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a publication of the Wisconsin Judiciary

# The Third Branch

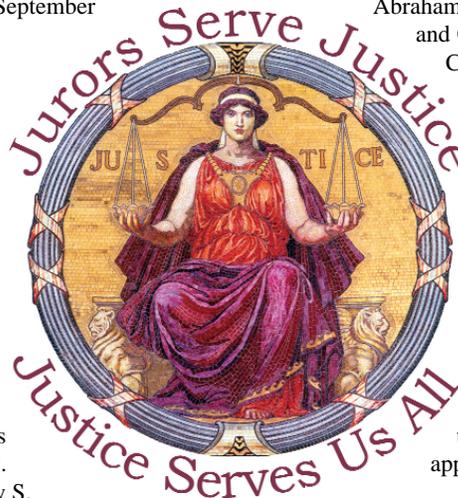


## State juror appreciation program launched

Gov. Jim Doyle has proclaimed September as juror appreciation month in Wisconsin.

To mark the occasion, circuit courts throughout the state will participate in a variety of activities intended to thank jurors, and to recognize the critical role they play in our democracy and system of justice. The theme of this year's event: *Jurors Serve Justice; Justice Serves Us All*.

The statewide celebration, co-sponsored by the Wisconsin court system and the State Bar of Wisconsin, will kick off with a press conference in Milwaukee on Sept. 3. Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirley S.



Abrahamson, State Bar President Diane S. Diel, and Chief Judge Kitty K. Brennan, Milwaukee County Circuit Court, along with other state and local officials, will host the press conference.

"The Wisconsin court system and the citizens of this state greatly appreciate the time and dedication of jurors. Without them, our system of justice would not function properly. Employers and families of jurors also deserve tremendous thanks for supporting Wisconsin jurors," Abrahamson said.

The statewide program builds on the success of a Milwaukee County juror appreciation program established last year. *See Jury on page 14*

## Appellate courts lose two veteran judges



Chief Justice  
Roland B. Day

The Wisconsin court system mourned the loss of two longtime appellate judges in July. Former Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Roland B. Day died July 26 at age 89, and Court of Appeals Judge Ted E. Wedemeyer Jr. died July 23 at age 75.

In August, Gov. Jim Doyle appointed Milwaukee Chief Judge Kitty K. Brennan to succeed Wedemeyer.

Day is remembered by court colleagues for fostering collegiality and working toward more prompt release of opinions. He is remembered by friends and family for his good sense of humor, commitment to public service and dedication to family.

Day served just one year as chief justice before retiring, but he used that time wisely to help improve the administration of justice and to encourage better public understanding of the courts, said Chief Justice Shirley S.

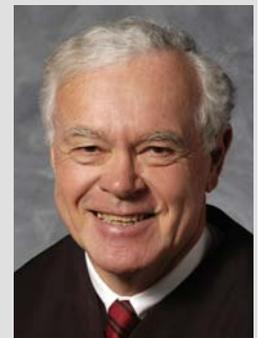
Abrahamson.

"He used his sense of humor, foresight and administrative skills to move the court forward," Abrahamson said.

Day reinstated the practice of having justices eat lunch together at least once a month. He made one rule about the lunches: justices were not allowed to discuss any court business. The result was a friendly atmosphere that carried back into the conference room, where differences can become confrontational, Abrahamson said.

Day was elected in 1976 and was reelected in 1986, after first being appointed by then-Gov. Patrick J. Lucey in 1974. Day became chief justice on Aug. 1, 1995, and retired a year later, at the end of his second term.

Day began his career as a



Judge Ted E. Wedemeyer  
see *Obituaries* on page 8

## Wisconsin welcomes justice, three new judges

Supreme Court Justice **Michael J. Gableman** and three new judges officially took office in August.

Justice **N. Patrick Crooks** swore in Gableman during a ceremony on the front lawn of the Burnett County Government Center in Siren on Aug. 1.

On Aug. 4, Chief Justice **Shirley S. Abrahamson** swore in **Kenneth L. Kutz** who filled the vacancy in Burnett County created by Gableman's election to the Supreme Court. For the past 21 years, Kutz has served as district

attorney for Burnett County. Prior to that, he served as the county's assistant district attorney.

Kutz said he has long aspired to join the judiciary. He believes that the court system is operating well, but plans to watch for new programs that might be implemented in his county. He also plans to work with Burnett County Clerk of Court **Trudy Schmidt** to try to secure additional staffing in the circuit court.

see *New judges* on page 10

## Practicing the fundamentals: Safe and secure courts

As a volunteer Little League coach, I'm certain kids are sick and tired of my pleas for better fundamentals. For them, it's more exciting to play Home Run Derby than to practice a sacrifice bunt; more thrilling to see if they can recreate a Top-Ten play from SportsCenter than to field a pop-up with two hands; and more thrilling to throw a knuckleball to their buddy than to practice throwing fastballs consistently over the plate. My job is to convince them that better performance comes from mastering the fundamentals, and that mastering the fundamentals leads to individual and team success.



A. John Voelker

Likewise, mastery of the fundamentals is critical to the success of our system of justice.

One of the key fundamentals is providing safe and secure courts. It is vital that the public feels confident and safe in accessing their courts and that court personnel feel safe in the performance of their duties.

