familiar history with Oakland County, having served as a court clerk to the retired Honorable Wendy Potts for several years, and most recently as judicial staff attorney to the Honorable Mary Ellen Brennan. Judge Cunningham is also the son of Judy Cunningham, former Circuit Court Administrator and Oakland County Corporation Counsel.

Judge Cunningham's standing-room-only investiture was held in January with his colleagues, family, friends and several dignitaries on hand to witness this momentous occasion. Chief Circuit Judge Shalina Kumar administered the Oath and Chief Probate Judge Kathleen Ryan made the formal introduction of the new judge. Judge Cunningham was an active member of the Oakland County Bar Association, having served on several of its committees, and is a member of several legal organizations.

Judge Gant became the 75th Circuit Court Judge in Oakland County after her appointment by Governor Whitmer in June. Judge Gant filled a vacancy in the Family Division that was created by the departure of Judge Karen McDonald. Similar to the other new judges, this was a homecoming for Judge Gant as she previously clerked for former Circuit Judge Alice Gilbert. After Judge Gilbert's retirement, Judge Gant worked for Judge Michael Warren when he joined the bench in 2002 and also held an internship for U.S. District Court Judge Gerald E. Rosen.

Judge Gant's investiture was held in July where she was sworn in by Chief Judge Shalina Kumar and was formally introduced by Judge Michael Warren. Judge Gant was accompanied by her family, friends, colleagues, and dignitaries who watched in admiration as she took the official oath of office.



**Hon. Kameshia D.
Gant**
Family Division



Circuit Court Administration

Circuit Court Administration

Circuit Court Administration is headed by Kevin Oeffner, Circuit Court Administrator, and Pamela Monville, Deputy Court Administrator. In March, Pamela Monville took over for Dave Bilson who transitioned to the position of Juvenile Court Referee. The Circuit Court Administrator serves as the chief executive officer and oversees the operations of the Friend of the Court, the Criminal Assignment System, and the Jury Office. This office also works closely with the Chief Judge and Circuit Court Judges. Circuit Court Administration carries out the directives of the Circuit Court bench, implements policies and procedures, and oversees programs and services. It also advises the judges on general matters involving court operations, administrative issues, and matters of procedure. Circuit Court Administration acts as liaison with the Michigan Supreme Court and State Court Administrative Office, local and state government offices, and other courts. This department also oversees the Clerk Support Unit that offers support and training to the judicial chambers.



Kevin Oeffner
*Circuit Court
Administrator*

Along with continuing challenges to providing efficient court services, 2019 also brought new personnel and staffing changes.

NEW JUDGES

In January the court welcomed the 73rd and 74th judges to serve on the Oakland County Circuit Court bench in its more than 160-year history. Judge Julie McDonald and Judge Jacob James Cunningham were elected the previous November and joined the court in January. Judge McDonald assumed a new judgeship that was created for the Family Division and Judge Cunningham acquired a Family Division docket previously assigned to Judge Jeffery Matis who transferred to the Civil/Criminal Division.



Pamela Monville
*Deputy Court
Administrator*

In April, Governor Whitmer announced that Attorney Kameshia D. Gant had been appointed to the vacancy that was created upon the departure of former Circuit Judge Karen McDonald. Judge Gant was welcomed as the 75th Circuit Court Judge in June and assumed a Family Division docket.

CIRCUIT COURT MANAGERS

The Circuit Court managers assist the Circuit Court under the direction of Chief Judge Shalina Kumar and the Circuit Court Administrator. 2019 brought changes to the team with the appointment of Pamela Monville to the Deputy Court Administrator position. Ms. Monville formerly served as the manager of the court's Civil/Criminal Division, and before that as judicial staff attorney for Judge Cheryl Matthews.

James Paterson was appointed to fill the vacant manager of the Civil/Criminal Division position. Mr. Paterson came from the 43rd District Court in Hazel Park where he served as a magistrate.



Circuit Court Managers

Left to right: Scott Hamilton, Suzanne Hollyer, Pamela Monville, John Cooperrider, and James Paterson

CIRCUIT COURT MANAGERS (continued)

In addition, he served as chief legal counsel for the Hazel Park School District and as private practitioner handling employment matters, domestic relations, probate, criminal defense, and insurance disputes.

The balance of the Circuit Court Management Team remained unchanged and includes John Cooperrider, Business Division Manager; Suzanne Hollyer, Friend of the Court; and Scott Hamilton, Manager—Judicial Support Services/Judicial Assistant.

COMMISSIONERS DAY

The Courts hosted Commissioners Day at the courthouse in April and hosted the Oakland County Board of Commissioners to a half-day informational program at the courthouse. The commissioners in attendance were able to observe hearings and trials in several courtrooms and witnessed firsthand what transpires on a daily basis in the building. At the conclusion of the program, the judges held an informal question-and-answer session which gave the commissioners and the judges the opportunity to meet, share their questions and comments, and get to know each other better.

2019 UPDATES

- The Michigan Supreme Court in its ruling in *People v Skinner* and *People v Hyatt* ruled that the decision to sentence a juvenile to life in prison without the possibility of parole or a term of years under MCL 769.25 must be made by a judge. Most of the cases in this court involving juveniles who were originally sentenced to life without parole and who are entitled to a resentencing hearing in light of *Miller v Alabama*, were stayed awaiting the Michigan Supreme Court's ruling.
- The Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) was created as a result of efforts to improve legal representation for indigent criminal defendants.
- A Courthouse Security Committee was established in compliance with an order issued by the Michigan Supreme Court. This committee is responsible for developing procedures to provide for the safety and security of the courthouse. The committee consists of representatives from the Circuit and Probate Courts, department heads in the courthouse complex, and interested groups who utilize the courthouse.

CLERK SUPPORT UNIT

Under the direction of Karen Wentz, Supervisor Clerk Support, and Kate Lyons, Court Clerk Coordinator, the Clerk Support Unit provides individualized training for new judicial clerks and supplementary training for current judicial clerks. Resources and training materials are provided to ensure that the judicial clerks have the latest procedural changes and updates in the law. New to the Clerk Support Unit are training binders that provide guides, explanations, and tools for new clerks. Additionally, tours for new clerks can now be scheduled with the Oakland County Clerk's Office, Case Management, Friend of the Court, and the Oakland County Jail. These tours allow for hands-on training as judicial clerks learn about the roles of other departments and how their duties intertwine.



Clerk Support Unit

Left to right: Karen Wentz and Kate Lyons

This year, multiple lunch and learn events were held on a variety of topics: Friend of the Court, Juvenile Court, Language Access Plan, Personality Type in the Workplace, and De-Escalation training. Lunch & Learn series are held to provide the judicial clerks with skills and knowledge in new and existing areas so that they can leverage their natural strengths and learn new skills. Looking into the future, the Clerk Support Unit will continue to create learning and development opportunities as well as enhanced training and improved coverage to chambers.



Circuit Court Civil/Criminal Division

Circuit Court—Civil/Criminal Division



Hon. Phyllis C. McMillen
Presiding Judge of the Civil/Criminal Division

Judge Phyllis C. McMillen presides over the Civil/Criminal Division and assists Chief Judge Shalina Kumar in providing leadership goals and directives for matters affecting the Civil/Criminal bench.

The Civil/Criminal Division is composed of 13 judges who hear civil cases with alleged damages over \$25,000, criminal cases involving felonies or high misdemeanors, and appeals from the 14 district courts. This division also has judicial oversight and administrative support for three specialty courts within the Civil/Criminal Division.

This division also includes the Administrative Support Unit, which assists the judges in this division with legal research and writing; 65 judicial staff and administrative support staff; the Case Management Office, which schedules and tracks cases through disposition and coordinates Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR); and the Jury Office, which is responsible for jury operations and obtaining jurors for the courts. This division also assists three specialty courts: Business Court, Adult Treatment Court, and Combat Veterans Treatment Court.



James Paterson
Manager Civil/Criminal Division/Judicial Assistant

James Paterson, manager of the division, supervises the recently created Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) for the Circuit Court. The MIDC was created in 2019 as a statewide effort to improve the quality of indigent representation in criminal cases. The Civil/Criminal manager coordinates administrative support and information to assist in implementing goals identified by the Civil/Criminal bench, updates the court on changes in the law, and reviews compliance standards established by the State Court Administrative Office.

RESENTENCING OF JUVENILE LIFERS—AN UPDATE

In 2016, the United States Supreme Court decided that juvenile offenders who were charged and found guilty of committing murder and who are serving life sentences without parole are entitled to resentencing. Of the 50 cases eligible for resentencing at the Oakland County Circuit Court, 16 have been resentenced at the time of this report. The remaining cases are awaiting the outcome of a related matter presently before the Michigan Supreme Court.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT UNIT

The Administrative Support Unit is comprised of judicial staff attorneys Pam Hamway and Deborah Beer. Between the two, they have 41 years of combined service as attorneys. This unit assists the 13 Civil/Criminal Division judges with legal and administrative matters. The Administrative Support judicial staff attorneys provide assistance to chambers' staff attorneys in drafting proposed opinions on complex appeals and criminal post-conviction motions. In addition, support staff attorneys provide assistance to chambers when a staff attorney is on an extended leave.

CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Under the leadership of Gwynne Starkey, Chief of Civil/Criminal Division, and Michelle Kase, Office Supervisor, the Case Management Office is the hub for caseload. Eleven specialized support staff, divided between the Civil Case Support area and the Criminal Case Support area, administer the daily case operations for civil, criminal, and probate dockets, including specialized programs such as case evaluation and Judge-On-Line.

The Civil Case Support area maintains statistics and is responsible for assigning, reassigning, and consolidating cases; processing Judge-On-Line requests; managing praecipes; preparing and distributing scheduling orders; logging and directing mail; and adjusting docket entries. The Criminal Case Support area is responsible for assigning criminal cases, is involved with appointing trial counsel, and compiles information used for pre-sentence investigations. Staff also track and maintain criminal assignment data and monitor the daily inmate population.

Late in 2019, Case Evaluation underwent two changes in its processes. First, no-fault (NF) cases began to be heard before specialty panels with evaluators having subject matter expertise. To handle the increase in the number of no-fault cases proceeding to case evaluation, the department set six or seven full-day panels each month in addition to the four general negligence panels typically scheduled.

To reduce the volume of paper generated from the increased caseload, the court adopted its second change: electronic submission of summaries. Utilizing the MiFILE portal, attorneys now e-serve their case evaluation summaries to opposing parties as well as the three panel members and ADR clerk. Evaluators bring in their personal laptops/tablets and access summaries via the internet rather than carry bundles of paper back and forth between the office and court. The change has also resulted in a decrease of staff time devoted to the sorting, filing, and storage of summaries.

CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

3,803
Bindovers Processed From District Courts

252
Appointed Appellate Counsel for Criminal Defendants

3,400
Preliminary Background Reports Prepared for Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports

2,608
Cases Completed Through Case Evaluation

2,809
New No-Fault Cases Started (Up 10% from 2018)

502
Requests for Judge-On-Line Program

3,722
Petitions Processed at Trial Level for Court-Appointed Attorneys

2,608
Case Evaluations

18% to 21%
Case Evaluation Acceptance Rate

NEW FILINGS AND REOPENED CASES

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Criminal	4,299	4,123
Civil	8,095	8,251
Appeals	397	366

DISPOSITION OF CASES

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Criminal	4,149	4,074
Civil	6,777	8,054
Appeals	384	364

MICHIGAN INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION UNIT

Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) was created as a result of efforts to improve legal representation for indigent criminal defendants. Governor Snyder signed the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission Act into law in July of 2013. The MIDC was given the authority to oversee the implementation and enforcement of minimum standards and procedures to ensure that all indigent adults in the criminal justice system receive effective assistance of counsel.

In 2019, the MIDC Unit at the Circuit Court was created to comply with the mandated act of the State. Angelina Sharon oversees the MIDC Unit which includes Jill Adkins, Court Appointment Specialist, and Carol Gore, Account Clerk II. The unit is responsible for appointing attorneys to represent indigent defendants on criminal felony cases as well as processing vouchers submitted by defense attorneys in order to ensure they are paid in a timely manner.



Michigan Indigent Defense Commission Unit
Left to right: Jill Adkins, Angelina Sharon, and Carol Gore

Beginning in March of 2020, a new task will be assigned to the unit. Attorneys will represent in-custody defendants at the jail during their video arraignments, which is the first critical stage in a criminal case. Defendants also will be able to have attorneys represent them when being arraigned on bench warrants as well.

JURY OFFICE

The Jury Office is overseen by Deborah Fahr, Jury Office Supervisor, and assisted by Michelle Glover, Jury Office Leader. The Jury Office ensures that a sufficient number of jurors are available for Circuit and Probate Courts, while imposing the least hardship on those summoned for jury service. All persons not legally excused from jury service, regardless of status or occupation, are expected to serve when summoned.

With the automated system, potential jurors have more communication options with which to connect with the Jury Office. Jurors may complete their questionnaires online, allowing court staff to expedite the check-in process. With the online access, jurors may update their personal information, check their juror status, immediately contact Jury Office staff, reprint a misplaced juror questionnaire or print attendance letters as proof of jury service. Jurors who provide an email address or sign up for text alerts are able to receive convenient electronic notifications, important updated messages, and reminders regarding their status and reporting instructions.

JUROR UTILIZATION

	2018	2019
Impaneled	1,728	1,873
Reported	7,598	8,470
Summoned	34,490	33,955

JURY OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

167 Jury Trials
3.2 Days Average Length of Civil Trial
2.72 Days Average Length of Criminal Trial
\$2,510 Average Cost of Jury Trial
\$419,259 Juror Fees and Mileage

As a result of these immediate notification services, the Jury Office has experienced an increase in juror participation and received positive response from jurors regarding their jury service experience.

This office is responsible for tracking detailed juror utilization statistics and juror expenditures, which are reported to the State Court Administrative Office.

More information about jury service can be found at: <https://www.oakgov.com/courts/circuit/civil-criminal/Pages/jury-service.aspx>



Juror Orientation

As part of the juror orientation process, prospective jurors are greeted and welcomed by a Circuit Court Judge. In conjunction with a statewide celebration of Juror Appreciation, during one week in July, jurors are provided special refreshments during their orientation to thank them for their juror service. Above, Judge Valentine explains the role of jurors in the legal process during an orientation session.

BUSINESS COURT

Business Courts were established by the Michigan Legislature in 2013 (MCL 600.8031 *et seq.*). The Michigan Supreme Court has appointed Judges Martha Anderson and James Alexander to serve on the Oakland County Business Court. The statutory purpose of the Business Court is to establish best practices for the resolution of business disputes; improve efficiency; utilize the latest technology in managing Business Court cases; and enhance the accuracy, consistency, and predictability of decisions in business and commercial cases. The Oakland County Business Court is the busiest Business Court in Michigan and one of the busiest in the United States.

BUSINESS COURT HIGHLIGHTS

**962
New Filings**

**1,014
Cases Disposed**

ADULT TREATMENT COURT

The Adult Treatment Court (ATC) was established in 2001 to provide both intensive community and judicial supervision to defendants who suffer from serious substance abuse disorders.

In 2018, the State Court Administrative Office mandated that all problem-solving courts be certified in order to be eligible for grant funding. The ATC underwent its certification site visit in January. Many programmatic changes were implemented in 2018 prior to this site visit in 2019 in order to comply with the SCAO-identified best practices. ATC's site review was very favorable, and the program was granted certification for a four-year cycle to be renewed in 2023.