Baseball analogies aside, Mary McQueen, president of the National Center for State Courts, put it this way:

***"In our country, courthouses belong to the public and have always been perceived as safe havens.... We must preserve this confidence the public has long held in the courts – and we must continue our work to ensure that the perception that courthouses are safe havens is a reality."***

As with Little League baseball, making progress on justice system fundamentals requires continual emphasis. This is especially true with court safety and security because, often times, there isn't enough attention paid to the issue until an incident occurs in or around a courthouse.

Complacency can be one of the biggest challenges in this area, but we've made preparation and prevention efforts a priority, even as resources are pinched.

In our 2007-2009 biennial budget request, we asked Gov. Jim Doyle and the Legislature to provide more than

\$100,000 for court safety training of court personnel around the state. Unfortunately, the budget process removed a significant digit from the request, and my office received \$10,000 to provide training. Undeterred, I started looking for partners willing to spend time and resources on the fundamentals.

Thankfully, Fox Valley Technical College and others have answered the call. On March 4-6, 2009 a program entitled *Court Safety and Security: A Comprehensive Approach for Multi-Agency Coordination and Personnel Protection* will be held in Green Bay. The program will include tracks for law enforcement, court staff and victim advocates. I am thrilled that the \$10,000 seed money will allow us to continue our efforts in this area.

The PPAC Court Security Subcommittee also is helping guide courtroom safety and security efforts, including a "state of security" survey. This survey is intended to gather a baseline of information on local facilities, protocols, security, remodeling and construction plans. Additionally the subcommittee is seeking to gain an understanding of security concerns and unmet needs at the local level. Information collected from survey responses will be considered by the subcommittee as it suggests revisions or updates to SCR 70.39 and the semi-annual security and facility report process. While the survey is lengthy, I encourage you to respond if you received it.

In addition, the subcommittee has viewed a presentation from the United States Marshal Service about federal court security and judicial safety and toured the Dane County Courthouse. The subcommittee will continue to research and make recommendations to PPAC on these and other issues including courthouse security training; development of a comprehensive security plan; incident reporting and tracking; and extending outreach on this topic to educate those outside of the court system.

As entrepreneur and author Jim Rohn has said, "Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying the basic fundamentals."

I am confident that our continual efforts to ensure our courts are safe and accessible will contribute to a better justice system. ■



Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson, center, was in Bayfield County to rededicate the Bayfield County Circuit Courtroom on June 6, after the courtroom's \$1.3 million renovation. District Ten Chief Judge Benjamin D. Proctor, left, and Bayfield County Circuit Court Judge John P. Anderson, right, attended the rededication. Bayfield County was the 54th stop on Abrahamson's 72-county tour of the state. At press time, Abrahamson had visited all but six Wisconsin counties.

## RETIREMENTS



Judge Dorothy L. Bain

## Bain, Nowakowski step down

Former Chief Judges **Dorothy L. Bain**, Marathon County Circuit Court, and **Michael N. Nowakowski**, Dane County Circuit Court, have announced plans to step down from the bench.

Bain resigned effective August 29 to take time to fully recover from a brain bleed (similar to a stroke) that she suffered in

December 2006.

"I have loved working as a judge and will miss all of the dear friends I have made in the court system over the years," Bain said. "It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve the people of Wisconsin and the citizens of Marathon County."

Bain was appointed to the bench in 1997 after working for eight years in private practice. She won election in 1998 and 2004. During her tenure, Bain was actively involved in judicial administration and education efforts. In 2003, the Supreme Court selected her to serve as chief judge for the Ninth Judicial District. She also served on the Civil Benchbook Committee, helping to write the desktop reference manual used by judges across the state. As an outgrowth of that work, Bain regularly served on the faculty at continuing education conferences, updating judges from around the state on key civil law cases.

Bain's current term runs through 2010. Gov. Jim Doyle is expected to appoint a successor.

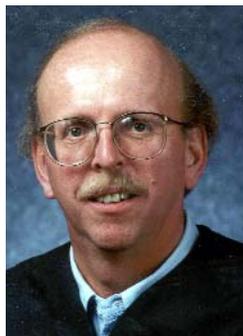
In Madison, another veteran chief judge announced plans to step down at the end of his term. Judge Michael N. Nowakowski said he will not seek re-election when his current term expires in July 2009. Nowakowski was first elected in 1985, and re-elected in 1991, 1997, and 2003.

Nowakowski served as chief judge of the Fifth Judicial Administrative District from 2001 to 2007 and as chair of the Committee of Chief Judges in 2006.

Among the many programs Nowakowski put in to practice are the judicial exchange program with the UW Law School and judges from China.

One of the most significant projects undertaken during Nowakowski's tenure was construction of the new Dane County courthouse, which opened in 2006.

Nowakowski said one of the biggest challenges he has faced over the last 20 years is dealing with the county over budget issues. He also said that he has noticed a change in the difficulties and problems facing kids in juvenile courts is greater today than it was when he first started. Those challenges, however, did not diminish the joy Nowakowski found in his work.



Judge Michael N. Nowakowski

"Being a judge has been incredibly challenging and rewarding," he said. "I can honestly say that in nearly 24 years, there was never a day I didn't want to go to work."

## Judge Byron retires from Rock County bench

Rock County Circuit Court Judge **Michael J. Byron** retired in August, after 17 years on the bench. Byron was appointed in 1991, and won elections in 1992, 1998, and 2004. Prior to his appointment, Byron worked in private practice from 1968 to 1991.

Byron said he is most proud of his ability to treat everyone with respect in his courtroom. He believes that he was always steady in his decision making and handling of cases, and noted that lately the criminal caseload had increased fairly dramatically, as has the time involved with each case.

Byron offered these words of advice to newer judges: Just be yourself. "You can't pattern yourself after other judges," he said. "Just call them the way you see them."



Judge Michael J. Byron

## Jackson County Judge Laabs retires

Jackson County Circuit Court Judge **Gerald W. Laabs** retired in August. Laabs was elected to the circuit court in 2002, after having served more than 25 years as the county's court commissioner.

During his time on the bench, Laabs was responsible for implementing several new programs including Children in the Middle, a program used in divorce cases. Laabs also gave special attention to truancy cases, much to the appreciation of the school system. His interest in child welfare issues led him to work hard on community service and teen court programs. Two months before his retirement, Laabs also started a drug court in the county.

Laabs said being a judge kept him so busy he did not have time to make plans for his retirement. He said he would like to continue to help out in the judicial system part time, as well as spend some time playing golf.



Judge Gerald W. Laabs

## Assistant to Bablitch, Crooks retires

After 25 years at the Wisconsin Supreme Court, **Elizabeth Simons** retired from her position as judicial assistant to Justice **N. Patrick Crooks** this summer. Simons worked for former Justice **William A. Bablitch** when he was Senate majority leader for five years, and then moved to the Supreme Court with him when he was elected to the Court in 1983. She served as his judicial assistant for 20 years. When Bablitch retired, Simons became judicial assistant for Crooks, for whom she worked for the past

see **Retirements** on page 15

**LEADERSHIP****Interpreter training features mock trial***By Carmel A. Capati, Court Operations*

To respond to the shortage of qualified Hmong court interpreters, the Director of State Courts' Interpreter Program, in cooperation with the Milwaukee County Circuit Court, hosted a special training for Hmong interpreters in July.

Ten Hmong interpreters from around the state participated in this unique workshop, which combined lecture and discussion on criminal and civil terminology and procedure with mock court hearings. The training faculty consisted of a team of certified American Sign Language (ASL) and Spanish interpreters, Hmong attorneys, law students, judges and a court commissioner.

During the first part of the seminar, Judge Paul R. Van Grunsven, Milwaukee County Circuit Court; Judge Ralph M. Ramirez, Waukesha County Circuit Court; and Commissioner Sandra Marcus, Marathon County Circuit Court, examined complex legal concepts, such as "Miranda warnings," "probable cause," "beyond a reasonable doubt," "competency," and "order to show cause." Trainees found it particularly challenging to find legal equivalents in Hmong for those words, and some others had difficulty with terms such as "weapon," "contact," "stop," and "seizure."

Most of the second day was devoted to mock hearings in which participants interpreted during an arraignment, plea hearing and deposition while attorneys, law students and the judge played roles using actual transcripts translated into Hmong. Experienced interpreters in ASL and Spanish gave

participants suggestions on how to improve their interpreting skills and guided them on courtroom protocol.

While Spanish remains the language needed for most court interpretation around the state, Hmong is the second most requested language. Very few, if any, training for Hmong interpreters or other refugee languages exist here or in other states. What complicates interpretation in more rare languages is that many of the fundamental concepts that provide the framework for the American legal system are non-existent in other traditional cultures. For example, the notions of "constitution" or "individual rights" do not exist in Hmong society. These cultural distinctions

make the job of Hmong interpreters difficult if no similar concept is available. The process of interpretation requires the transfer of equivalent messages between languages or cultures, not "word-for-word translation." Interpreters must have a firm understanding of what a legal term means in English in order to accurately interpret its concept into their language. This training attempted to deconstruct complex legal words and phrases so Hmong interpreters could better convey their meaning during court proceedings.

Currently, four Hmong court interpreters have achieved certification in Minnesota. Wisconsin does not yet have a certified Hmong interpreter, but given the dedication and commitment demonstrated by attendees who devoted an entire weekend to improving their skills, that may soon change. ■



*Interpreters from around the state participate in a mock trial during the July Hmong court interpreters training.*



*Former Supreme Court Justice Louis B. Butler Jr., center, shares a laugh after the last oral argument of the Court's 2007-08 term. Butler, who was defeated by Justice Michael J. Gableman, was appointed to the Court in 2004. Also pictured, left to right, Butler's daughter, Jessica Butler, former clerks Brett Eckstein, Nancy Marcus, Jake Wittwer, and District IV Court of Appeals' Judge Paul B. Higginbotham.*

## Joint meeting addresses sexual violence, child welfare and juvenile practices

by Gail Richardson, District Five Court Administrator

Forty circuit court and reserve judges from the Fifth and Seventh Judicial Administrative Districts met in Spring Green during May for a joint educational session.

Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judges Mel Flanagan and Jeffrey A. Kremers spoke on *Sexual Violence: The judicial process and courtroom experience*. They were joined by Milwaukee County District Attorney Victim Specialist Jane Foley. The speakers presented evidence from national research on the relationship between domestic abuse and sexual

assault. Research found that a co-occurring domestic violence and sexual assault is a leading indicator of lethality.



Chief Judge William D. Dyke; Mark Carey, president of the Carey Group; Jim Moeser of the Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance; and Chief Judge C. William Foust were among those in attendance at the joint education session for Districts Five and Seven.