The program continues to have three jurists that preside over the ATC cases. Judge Kumar continues to be the presiding judge over all of the female participants; Judge Phyllis McMillen presides over the male participants who have co-occurring disorders; and Judge Matis presides over the male participants who have been diagnosed solely with a substance abuse disorder.

In October, the ATC celebrated its 60th Commencement honoring the 339th through the 352nd graduates. Without the ATC program, these individuals would otherwise have been facing a probable sentence of months, if not years, in jail or prison. Beyond the extremely close judicial and community supervision and the intense substance-abuse treatment, frequent substance abuse testing is required. In addition, program participants are expected to find and maintain employment, pay court costs, including restitution to the victims of their crimes, and of course, take responsibility for the support of their children.



Adult Treatment Court Team

Front row (left to right): Heather Willis, OCHN/ATC Liaison; Callie Moss, MDOC Probation Agent; Presiding Judges Phyllis C. McMillen, Shalina D. Kumar, and Jeffery S. Matis
Back row: Lisa Lee, Community Corrections Supervisor; Ahmed Bazzi, MDOC Probation Agent; Jacqueline Howes-Evanson, Drug Treatment Court Supervisor; Rachel Jarnagin, MDOC Probation Agent; Jack Holmes, ATC Defense Counsel; and Michelle Crenshaw, ATC Technical Assistant.

ADULT TREATMENT COURT HIGHLIGHTS

838
Participants Admitted Since Inception

352
Graduates of the Program

98%
Percentage of Graduates Employed Full Time at Discharge

549 (18 months)
Average Number of Days to Completion

53
Male Participants

10
Female Participants

28
Participants with Co-occurring Disorders and in the Mental Health Track

14%
Percentage of Graduates Who Improved Education Level During Program

COMBAT VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

The Combat Veterans Treatment Court (CVTC) at Oakland Circuit is the state's only Combat Veterans Treatment Court and is operating in its sixth year. Judge Nanci Grant founded and presides over this specialty court. The CVTC was created as a way to help combat veterans who literally placed themselves in harm's way to protect our freedoms. The Combat Veterans Treatment went through a certification process and was certified by the State Court Administrative Office in June of this year.

The goal of the court is to reach Oakland County combat veterans who have been charged with offenses related to traumatic experiences suffered in combat, conflict, search and rescue operations, or recovery missions while serving our country. This program does not seek to give participants special treatment, but focuses on the unique issues faced by our veterans.



Combat Veterans Treatment Court

Front row (left to right): Elias Escobedo, Nanette Colling, Hon. Nanci J. Grant, Denise Reeves-Cook, and Cheryl Werner

Back row: Lauren Chamberlin, Chaka McDonald, Modesto D' La O, and Pamela Monville

COMBAT VETERANS TREATMENT COURT HIGHLIGHTS

8
Participants

15
Veterans Who
Successfully Completed
Program Since Program
Inception

2
Defendants Under
Consideration for
Admittance Into
Program



Circuit Court Family Division

Circuit Court—*Family Division*



Hon. Mary Ellen Brennan
Presiding Judge of the Family Division

Under the leadership of Presiding Judge Mary Ellen Brennan, the Family Division is composed of seven Circuit Court judges who hear domestic relations cases involving divorce, child support, and paternity matters. Judges in this division also finalize adoptions; handle name changes and juvenile guardianships; preside over hearings for juvenile offenses, delinquencies, and child abuse and neglect cases; and oversee personal protection orders.

2019 brought several judicial changes to this division. Former Presiding Judge Jeffery S. Matis moved to the Civil/Criminal Division and Judge Mary Ellen Brennan was appointed to fill his vacancy as the Presiding Judge. Also, with the creation of a new judgeship and an open seat on the ballot, Judge Julie A. McDonald and Judge Jacob James Cunningham were elected to the bench. Later in the year Judge Kameshia D. Gant was appointed to the bench as a result of an open seat created by the departure of former Judge Karen McDonald.



Suzanne Hollyer
Friend of the Court

FRIEND OF THE COURT

Administered by Friend of the Court Suzanne Hollyer, this office is responsible for investigating and enforcing issues involving custody, support, and parenting time on the court's domestic relations caseload. The Family Division judges are assisted by 19 Friend of the Court referees who hold hearings to enforce and modify Family Division orders regarding support, custody, and parenting time, and hold early intervention conferences to help divorcing clients under the process. Also assisting the Family Division judges are 19 Custody and Parenting Time Specialists who provide the SMILE (Start Making it Livable for Everyone) program to help parents understand the impact of divorce on their children. More information about the FOC can be found at www.oakgov.com/courts/foc.

FOC CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

In November, 150 staff members of the Friend of the Court met together for training and a celebration of 100 years of service to Oakland County families. Although much has changed in Friend of the Court service delivery over the past 100 years, the desire to provide excellent service to local families has remained constant.

The historical records are not entirely clear, but it appears the first Oakland County Friend of the Court was Ida Anne Reese who served for about a decade. She was followed by W. Cadman Prout. His first annual report in 1955 boasts that of the 1,287 divorces filed in the county that year, 245 of the filing couples were reconciled due to the effort of the FOC staff. A few current employees of the Friend of the Court still remember the name of John J. Houghton, who served as Friend of the Court from 1974 to 1988. Joseph Salamone served as Friend of the Court from 1989 until 2003, and Suzanne Hollyer has served as Friend of the Court since 2003.

FRIEND OF THE COURT (continued)

Today, Friend of the Court employees serve as sounding boards, educators, and navigators, as well as investigators, enforcers, and probation officers. The Friend of the Court staff continuously seek to find new and more effective ways to help Oakland County families.

In 2019, the office implemented a new outreach program to assist clients in learning more about the services provided by the Friend of the Court. Additionally, 2019 brought genetic testing as a new service being offered to Michigan families.



Lifetime Achievement Award

Pamela Sala (left), Chief Assistant of Operations of the Friend of the Court, received the Lifetime Achievement award from the Michigan Family Support Council in October. She was recognized for her outstanding contributions and dedication to the Michigan domestic relations field. Pam has been involved with the child support program with FOC for more than 24 years and has filled many roles in that capacity. Presenting the award was Jeanette Miracle-Leshan (right), president of the council and Chief Assistant FOC Financial Operations.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS NEW CASE ACTIVITY

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Without Children	2,220	2,069
With Children	1,909	1,833
Paternity	516	648
Interstate	45	27
Support	741	942
Other	315	358

FRIEND OF THE COURT HIGHLIGHTS

2,082
Investigations and
Recommendations Regarding
Custody, Parenting Time, and
Change of Domicile/Residence

29,809
Referee Hearings Held by
FOC Referees

5,607
Parents who Received
Assistance in Resolving
Disputes



JUDICIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Judicial Support Services is led by Scott Hamilton, Manager of Judicial Support/Judicial Assistant and lead legal advisor for the Family Division. This area consists of the Juvenile Court referees, Clinical Services, and Juvenile Support Services, which includes the Juvenile Intake Unit, Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit, Personal Protection Order Office, and Adoption Unit.

Scott Hamilton
Manager—Judicial Support Services/
Judicial Assistant

In 2019, Judicial Support Services finalized plans with the County’s Facilities Division to restructure the juvenile intake area. With construction scheduled to begin in late 2020, this project will greatly expand the referee hearing rooms and the juvenile intake lobby. It will also provide added security and convenience to families and other members of the public who appear for court hearings. Once completed, the new construction will allow Judicial

Support Services to reorganize referee dockets and reduce the time it takes for a case to make its way through the court process.

Juvenile Court Referees—

Referee Karla Mallett oversees the eight Juvenile Court referees who assist the Family Division judges by conducting hearings and making recommendations following the hearings. Referees act as the gatekeeper to Juvenile Court by evaluating each complaint or petition filed and then making the decision whether to grant or deny authorization, divert the matter, or use informal resolution methods.

With the use of iPads™, Juvenile Court referees represent the court 24/7, 365 days a year, and are able to view petitions, record testimony, and complete and sign court orders. Referees can immediately act on requests for detention of juveniles and placement of children who are at substantial risk of harm.