They discussed how personal attitudes can influence how these cases are perceived and prosecuted. They outlined challenges for courts, including voir dire, sentencing and access to relevant information earlier in the process.

This was followed by a session on the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act by Loa Porter, tribal child welfare specialist and Therese Durkin, attorney in the Office

See **Joint meeting** on page 14

## Nine court reporters pass certification exams

By Margaret Brady, Human Resources Officer

Each year a small group of official and district court reporters register to take certification examinations offered through the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA). The Director of State Courts Office has received notice that nine court reporters working throughout the state have passed NCRA exams and received additional certifications:

- Ann Albert, Dane County, certified realtime reporter
- Joyce Beauchamp, Waukesha County, registered professional reporter
- Jennifer Beranek, Milwaukee County, registered merit reporter
- Karen Blair, Columbia and Marquette counties, certified realtime reporter
- Trisha Carlson, Pierce County, registered merit reporter
- Kelly DeFort, Milwaukee County, certified realtime reporter
- Theresa Schiff, Oneida County, certified realtime reporter
- Gerald Schultz, Menominee-Shawano counties, registered merit reporter
- Janet Schulz, Walworth County, certified realtime reporter

Since 1935, the NCRA has offered certification examinations for court reporters with the goal of improving the standards of court reporting and to encourage continuing performance improvement among individual court reporters. Court reporters devote hours of personal time in preparation for these rigorous certification exams.

Through an agreement with the NCRA, the director's office helps coordinate the examination registration process for Wisconsin court reporters. Typically, one or two court reporters working in the court system receive additional certification each time an exam is conducted.

The large number of court reporters passing the May

exam demonstrates an ongoing commitment to professional education and development. Supervising judges were generous in recognizing and praising the work of Wisconsin reporters. Supervising judges were generous in recognizing and praising the work of Wisconsin reporters.

"Congratulations to Joyce (Beauchamp) on passing the exam with flying colors," Hon. Linda Van de Water, Waukesha County said.

"Jennifer (Beranek) is very hardworking, focused and the consummate professional," said Hon. Mary E. Triggiano, Milwaukee County. "She has worked hard and deserves countless accolades!"

"Ann (Albert) is a fantastic court reporter and an even better person," Hon Daniel R. Moeser, Dane County said. "She exemplifies all the characteristics one would want in a true professional."

"I praise Theresa's (Schiff) recent accomplishment and now enjoy the services of two highly qualified court reporters that job share - Theresa and Paula Anderson," said Hon. Mark A. Mangerson, Oneida County.

Ongoing skill development and professional education are extremely important to judges and the director's office, particularly during this time of changing technology and methods. In addition to recognition of certifications offered through the NCRA, the court system recognizes certifications offered through the National Verbatim Reporters Association (NVRA) for voice writers and through the American Association of Electronic Reporters and Transcribers (AAERT) for the newly introduced digital court reporters. ■

## Municipal judges bill in works

By Nancy M. Rottier, Legislative Liaison

The Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association (WMJA) has developed a legislative proposal to substantially revise the statutes governing municipal court elections, judges and procedures. The WMJA hopes to introduce a comprehensive bill during the 2009-2010 legislative session.

The WMJA proposal would revise Chapters 755 and 800 of the statutes, with the goal of enhancing the independence and professionalism of the municipal courts and providing for sensible, workable procedures. The WMJA began the revision process in 2006; seven municipal court judges have worked through multiple drafts since that time.

The Committee of Chief Judges has had input into the draft through its Subcommittee on Municipal Courts. The Subcommittee has been particularly concerned that municipal courts be independent. To address that issue, the legislative proposal would require the municipal governing body to provide its court an adequate office, a courtroom separate from the police department, a separate telephone number, a facility for storing the court's records, a court clerk and a separate budget.

While no bill was introduced during the current

legislative session, the WMJA draft proposal recently received an informational hearing before the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Housing. Members of the association explained the numerous provisions of the draft and answered questions of the senators. The committee chair, Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee), has also asked the Judicial Council to review the procedural aspects of the draft. Its report is expected in the fall.

In addition to consulting with the court system and the Judicial Council, the WMJA is working with the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and the Wisconsin Towns Association to address concerns expressed at the informational hearing about issues of municipal control and costs.

The Committee of Chief Judges' Subcommittee members are Chief Judges Sue E. Bischel and Benjamin D. Proctor, District Court Administrator Patrick Brummond, and Marcia Vandercook of the Office of Court Operations.

If you would like more information about this legislative proposal or a copy of the draft, please contact me at 608-267-9733 or [nancy.rottier@wicourts.gov](mailto:nancy.rottier@wicourts.gov). ■



Judges, court system staff, state agency workers and members of the medical field gathered in Racine to discuss the issue of serving individuals with substance abuse problems in the criminal justice system.

## Workshop addresses evidence-based approach to substance abuse

By Kerry Connelly, District Three Court Administrator

In early June, the Committee of Chief Judges, other judges, court staff, and selected individuals from state agencies and the medical field met for one day at Wingspread in Racine to discuss how to better address substance abuse problems of people involved in the criminal justice system.

The workshop was sponsored by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Office of Judicial Education, Physicians and Lawyers for National Drug Policy at Brown University, and the Johnson Foundation.

The purpose of the meeting was to educate practitioners about how to effectively handle substance abuse problems using evidence-based practices. More than 45 participants heard presentations by Professor Emeritus David C. Lewis of Brown University and Dr. Richard Brown, Clinical Director at the School of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Wisconsin.

After hearing brief lectures by the physicians, participants were provided two case studies and divided into four groups to discuss:

- What are the consequences and outcomes you intend to happen?
- What are some of the unintended outcomes?
- How do you know when there are improvements?
- What do we need to see further down the road to know improvements are actually made?
- Priorities for change—What are the things we really need to be working on?

Participants had suggestions for what improvements are needed for both the courts and community. Among them:

- Increased funding for treatment
- Better training for health care professionals
- Better assessments for services in the criminal justice system
- Better pre-trial assessments
- Strengthening penalties for OWI cases and more assistance up front
- Establishing a Statewide Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee. ■

## NEW FACES

**H. Britt Beasley**, the new District Eight court administrator, brings with him 28 years of experience from the Florida court system. Beasley, who came out of early retirement to take the position, previously served as court administrator for the Fourth Judicial Circuit in Florida. He said he came out of retirement because of the opportunity to work in what sounded like an exciting position in the Wisconsin court system.

Beasley, who received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Florida State University, said he had previously spent some time in Madison while serving in the U. S. Army Reserve. He started his new job on Aug. 7.



H. Britt Beasley

**Theresa Owens** has returned to the Wisconsin court system to serve as executive assistant to the Chief Justice, a title she will share with Ann Zimmerman, who works part-time on issues related to self-represented litigants. Prior to her



Theresa Owens

return, Owens worked as the federal district clerk for the western district of Wisconsin. Owens had previously served as chief deputy clerk of the Office of the Clerk of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. She received her law degree from Drake University Law School.

The circuit court judges of Eau Claire County have selected **Kristina L. Aschenbrenner** to fill the clerk of circuit court vacancy created by **Diana J. Miller's** retirement (see *The Third Branch*, spring 2008).

Aschenbrenner will serve out the remainder of Miller's term, which expires on Jan. 2, 2011. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from UW-Eau Claire, and has a background in administration, finance, office management and supervision. Aschenbrenner also holds the rank of Sergeant (E-5) in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. She spent 11 months serving in Iraq and has been awarded the Army Commendation Medal for active duty service. "I like the public service aspect of things," she told the *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*. "That's where my military service comes into play. It's a good combination." ■

Kristina L.  
Aschenbrenner

## Interactive small claims forms online

By Ann Zimmerman, Pro Se Coordinator

The Wisconsin court system is continuing efforts to make navigation of the courts easier for *pro se* litigants by introducing its new, interactive small claims Web site to the public. Like its family law counterpart introduced in March 2006, this user-friendly program will provide an inexpensive alternative for people in need of small claims assistance but who do not have an attorney. The new site debuted in August.

The Web site, <https://prosmallclaims.wicourts.gov>, guides users through a series of questions, and the Summons and Complaint form is automatically filled in based on the answers provided. The Web site operates much like the software used to complete a tax return. Blank versions of the statewide-standardized forms are also offered for people to fill in by hand. Additionally, the site offers many county-specific instructional guides to assist users.

The *Pro Se* Small Claims Forms Committee revamped existing small claims forms into plain English to make them easier to understand and made additional forms available on the court system's Web site. The forms contain step-by-step instructions down the left hand sides of the forms.

So far, more than 20 small claims forms and 11 instructional guides have been adapted or created to assist *pro se* litigants. Since then, Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) has worked to convert some of them into a Web-based application.

Not only will these interactive forms provide users with small claims assistance in general, each county in

Wisconsin has tailored many of the instructional materials that accompany the forms to reflect their court-specific procedures. Ensuring that the forms are completed correctly, and that they comply with local rules, will save time and prevent frustration, both for self-represented litigants and court officials.

Printable forms and the interactive forms can be found at: <http://wicourts.gov/services/public/prose.htm>. For further information, contact the State *Pro Se* Coordinator Ann Zimmerman at [ann.zimmerman@wicourts.gov](mailto:ann.zimmerman@wicourts.gov). ■

## AWARDS

### Three judges named Leaders in Law

Three Wisconsin judges have been selected as 2008 Leaders in the Law by the *Wisconsin Law Journal*. Each year, the *Wisconsin Law Journal* recognizes attorneys, judges and law professors who have made an impact in the community. The judges were honored during a luncheon May 16.



Judge Randy R. Koschnick

Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge **Randy R. Koschnick** was selected for implementing a new case assignment system in his county. By assigning judges to specific case

types and rotating the assignments every two years, the new system saves the county money and processes cases in a more timely manner.



Judge Neal P. Nettesheim

Retired District II Court of Appeals Judge **Neal P. Nettesheim** was honored for his commitment to the judicial system. Prior to his retirement in 2007, Nettesheim was the second-

longest-serving judge in Wisconsin. He continues to work in the judicial system as a reserve judge and through his appellate practice consultancy. Milwaukee

County Circuit Court Judge **Richard J. Sankovitz** was recognized for his work while presiding over a historic lead paint trial in 2007 and for his commitment to providing better legal assistance for the poor. As leader of the State Bar Access to Justice Study



Judge Richard J. Sankovitz

See Awards on page 12

## OBITUARIES *continued from front page*

law trainee in the Office of the Attorney General in 1947 and was the first assistant district attorney for Dane County from 1949 to 1952. From 1957 to 1958, he served as legal counsel to U.S. Sen. William Proxmire in Washington, D.C. Upon returning to Madison, Day resumed law practice until 1974. He served as special counsel to Gov. John W. Reynolds in the reapportionment case before the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which became the first state court in the nation to reapportion legislative districts on the basis of one person, one vote.