CASA Jurist of the Year Award

Referee Lisa Harris received the CASA Jurist of the Year Award. This award is given to a jurist who best exemplifies the qualities of a committed child advocate, has high morals and ethics, who perseveres on behalf of the children, and who respects the process and people of the foster care system.



Tribute to Referee Marty Alvin

On October 24, friends and family of long-time Juvenile Court Referee Supervisor Martin Alvin gathered for a memorial tribute to Marty in the shadows of his former hearing room. A bench and tree were dedicated to honor Marty’s service to the court, his passion for helping young people and their families, and his commitment to the administration of justice.

Clinical Services Unit—

The Clinical Services Unit, also known as the Psychological Clinic, operates under the direction of Melissa Sulfaro, Psy.D., LP. This unit is comprised of two full-time and two part-time clinicians who assist the judges in making informed decisions by providing forensic evaluations of children and families who are involved with the court. The Clinical Services Unit received 422 referrals for psychological evaluations for delinquency and abuse/neglect matters. Twenty-six of those referrals were for competency and criminal responsibility evaluations. The Clinic received 57 subpoenas requesting expert testimony in 2019.

The new year saw some restructuring of staff in the Psychological Clinic. Clinician Shannon Conz began full time with the clinic, and Cheryl Plautz, Technical Assistant, joined the clinic staff in 2019. The Technical Assistant position, created from the reorganization of an existing job classification, brings improved statistical analysis and computer skills to the clinic. In addition, Ms. Plautz completes intakes that includes gathering basic demographic information and case-related information for the court's full-time and part-time psychologists.

Long-time clinician, Dr. Bernard Gaulier, who returned to work with the clinic in a part-time capacity since his retirement several years ago, officially retired from the clinic at the end of 2019. His knowledge of the juvenile court system and his years of experience were a true asset to the Clinic.



Clinical Services Unit

Front row (left to right): Melissa Sulfaro, Kathy Spatafora, and Shannon Conz

Not pictured: Cheryl Plautz, Sylvie Bourget, and Angie Long

JUVENILE SUPPORT SERVICES

Erin O'Brien, Chief of Juvenile and Adoption Services, oversees the Juvenile Intake Unit, Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit, Personal Protection Order Office, and Adoption Services Unit. These units provide essential assistance to the judges of the Family Division as well as the residents of Oakland County.

Juvenile Intake Unit—

Jerri Decker, Juvenile Intake Supervisor, oversees support staff who process all incoming requests for action, perform record checks to identify prior court involvement, and forward documents to the Prosecutor's Office. This unit also schedules preliminary hearings, diversion conferences, traffic hearings, and other matters for the four referees assigned to Juvenile Intake.

Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit—

The Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit operates under the direction of Supervisor Carmen Janik. The support staff, which includes deputy registers, order clerks, typists, and file room assistants, are responsible for preparing files for hearings as well as creating, maintaining, and updating the physical and electronic records for each case. They also oversee the court schedule, confidential juvenile files, transcripts, and exhibits. This unit assists the public and parties in cases before the Juvenile Court. They prepare court orders for all hearings heard by referees and distribute court orders after they have been processed by the County Clerk's Office.

Nicole Bennett, Attorney Appointment Specialist, maintains a database of attorneys qualified by education and experience to represent indigent parties who request a court-appointed attorney. In 2019, there were 2,423 requests for court-appointed attorneys, and approximately 4,700 contacts were made to facilitate these appointments.



Juvenile Court Legal Processing Unit

*Front row (left to right): Sarah Myers, Marla Taylor, Dustin Theis, and Juli Berres-Wainio
Back row: Carmen Janik, Lesley Young, Jessica Jackson, Darcy Guzik, Jennifer Lucas, Brittany Harville, Kacey Vogt, and Yvonne Goryca
Not pictured: Roberta Dunn, Rebecca Perry, Sam Cobb, Cindi Dugan, Laine Mallett, Gracie Carpenter, and Angela Lampp*

Personal Protection Order Office—

The Personal Protection Order Office assists petitioners in completing the application process for personal protection orders. Melissa Hoppe, Personal Protection Order Liaison, provides legal expertise in the enforcement of personal protection orders and works with Pre-Trial Services, a unit of the Oakland County Community Corrections Division, in developing bond recommendations for incarcerated respondents. Ms. Hoppe and paralegal Suzanne Bennett, who joined the staff in 2019, also work with petitioners who have requested personal protection order violation show cause hearings.

Adoption Services Unit—

The Adoption Services Unit works with the public and adoption agencies to provide oversight and supervision of adoption petitions and post-adoption information requests. The professional and support staff are charged with ensuring that the confidentiality of information is maintained and that the adoption process is handled expeditiously as required by law.

Adoption Services Unit—(continued)

The Adoption Services Unit processes adoption petitions for direct placement, agency, adult, stepparent, and relative adoptions. It also accepts petitions regarding post-adoption matters, including confidential intermediary services. In addition, two permanency coordinators handle a specialized Permanency Docket and monitor the progress toward adoption permanency for foster children. The coordinators also monitor both foster care and adoption caseworker performance to eliminate barriers to a child’s adoption.

This unit hosted the 17th Annual Adoption Day Celebration in November highlighting the adoption of nine children with six families



17th Annual Adoption Day Celebration

Judge Lisa Langton (left picture) and Judge Lisa Gorcyca (right picture) participated in the Annual Adoption Day Celebration finalizing two of the six adoptions hearings that were celebrated at the 17th Annual Adoption Day Celebration in November.

ADOPTION SERVICES UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

- Adoptions finalized—337
- Hosted the 17th Annual Adoption Day Celebration highlighting the finalization hearings of nine children with their six forever families
- Since the inception of the Annual Adoption Day Celebration in 2003, over 200 children from Oakland County have had their adoptions finalized with 146 families on this special day

JUDICIAL SUPPORT NEW FILING ACTIVITY

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
<u>Juvenile/Adoptions</u>		
Delinquency	1,316	1,219
Child Protective Proceedings	275	257
Juvenile Traffic Tickets	24	10
Adoption Petitions	311	369
<u>Personal Protection Orders</u>		
Domestic	1,515	1,466
Non-Domestic	729	706
Juvenile	36	22
<u>Miscellaneous Family</u>		
Name Change	559	579
Other	29	29
Total New Filings	4,794	4,657

COURT SERVICES

Court Services encompasses Casework Service, Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court, and Youth Assistance. Tina Lathers is the Chief of Casework Services and also oversees the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court. Mary Schusterbauer, Chief of Youth Assistance, oversees the professional staff in the 26 Youth Assistance field offices countywide.

Casework Services—

Jerry Seawright, Melissa Reid, and Stacey Doria supervise the Intensive Casework Unit and the Standard Casework Unit. Casework Services is responsible for juvenile probation, including standard and intensive probation with community-based and residential treatment services. It also handles delinquency cases authorized for the court by Juvenile Intake and assists cases through the adjudication process when necessary. Upon adjudication, the Casework Unit is responsible for making recommendations regarding disposition. During post-disposition, it assists with implementing court orders, including monitoring of probation, restitution, community service, parent education, and counseling.

Twenty-eight juvenile probation officers within this unit service approximately 600 cases at any given time. Casework staff provides exemplary service to the children and families in their care. The Casework Unit also handles the processing of victim's rights information to members of the community.

Casework Services continued to expand collaboration with community partners including Children's Village, Crossroads for Youth, Oakland Schools, and Oakland Community Health Network, in order to improve service delivery to those youth who come before the court for delinquent behavior, and their family members.

Court Services celebrated the retirement of Michael Amshay, a highly regarded and experienced employee with the court.