### Judge Ted E. Wedemeyer District I Court of Appeals

Judge Ted E. Wedemeyer Jr. was still an active judge on the District I Court of Appeals at the time of his death from lung cancer on July 23.

Wedemeyer helped organize the municipal court system in Milwaukee, and in 1975, was appointed the first municipal judge for the City of Milwaukee. His municipal courtroom was the first in which cameras were allowed after he successfully petitioned the Wisconsin Supreme Court in the 1970s. In 1977 then-Gov. Martin Schreiber appointed him to the Milwaukee County Circuit Court. He served on the circuit court until his election to the Court of Appeals in 1982.

Wedemeyer was a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross and Marquette Law School. He also received a master's degree from John Marshall Law School.

As a judge, Wedemeyer was known for treating everyone in his courtroom with respect and dignity. "He saw them as human beings, and he treated everyone with respect," Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge John DiMotto told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "He was someone we could all look to for help on how to be a judge. He was someone other judges would turn to."

"Everyone in the Milwaukee Circuit Courts loved Ted Wedemeyer," Chief Judge Kitty K. Brennan told the

*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "He was a great judge. He was easygoing, extremely personable, knowledgeable and fair. He loved his job, and it showed."

Wedemeyer was also well loved in the community. He helped organize the Milwaukee Kickers Soccer Club and was inducted into their "Hall of Fame." He was also president of Goethe House of Wisconsin, a German-American cultural organization. "He felt strongly about helping the community," his wife Susan told the *Journal Sentinel*.

### Robbie Brooks CCAP

Robbie Brooks, customer services manager for Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP), passed away at his home on July 23 after a long battle with cancer. He was 46 years old.

Born in Beaver Dam, Brooks received a communication arts degree and law degree from the UW Law School. He worked for CCAP for 18 years, starting as an analyst and serving in several leadership roles. He was instrumental in the successful implementation of CCAP throughout the state. As customer services manager, Brooks was the "voice of CCAP." He was well-known throughout the court system and widely respected for his dedication to ensuring that CCAP staff never forgot CCAP's primary mission is to help people, not implement technology, according to his obituary published in the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

He is survived by his partner, Ken Monteleone; parents, Rocky and Janis; brothers, Michael and Mark; sister-in-law, Susanne; and many family, friends and co-workers. ■



Robbie Brooks

## WISCONSIN CONNECTS

## African leaders visit Milwaukee County

By Judge Paul Van Grunsven, Milwaukee County Circuit Court

On June 16, I welcomed 19 government officials from Ghana, Mali and Nigeria for an Anti-Corruption and Good Governance program. The African dignitaries included judges, journalists and elected and appointed representatives of the governments of these countries. The seminar was arranged in coordination with USAID and the Marquette University Les Aspin Center for Government.

West African officials observed proceedings in felony drug court, where I currently sit. After court adjourned, we had a dialogue about the operation of the courts in our respective countries and the role of courts in addressing corruption and good governance. Dignitaries asked about the ability of judges to be unbiased, given their positions as elected officials; the method judges use to shield themselves from outside influences that may distort their objectivity; the application of the law; and the security reasons for in-custody defendants being handcuffed while in court.

During the program it was learned that none of the African countries has a “trial by jury” system for resolution of legal disputes and instead they rely upon the judge to issue a fair

verdict. African officials agreed that a jury system would not work in their countries because jurors would be prohibited from ever “voting” against a member of their tribe regardless of the overwhelming evidence because many of their cultures operate in kinship circles consisting of clans and extended families. Voting against a defendant might result in the juror’s banishment from his tribe or village. Some African countries allow litigants to opt out of common law court proceedings and instead submit their case or dispute to tribal elders.

Topics also included the unique language issues confronting African courts where many litigants speak unique languages or dialects which require the assistance of interpreters. Wisconsin Court Interpreter Program Manager Carmel Capati addressed language barriers in Wisconsin

courts. In addition, District One Chief Judge Kitty K. Brennan and Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Mel Flanagan shared their own experiences and education regarding important issues confronting courts in Wisconsin and in Africa. ■



Judges, journalists and representatives from Ghana, Mali and Nigeria visited with Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Paul R. Van Grunsven as part of an Anti-Corruption and Good Governance program arranged in coordination with USAID and the Marquette University Les Aspin Center for Government.

## Library Initiative moves to District Four

By Ann Zimmerman, Pro Se Coordinator

In September, the Fourth Judicial District (headquartered in Oshkosh) will implement the state’s Public Library Initiative (PLI), an effort to help educate Wisconsin librarians about resources available to assist self-represented litigants.

District Four training sessions are being offered on Sept. 17 in Sheboygan and on Sept. 29 in Fond du Lac. Presenters include Chief Judge Darryl W. Deets, Manitowoc County Circuit Court; four Sheboygan County officials including Court Commissioner Rebecca Persick and Clerk of Circuit Court Nan Todd, and Register in Probate Peggy Kress, District Four Court Administrator Jerry Lang; State Law Librarian Jane Colwin; and Atty. Ann Zimmerman, state Pro se coordinator.