CASEWORK SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

654
New Cases

700
Closed Cases

5,148
Hours of Community Service
Completed by Juveniles

2
Youth and Family
Caseworkers Hired and
Trained



Casework Services and Juvenile Drug Court Staff

Front row (left to right): Jackie Howes-Evanson, Ed Jones, Krista Horton, Nicholle Hardman, Kathy Bolton, Kelly Wendt, Paula Jefferson, and Candace Sereno

Middle row: Louise Strehl, Greg Prokopp, Stephanie McGowan, Avery Newland, Karen Evanson, Tina Lathers, Victoria Martinuzzi, Martha Ortiz, Megan Wentz, and Nate Gilling

Back row: Eddie Herron, Rachel Giroux, Stacey Doria, Jerry Seawright, Kevin Gross, Nicole Bain, Melissa Reid, Sheldon Lipka, and Brad Pugh. Not pictured: Ashley Bishop, Traci Howden, Heather Kirchner, Bryan McCaffrey, Kevin Threatt, Hillary Bannasch

Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court —

Known as OPTIONS (Owning the Problem—Trusting in our New Skills), the Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court was created in June of 2001. It is the mission of the Juvenile Drug Court (JDC) to promote public safety and reduce juvenile drug crime rates by helping substance-abusing youthful offenders and their families achieve drug-free lives and healthy family relationships.

Led by the Honorable Mary Ellen Brennan, the team uses a non-adversarial approach and consists of court staff, a defense attorney, and both substance abuse and mental health professionals. Services provided by the JDC include intensive community and judicial monitoring; substance abuse and mental health treatment for participants and family members; family therapy; in-home therapy when needed; transportation and employment assistance for participants and parents; personal enrichment activities; recreational opportunities; and other ancillary services as needed to assist families to succeed.

To increase family engagement, the Juvenile Drug Court hosts an annual holiday party. The event consists of the JDC team with the participants and their families sharing lanes, pizza and some good-hearted competition. After these events, the kids and families seem to view the JDC team as just ordinary people and form a closer bond with the team. It becomes “us” as opposed to “us versus them.”



Family-Focused Juvenile Drug Court Annual Holiday Party

Left to right: Megan Matthews and Madyson Ochalek, JDC interns; Presiding Judge Mary Ellen Brennan; Drug Court Coordinator Jacqueline Howes-Evanson; JDC Referee Lisa Harris; and JDC Youth & Family Caseworker Sheldon Lipka.

FAMILY-FOCUSED JUVENILE DRUG COURT HIGHLIGHTS

48%
Graduation Rate

225
**Sobriety Days Averaged by
Graduates at Time of
Commencement**

98%
**Percentage of Graduates Who
Improved Level of Education
While in Program**

90%
**Percentage of Participants
Who Improved Employment
Status During Program**

53
**Number of Graduates
in 2019**

165
**Number of Graduates Since
Inception of Program**

Youth Assistance—

Youth Assistance is the prevention arm of the court's continuum of services and uses a two-pronged approach to strengthen youth and families. Professional staff in 26 field offices countywide provide family-focused casework to at-risk youth referred by police departments, schools, and Juvenile Intake. Volunteer boards of directors in each community identify needs, raise funds, and plan and implement primary prevention programs. Youth Assistance has a unique tri-sponsorship structure where staff is hired by the court, but each local program is sponsored by the school district and municipalities.

In December, 150 volunteers, sponsors, staff, and supporters of Oakland County Youth Assistance gathered to celebrate another successful year of serving youth and families across Oakland County. Judge Mary Ellen Brennan, Presiding Judge of the Family Division, welcomed everyone on behalf of the Circuit Court Family Division. County Executive David Coulter congratulated the audience for their support and likened the Youth Assistance network to a forest of many Aspen trees coming from a single root system. The event ended with Grant Smith, Oakland County Youth Assistance Coordinating Council Chairperson, and Mary Schusterbauer, Chief of Oakland County Youth Assistance, presenting the Champion of Youth Award to Leonette Cipelowski for her many years of dedication to the mission of Youth Assistance.

YOUTH ASSISTANCE HIGHLIGHTS

2,168
New Referrals

1,247
Consultive Cases

84
Reentry



Youth Assistance Annual Meeting

Top left: David Coulter, Oakland County Executive

Top right: Judge Mary Ellen Brennan, Presiding Judge of the Family Division

Left: (left to right) Mary Schusterbauer, Chief, Oakland County Youth Assistance; Leonette Cipelowski, award recipient; and Grant Smith, Youth Assistance Coordinating Council Chairperson



Youth Assistance Staff

Front row (left to right): Zetter Slappy, Jeff Brough, Nancy Minckler, Paul Scobie, Tasha Hanson

Middle row: Paul Tiseo, Gail Innis, Paula Johnson, Lauren Klos, Liz Cszmadia, Tom Swieboda, Mary Bartolotta, Julie Stitt, Stacy Williams, Pam Strzalkowski

Back row: Amy Sullivan, Lisa Shields, Liz McGregor, Anna Torres, Joanna Papiez, Amber Kish, Karen Wonsowicz, Deb Lindsey, Mary Schusterbauer, Nikki Keller, Cathy Womack, Stacy Pasini, Doreen Brant

Not pictured: Karyn Willis, Regan Rockwell, Jessica Wallace, Robin Brown-Green



Probate Court Administration

Probate Court Administration



Edward A. Hutton III
Probate Court
Administrator

The Oakland County Probate Court provides essential services to Oakland County's most vulnerable citizens. The Probate Court Administrator, Edward A. Hutton III, works in conjunction with the Probate Chief Judge and Probate Judges regarding operations and services provided by the Probate Court. The Probate Court Administrator also serves as liaison to local and state government offices and other courts.

PROBATE COURT UPDATES

The Oakland County Probate Court continued innovating and improving in 2019. The Probate Court implemented a cross-training initiative whereby, once complete, each staff member will be proficient in accepting all probate document filings, not just filings specific to a particular unit. Similarly, Probate Court Administration worked in conjunction with Oakland County Human Resources to create and administer a customer service-based learning experience for Probate Court employees. Another improvement of which the Probate Court is very proud is the addition of two digital monitors that display each probate judge's docket for the day. These monitors, located in the hallway adjacent to the Probate Court office, help direct individuals to the correct courtroom on time, and have helped relieve hallway congestion.

NAVIGATING THE PROBATE COURT

In coordination with local participating Oakland County senior centers, the Probate Court offers a free seminar titled "Navigating the Probate Court." The Court's aim is to inform senior citizens and their families regarding the probate process. Topics include wills, trusts, powers of attorney, and joint ownership. In addition, the seminar provides useful information on how to begin probate proceedings, when to consider the use of guardianships and conservatorships, and how "avoiding probate" may cause more harm than good. Dates and locations for the seminar are announced throughout the year and are available on the Probate Court's website.



15th Annual Mock Trial

Probate Court Chief Judge Kathleen Ryan and retired Probate Court Judge Eugene A. Moore collaborated on presiding over the 15th Annual Mock Trial at the Probate Court with a group of students from Cranbrook Schools. This experience allows the students to participate in a unique opportunity to develop essential critical thinking skills in a formal courtroom setting, potentially inspiring the next generation of legal counselors.



Probate Court Estates & Mental Health

Probate Court—*Estates & Mental Health*



Barbara Andruccioli
*Probate Court
Register*

The Oakland County Probate Court is comprised of four judges: Honorable Kathleen A. Ryan, Chief Judge; Honorable Linda S. Hallmark, Chief Judge Pro Tempore; Honorable Daniel A. O'Brien; and Honorable Jennifer Callaghan.

Barbara Andruccioli, Probate Court Register, oversees support staff of the three units comprising of the Mental Health Unit, the Guardianship and Conservatorship Unit, and the Estates and Trusts Unit. The Mental Health Unit handles adult guardianships for individuals with developmental disabilities, transport orders for individuals with a mental illness, and mental health commitment hearings. The Guardianship and Conservatorship Unit handles guardianships/conservatorships for minors, and adult guardianships/conservatorships for legally incapacitated individuals. The Estates and Trusts Unit handles matters concerning decedent estates and will safekeeping.

The two filing counters are the hub of the Probate Court. The main filing counter is staffed by six to eight employees during business hours and serviced 43,245 customers in 2019. The Mental Health Annex counter is staffed by two employees and served 4,391 customers. The Probate Court staff also opened 29,427 pieces of mail in the same time period.

The Probate Court works with the Jury Office to manage probate jury trials, the courts' Case Management Office regarding judicial assignments and case evaluations, and the courts' Business Division in regard to the Probate Court's \$6.5 million budget.

MENTAL HEALTH UNIT

Mental health commitment hearing dockets are held by the court twice each week. At these hearings, the judge must decide whether the respondent is mentally ill and requires treatment, and whether or not hospitalization is the only appropriate treatment. Mental health respondents participate in court hearings by physically appearing in court or through video conferencing.

The Mental Health Unit manages proceedings under the Mental Health Code. This includes mental health commitment hearings, requests for assisted outpatient treatment, and emergency requests for mental health examination and possible hospitalization. This unit facilitates jury trials and coordinates appointment of counsel and expert medical witnesses. This unit also processes and schedules all motions in mental health cases and prepares orders after court hearings.

MENTAL HEALTH UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Mental Health docket accounted for roughly 26.6% of the Probate Court cases**
- **Probate Court disposed of approximately 91% of the mental health cases within 14 days of filing**

GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP UNIT

The Probate Court hears all petitions to initiate, modify, or terminate guardianships and conservatorships for minors and adults, as well as guardianships for developmentally disabled persons. The court also resolves issues that arise during the pendency of a guardianship or conservatorship and monitors many cases through regular review hearings. Unlike many other cases, conservatorship and guardianship cases may remain open for years.

This unit manages court filings for the guardianship and conservatorship cases, including processing annual reports of guardians and annual accounts of conservators. Court staff assigned to this unit also ensure that mandatory reviews of guardianships are performed. Consistent monitoring is required to determine whether fiduciaries have complied with statutory requirements.

The Probate Court conducts basic training classes for conservators and guardians on a monthly basis at the courthouse. These training classes are conducted by volunteer attorneys and are provided at no charge to the participants. The training provides essential information and tools for handling duties as a conservator and/or guardian.

GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

- **1,572 guardianship reviews were performed by court-appointed reviewers, many of them trained volunteers**
- **Although state case age guidelines require that 75% of minor guardianship dispositions occur within 90 days, Oakland County Probate Court disposed of over 90% of their files within that timeframe**

ESTATES AND TRUSTS UNIT

The Probate Court resolves issues involving wills and trusts in the event of uncertainty or conflict and determines the heirs in estates where there is no will. If a conflict is present regarding interpretation of a trust or the disposition of property under the terms of a trust, then the court resolves the issues. The court may also render decisions involving conflicts between fiduciaries.

Civil cases involving trust and estate assets are also heard in Probate Court. These cases typically involve claims in which a fiduciary is seeking to preserve or recoup assets.

The Estates and Trusts Unit manages court filings for estates, trusts, and civil cases. Members of this unit are responsible for the authorization of small estates and *Letters of Authority* for personal representatives in certain situations. Staff assigned to this unit also monitor all active cases on a daily basis to ensure required documentation is filed and timelines are met. This unit issues notices of deficiency and suspensions of fiduciaries when necessary and addresses questions on open files.

ESTATES AND TRUSTS UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

- **The Probate Court accepted 818 new wills for safekeeping; they join the tens of thousands of wills already held by the court**
- **Estate and trust cases comprise almost 37% of the Probate Court caseload**
- **The Probate Court disposed of 96% of the estate dispositions within a 182-day timeframe, which is 6% higher than the state case age guideline**

PROBATE COURT ACTIVITY

New Filings	7,250
Reopened Cases	250
Pending Cases	416
Wills	818
Foreign Births	24
Total Activity	8,758

ACTIVE CASE TOTALS

Estates and Trusts Cases	5,556
Adult Guardianships	4,752
Adult Conservatorships	1,464
Minor Guardianships	1,818
Minor Conservatorships	709
Guardianships (Developmentally Disabled)	2,438
Civil and Other Matters	29
Total Active Cases	16,766



Business Division of the Courts

Business Division of the Courts



John Cooperrider
*Business Division
Manager*

The Business Division, under the leadership of John Cooperrider, is responsible for the development and delivery of business and administrative support services for the Circuit and Probate Courts. This division is responsible for developing and monitoring the Circuit Court's \$70.5 million budget and the Probate Court's \$6.5 million budget.

Chris Bujak, Chief of Court Business Operations, assists in supervising this multifaceted operation. The Business Division is divided into three areas of operation, Administrative/Financial, Data Technology, and Court Resource and Program Support, in order to effectively manage its diverse and complex responsibilities.

2019 included significant changes, transitions, conversions, and large implementation projects in which the Business Division played a leadership role for the courts.

The Business Division participated in the planning and construction of a new courtroom, Courtroom W4, constructed on the 2nd floor of the west wing extension. The new courtroom became operational in April 2019.

Effective on October 1, 2019, State Pays First legislation became effective (per SB530). Expenditures for children placed with MDHHS (neglect and abuse cases only), will now be paid by 100% by MDHHS and 50% reimbursed by the county. Previously, the county paid first and was reimbursed by the state.

e-FILING UPDATES

The Circuit Court has been a trailblazer in e-Filing in the state of Michigan since the mid-2000s. As more courts began to join the fray, the State of Michigan (SOM) began a project to create a statewide e-Filing application to provide filers, both litigants and attorneys, with a uniform interface to submit their court documents. Once again, the Circuit Court was at the leading edge and implemented a "pilot court" version of the application in anticipation of the Statewide Standard Solution of the e-Filing application still in development by the State.

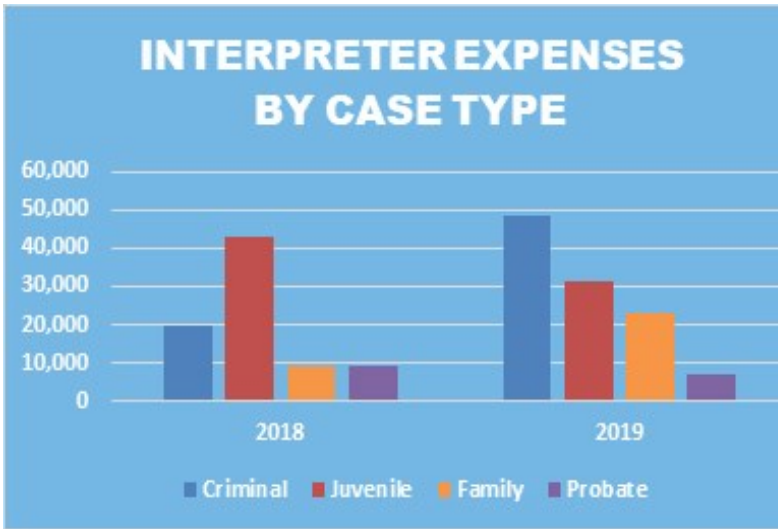
The Circuit Court began working with the State of Michigan on a gap analysis between the pilot court version and the proposed standard solution. Representatives from the Circuit Court, Oakland County Clerk's Office, the State of Michigan, and the vendor have worked diligently over several months to uncover where differences lie, and how best to mitigate those gaps, either through programming or business process changes. This process has also allowed the Circuit Court to provide input and recommendations that may help shape the final version of the standard solution. It is anticipated that the standard solution will become available in early spring 2021. The Circuit Court continues to assist in evaluation and design, and hopes to provide a system that is efficient and helpful to the public, the Bar and the Circuit Court.