The PLI was launched in District Ten in 2007. The objective of the program is to educate public librarians within a judicial district so that local libraries can better meet the increased demand for legal resources from individuals who do not have attorneys.

Participants will be introduced to the offices of the

clerk of circuit court and register in probate, and educated about court forms and resources, as well as reliable Web sites that provide access to Wisconsin legal materials including statutes, administrative codes, case law, journal articles, and forms.

After the training portion of the program, local court staff will conduct follow-up visits with the participating libraries in order to strengthen cooperation between the libraries and the courts. This ensures that pro se litigants will have a number of reliable places to turn for help in navigating the court system. ■

For more information about Wisconsin’s Public Library Initiative, see the article published in “Public Libraries” magazine entitled “The Wisconsin Public Library Initiative: Improving Access to Courts Through Collaboration with Public Libraries.” For further information, contact State Pro Se Coordinator Ann Zimmerman at [ann.zimmerman@wicourts.gov](mailto:ann.zimmerman@wicourts.gov).

New judges *continued from front page*

Photo credit: Todd Bechmann, Burnett County Sentinel

Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice N. Patrick Crooks, left, administered the oath of office to new Justice Michael J. Gableman during a ceremony on the front lawn of the Burnett County Government Center in Siren on Aug. 1. Gableman, a former Burnett County Circuit Court judge, became Wisconsin's 81st Supreme Court Justice.

Kutz received his bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota and his law degree from Marquette Law School. He lives in Grantsburg with his wife, Patricia, and their three children.

**Michael R. Fitzpatrick** took the bench in Rock County to fill the seat of Judge **Michael J. Byron**, who retired (*see page 3*). Fitzpatrick has worked as an attorney in private practice for more than 20 years and also as a



Judge Kenneth L. Kutz

Janesville Police and Fire commissioner. He received his bachelor's degree and law degree from Drake University in Iowa.

"Michael Fitzpatrick's outstanding legal career has prepared him well for a position on the bench," Gov. Doyle said in a press release. "His broad experience and understanding of the law will allow him to serve the people of Rock County well."

Fitzpatrick said he is honored by the trust and

confidence everyone has had in him. He said that this will be a wonderful challenge and a great opportunity for him, and he is looking forward to working in the Wisconsin court system.

Fitzpatrick and his wife, Sharon, have two children and live in Janesville.

The vacancy created in Jackson County by the death of Judge-elect Eric Stutz (*see The Third Branch*, spring 2008) has been filled by **Thomas E. Lister**, a former Jackson County district attorney who has represented plaintiffs in personal injury cases for nearly 30 years in private practice.

Lister said he will focus in general on improving efficiency in the courtroom through increased use of technology. He also intends to work closely with the tribal courts on alcohol treatment programs to complement the newly created Jackson County Drug Court.

An Ohio native, Lister received his bachelor's degree from DePauw University and his law degree from the UW Law School. When he is not at work, he enjoys golf, bicycling, and rowing. He lives in Black River Falls with his wife, Sally, and their two children.



Judge Thomas E. Lister



Judge Michael R. Fitzpatrick

## PPAC updates Critical Issues Report

By Shelly Cyrulik, PPAC Policy Analyst

During the last six months, the Supreme Court's Planning and Policy Advisory Committee (PPAC) Planning Subcommittee, chaired by Judge Barbara A. Kluka, Kenosha County Circuit Court, has been busy preparing its report of planning recommendations for the next biennium. The PPAC Report, *Critical Issues: Planning Priorities for the Wisconsin Court System 2008-2010*, was approved by PPAC at its May meeting.

Last year, the PPAC Planning Subcommittee was asked by PPAC to research and to make a recommendation as to how it thought PPAC could best accomplish both short and long-range strategic planning. Specifically the subcommittee

was asked to identify the process that should be undertaken as well as the necessary resources to conduct both short and long-range planning for the court system. Critical Issue reports have been serving as the short term planning mechanism for PPAC for a number of years.

However, the court system has not studied long-range planning in-depth since "Framework for Action" was developed with the assistance of the State Justice Institute for the Wisconsin Court System in 1994. Since then, the Planning Subcommittee has reviewed the current process

## PEOPLE

In addition to having served on the Brown County Circuit Court for 11 years, Judge **Donald R. Zuidmulder** is a member of the Green Bay Packers Board of Directors. That role has been unusually time-consuming of late; he



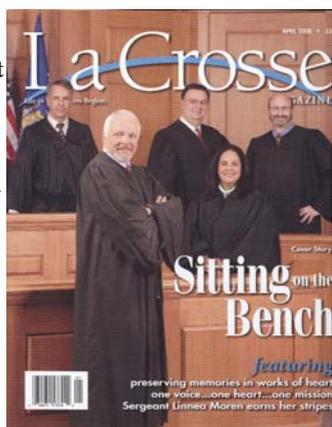
Judge Donald Zuidmulder, Brown County Circuit Court, catches up with U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts in sub-zero temperatures at a Packers tailgate party.

reports that much of his time off the bench has been devoted to answering questions about former Packers quarterback **Brett Favre**.

Zuidmulder hosted U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice **John Roberts** and Roberts' son for a pre-game tailgate party prior to the NFL championship game in January. Zuidmulder reports that Roberts, who is

from Indiana, very much enjoyed the brats.