INTERPRETERS

The Circuit and Probate Courts have experienced an increased use of Foreign Language interpreters since the Language Access Plan (LAP) was approved in 2014. The LAP was established by Administrative Order and provided for enhanced language access for court users with limited English proficiency (LEP). Not only were the courts to provide interpreters for users in the courtroom, but also outside the courtroom. This factor, along with the growing diverse population within Oakland County, has attributed to an increase in use of foreign language interpreters. In 2019 interpreters were used for over 30 different languages, with Spanish and Chaldean being the greatest volume. Requests were also made for rare languages, such as Tigrinya, Telugu, Punjabi, and Urdu.

There has also been an increase in the number of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters used in the courts. ASL interpreters are governed under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and regulated by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. If the court receives a request for an ASL interpreter, one must be provided at the county's expense. Oftentimes, it is necessary to have two or three ASL interpreters for a particular case.

TOP SIX LANGUAGES INTERPRETED		
	2018	2019
Spanish	\$48,954	\$55,697
Arabic/Chaldean	\$11,456	\$17,485
Chinese	\$5,465	\$5,514
Russian	\$4,450	\$3,570
Romanian	\$3,930	\$2,300
American Sign Language (ASL)	\$7,119	\$11,121
Other	\$8,079	\$14,164
TOTAL	\$89,464	\$109,850



ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCIAL UNIT

The Administrative/Financial Unit (also known as the Business Office) is under the direction of Cindy Lingle who oversees six full-time and three part-time employees. This unit could be considered the gateway to the Circuit and Probate Courts as employees route voluminous phone calls and direct citizens to various departments throughout the building.

Staff in this unit are responsible for reconciling state ward and court ward juvenile placements and processing payments for case-related services, such as court-appointed attorneys, expert witnesses, interpreters, and



Administrative/Financial Unit

Front row (left to right): Angela Garrett, Amy Vinyard, Shelby Simpson, Lin Miller
 Back row: Carol Gore, Cindy Lingle, Dita Cunmulaj, John Range, and Carrie Hobusch

delinquent out-of-home care placements. Business Office staff assist the Business Division Manager with budget information and financial reporting, capital improvements, special projects, work orders, furniture and equipment requests, as well as ordering supplies and printing requisitions.

Using PeopleSoft, employees work closely with the Human Resources Department to process court personnel transactions and monitor attendance records for more than 350 Circuit and Probate Court employees. In addition, four typists work with 26 juvenile caseworkers and seven juvenile referees to prepare casework and referee reports on all juvenile neglect and delinquency cases.

ATTORNEY PAYMENTS PROCESSED

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Juvenile	6,285	5,144
Civil/Criminal Division	5,957	6,477
Probate Court	2,837	2,820
Total Payments	15,079	14,441

ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCIAL UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Participated in the hiring and training of staff as well as the implementation of the new Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) rules and practices**
- **Training for new Workday Human Resources system to be implemented Summer 2020**

DATA TECH UNIT

Under the supervision of Lisa Czyz, Court Technical Services Supervisor, the Data Technology Unit is responsible for court technology and automation for the courts, including assisting both staff and litigants with court programs and video conference initiatives. This unit is the courts' liaison to Oakland County's Department of Information Technology, various vendors, and other state and local government agencies.

DATA TECH UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Completed rollout of Windows 10 to all court computers**
- **Provided wireless printer for attorneys to print drafted orders in the courtroom for immediate submission**
- **Deployed hallway monitors to display daily Probate Court docket and hearing locations**
- **Planned and implemented Automatic Call Distribution (ADC) project for Probate Court phones to answer and route calls to appropriate units**
- **Upgraded video recording software in four courtrooms**
- **Converted Adoption documents from microfilm to digital format**

DATA TECH UNIT (continued)

DATA TECH UNIT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

- **Upgraded document scanning software**
- **Implemented use of OakVideo for transmission of police reports for Personal Protection Order (PPO) violations**
- **Upgraded in-courtroom displays from hard-wired VGA to wireless HDMI**
- **Began use of Zoom meeting rooms for video conferencing to allow easier access for litigants with ADA requests and witnesses to appear via video**
- **Implemented electronic delivery of Case Evaluation summaries**
- **Instigated the re-write process of the Judgment of Sentence program**
- **Launched automated jury payments for the Circuit Court and four 52nd District Courts**

COURT RESOURCE AND PROGRAM SUPPORT UNIT

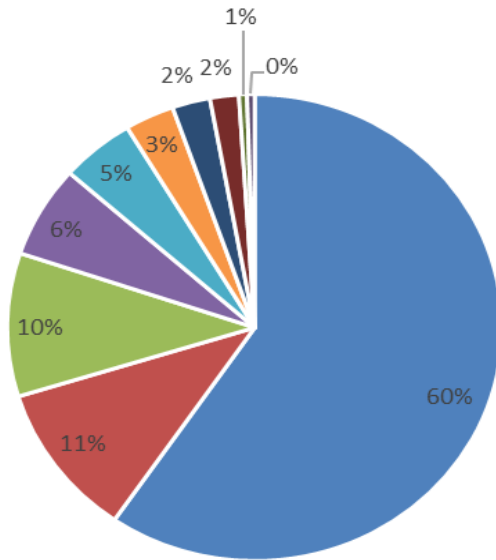
The Court Resource and Program Support Unit, overseen by Karen Koshen, is an area of general responsibility within the courts. This unit provides informational, technical, and administrative support services to the judges, various court departments, and outside agencies. This unit also coordinates and assists with special projects, events, and media relations. Other responsibilities include maintaining judicial attendance records, preparing and maintaining the Bail Bondsman List, and updating the BCORP Emergency Plan for the Circuit Court. Preparation of the annual report, press releases, historical roster of the courts, and other publications are also handled by this unit.

COURT RESOURCE AND PROGRAM SUPPORT UNIT HIGHLIGHTS

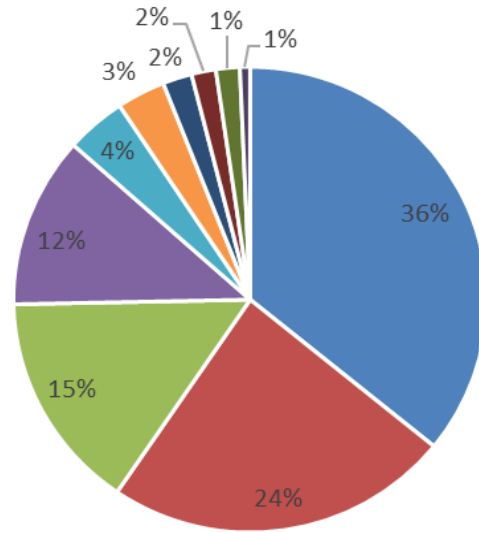
- **Coordinated special events: 17th Annual Adoption Day Program, Constitution Day Program, New Lawyers Admission Ceremonies, 21st Annual Police Training for the Juvenile Courts, Pro Bono Attorney Appreciation Breakfast, Take Your Child to Work Day, Judges Holiday Dinner, Judicial Investitures, Juror Appreciation, and Navigating the Probate Court seminars**
- **Coordinated courthouse employee functions, plaque ceremonies, special breakfasts/luncheons, and retirements**
- **Assisted Administrative/Financial Unit with reconciling reports and attorney payment vouchers**

Financial Reports • Circuit and Probate Courts

2019 FINANCIALS



Expenditures—\$71,604,981



Revenues—\$34,702,554

- Personnel Costs—\$42,671,255
- Youth Out-of-Home Care Costs—\$7,617,932
- Transfer Out—\$7,111,365
- Data/Communication Technology Costs—\$4,561,085
- Facility Costs—\$3,467,974
- Court-Appointed Attorney Costs—\$2,318,093
- Other/Misc.—\$1,775,676
- Other Case-Related Costs—\$1,351,026
- Supplies/Materials/Furniture Costs—\$376,165
- Professional Services—\$354,410

- Child Care Reimbursement—\$12,440,441
- FOC CRP Contract—\$8,211,399
- Transfer In—\$5,265,585
- FOC Fees and Revenues—\$4,125,894
- Other/Misc. Reimbursement—\$1,429,116
- Attorney Fee Reimbursement—\$1,150,548
- Mediation Payments and Fines—\$694,755
- Probate Fees and Revenues—\$578,089
- Costs—\$566,006
- Jury Fees—\$240,721

2019 Highlights



2019 Highlights



Court MVPs—*Most Valuable Persons*

Employees are the backbone of the Circuit and Probate Courts and the courts are fortunate to have many dedicated and loyal employees who are hard working, creative, and willing to go the extra mile to ensure that the courts run efficiently and smoothly. Twice a year, supervisors and employees have the opportunity to nominate MVP employees who exhibit a high level of commitment and demonstrate service that far exceeds their written job descriptions. After careful consideration, a committee selects eight employees who are recognized as MVPs at the Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony in December.

2019 MOST VALUABLE PERSONS

Chari Christie—Court Administration Executive Secretary

Carol Esher—Probate Court Case Management Coordinator

Paula Johnson—Youth Assistance Caseworker II

Kate Lyons—Circuit Court Clerk Coordinator

Doug Moore—Judicial Law Clerk for Chief Judge Kathleen A. Ryan

Carol Stephens—FOC Domestic Support Specialist

Tracy Stieb—FOC Custody & Parenting Specialist

Joanne Thorndycraft—Judicial Law Clerk for Judge James Alexander



2019 Most Valuable Persons

*Front row (left to right): Probate Court Chief Judge Kathleen A. Ryan and
Circuit Court Chief Judge Shalina D. Kumar*

Middle row: Kate Lyons, Carol Esher, Carol Stephens, and Chari Christie

Back row: Tracy Stieb, Joanne Thorndycraft, and Douglas Moore

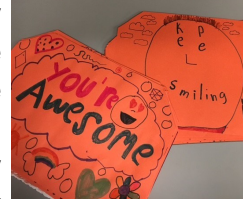
Not pictured: Paula Johnson

Making a Difference

Once again, Circuit Court and Probate Court employees generously gave of their time, energy, and financial resources to support charities throughout the year.



For the fourth year in a row, Friend of the Court staff collected money to fund two dinners at HOPE Shelter in Pontiac. On two separate occasions, FOC staff prepared and served 140 meals to guests at the shelter. A class of elementary school children created placemats with the theme “You are Great” for each shelter guest, which not only made each of the guests feel special, but the kids felt good about participating as well.



From the money collected, FOC staff were also able to purchase and deliver four carloads of much needed items such as socks, underclothing, hats and gloves, as well as laundry soap, cleaning supplies, and toilet paper. To top things off, they also collected surplus Halloween candy which the guests really seemed to enjoy.



“Christmas in July” means a time to share some love with the four-footed friends at the Oakland County Animal Shelter and Pet Adoption Center. Many of the items on the shelter’s wish list were included in the 2019 donations. With the shelter’s convenient location and collaboration with county employees, it’s also a great way to grab a “friend” for a little exercise around the county campus at lunchtime.

When Lighthouse Oakland County put out an urgent plea for supplies to replenish their food pantries in October, court employees generously responded with donations of food and household items to help restock their shelves. A carload of boxes filled to capacity was delivered to Lighthouse in time for Thanksgiving.



As in years past, Circuit Court Administration adopted a family through Lighthouse of Oakland County with whom they could share gifts for the holidays. This year a single mother and her four children, ages 1 to 16, were honored. Their requests were not extravagant and the children asked for clothing items. The Court Administration employees were able to provide an outfit, coat, boots, hat, and gloves plus at least one “fun” gift for each of the children. Although pulling it all together was challenging, the Court Administration employees helped make a happier holiday for at least one family.

Also in December, Judge Bowman and his staff continued their tradition of gathering items for a local charity. This year, several items were collected for children of the Ennis Center for Children in Pontiac. Ennis Center has been working with abused and/or neglected children for more than 39 years with services reaching more than 3,500 Michigan children and families in crisis annually.

Participating in Casual Day is yet another opportunity for court employees to support charities in and around our community. From the numerous charities nominated by court employees to receive a portion of the casual days funds collected in 2019, eight were selected by the Court Employees’ Casual Day Committee to receive \$500 each. This year’s recipients were: St. Jude Children’s Research (AdvoKate Run 2020), Humble Designs, Samaritan House, Western Oakland Meals on Wheels, Hope Shelter, Snuggle Sacks, KnowResolve, and Feed My Starving Children. Since 2004, \$61,300 has been donated to charities from the generous court employees.

Milestones and Retirements

The following Circuit and Probate employees were recognized at the 38th Annual Retirement & Service Awards Celebration held in June of 2019 for their dedication, professionalism, and longevity with Oakland County Circuit and Probate Courts:

MILESTONES

20 Years

Kristy Bills
Tracey Carter
Elizabeth Csizmadia
Phillip DeBarr
Angela Garrett
Tasha Hanson
Carmen Janik
James Krebs
Nicole Rude
Victoria Rupert
Angelina Sharon

25 Years

Kimberly Bernal
Jeanne Gonek
Lori Hale
Richele Hollingsworth
Adrian Long
Wendy Waring

30 Years

Robin Brown-Green
John Cooperrider
Michael Hand
Jennifer Lucas
Cindy Morales

40 Years

Roma Honer
Jany Lee-Warren

45 Years

Gregory Prokopp

50 Years

Kristine Vollmar

RETIREMENTS

Michael Amshay
Suzanne Bolton
Deb Gebhart-Pollins
Martha Jackson
Susan Koop
Lori Lizenby
Porki Mellado

Rhonda Mohlman
Gabrielle Osooli
Honorable Wendy Potts
Kathy Summers
Mary Viviano

Remembering Judge John “Jack” L. McDonald

Retired Oakland County Circuit Judge John “Jack” McDonald passed away in August, just shy of his 80th birthday. Judge McDonald was appointed to the Circuit Court by then-Governor John Engler in 1993. He was re-elected for three subsequent terms and served the citizens of Oakland County for 17 years. After completing law school at Detroit College of Law, he began his legal career with the Oakland County Prosecutor’s Office as an assistant prosecutor. After leaving the Prosecutor’s office, he managed a successful law practice for 20 years and practiced in both the state and federal courts. During this time he ran for and was elected as an Oakland County Commissioner representing the communities of Farmington and Farmington Hills.



***Hon. John J.
McDonald
1939 - 2019***

Judge McDonald was married to the late Sharon McDonald for 53 years and together they raised three children, Michael, Julie and Patrick John. He also had three grandchildren whom he adored. Judge McDonald’s daughter, Julie McDonald, followed in her father’s footsteps and is currently an Oakland County Circuit Judge. One of his proudest moments was giving the oath of office to his daughter at her investiture in 2019.

Judge McDonald loved being a judge and resolving cases. He wanted to make a difference and he did. He was devoted to his family and the bench and was known for his great sense of humor and keen sense of professionalism. He will truly be missed by his family, colleagues, and his friends at the Oakland County Courts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Annual Report is a historical record to reflect back on the people, events, and successes that have been an integral part of the courts over the past year. The Circuit and Probate Courts would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their valuable contributions to the 2019 Annual Report for the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court and the Oakland County Probate Court:

Managers and supervisors of the offices highlighted in this report for their input with regard to office functions, statistics, and highlights.

Pictorial contributions by John Meiu, courtesy of Detroit Legal News Publishing LLC; Phill DeBarr, Data Technology Unit; and Beth Sayles, Sayles Studio.

Chari Christie for her assistance in editing and proofreading.

Pam Tremble, Economic Development and Community Affairs/Marketing & Communications, for her graphic design expertise.

Karen Koshen for overseeing and managing the project.



SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

Telephone: (248) 858-1000

Website: OakGov.com/courts/circuit

OAKLAND COUNTY PROBATE COURT

Telephone: (248) 858-1000

Website: OakGov.com/courts/probate

OAKLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE

1200 North Telegraph Road
Pontiac, Michigan 48341