The April issue of *La Crosse Magazine* featured the five circuit court judges in La Crosse County. Judge **Ramona A. Gonzalez** talked about how her background and her personal life have played a role in shaping her judicial career. She told the magazine that her goal has been to focus on each individual involved in a case. Gonzalez, who was born in the Dominican Republic, has made an impact nationally and internationally with her training programs on domestic violence and international child abduction. Judge **Dale T. Pasell** discussed his journey from the Public Defender's Office to the circuit court, as well as his hobbies of running, reading, Badger football and traveling. Judge **Elliott M. Levine** who, as an assistant state public defender, helped lead the effort to establish a drug court in La Crosse County, discussed the important role of drug courts. Judge **Scott W. Horne** worked alongside Levine in developing the drug court. "This program tells people that we're going to devote resources, give support, and provide the opportunity to recover," Horne said in the article.



Judge **Todd W. Bjerke** talked about his military background (he is currently a judge advocate in the U.S. Army Reserves and served in the same capacity in the 1980s

in the Marine Corps), and his reason for pursuing a legal career. "I have always been interested in making people's lives better through the law," he told the magazine.

Reserve Judge **Charles B. Schudson** and his wife, **Karen**, who is a marriage and family therapist, conducted seminars at the Indiana Judicial Conference last September and April. Additional presentations are scheduled in Arizona and Utah. The seminars focus on helping judges handle hot-button topics and highly emotional cases involving families and children.

District Ten Court Administrator **Scott Johnson** was called to active duty in June for the National Guard. Johnson, a member of the Iowa Air National Guard, was called to assist with flood relief in Iowa after the state was devastated by severe storms and tornadoes. During the flood clean-up, Johnson helped to mobilize over 4,000 Iowa National Guardsmen to more than 80 of the 99 counties in the state. Johnson said he was most impressed by the dedication of the guardsmen, especially those who were mobilized from the affected area.

Johnson was released from active duty on June 20, after about a week of service, and returned to the district court office that following Monday.

In the past several years, Johnson also has been called to duty in Afghanistan and Iraq. He is especially thankful to Chief Judge **Benjamin D. Proctor** and Deputy Director for Court Operations **Sheryl Gervasi**, both of whom have been supportive

when he has been called to serve. Johnson returned to the Wisconsin court system this past winter, after a stint as deputy chief clerk in the federal court system in Iowa.

Wisconsin Public Television's program Teen Connections featured an episode on teen courts in May. The live call-in show featured a panel of adults and teen experts who discussed how teen courts work in Wisconsin. The panel included student volunteers from the Brown County Teen Court Program, as well as **Terri Delaruelle**, program manager for the Brown County Teen Court. Footage of a training session with high school volunteers, area lawyers and program administrators also was featured in the episode. Brown County Circuit Court Judge **Mark A. Warpinski** is a member of the county's Teen Court Advisory Board.

Milwaukee Circuit Court Judge **David A. Hansher** has been elected chair of the Wisconsin Judicial Commission. Hansher is the first trial judge to serve as chair since the commission's creation in 1978. The Judicial Commission is responsible for enforcing high standards of



Iowa National Guardsmen move sandbags in Iowa City as part of the state's flood relief. Photo courtesy of Scott Johnson

**AWARDS** *continued from page 8*

Committee, Sankovitz presided over an effort to gather data on the need for civil legal services. The group's work demonstrated that more than 500,000 Wisconsin residents had an unmet need for civil legal services in 2006. The committee's work resulted in a \$1 million provision for civil legal services in the state budget.

**Brennan recognized as Woman of Influence**

Chief Judge **Kitty K. Brennan**, Milwaukee County Circuit Court, received one of the *Milwaukee Business Journal's* 2008 Women of Influence Awards on June 26. Brennan is the first

woman to serve as chief judge of the First Judicial District, and recently was appointed to the District I Court of Appeals. She was recognized, in part, for successfully fighting budget cuts proposed after she was appointed chief judge in 2005.

Chief Justice **Shirley S. Abrahamson** told the *Business Journal* that Brennan "follows in the tradition of good presiding judges in the county who have been strong leaders who recognize the needs of the court system under dire fiscal pressure." Brennan has served as a circuit court judge since 1994, and is currently chair of the Milwaukee Community Justice Council.

**Two municipal judges receive honors**

At the July 24 annual meeting and awards luncheon for the Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association, two municipal judges were recognized for their dedication to justice. Municipal Judge **David H. Nispel**, City of Middleton, received the association's 2008 Judge of the

Year Award. Nispel was recognized for his more than 12 years of service as a municipal judge, as well as his commitment to the Middleton community. Nispel, who is a full time employee of the Wisconsin Department of Employee Trust Funds, has also previously served as president of the association.

City of Kenosha Municipal Judge **John A. Neuenschwander** received the association's Lifetime Jurist Achievement Award. Neuenschwander, who has served as a municipal judge for 22 years, received this honor for contributions to municipal judge seminars and his willingness to offer advice and assistance to his fellow municipal judges. Neuenschwander is also a professor of history at Carthage College.



Photo credit: The Milwaukee Business Journal

Chief Judge **Kitty K. Brennan** was featured in the June issue of the *Milwaukee Business Journal* as one of their 2008 Women of Influence.

**Legislators recognized for legal system efforts**

Four Wisconsin legislators were awarded the State Bar of Wisconsin's 2007-2008 Scales of Justice Awards on June 27. Sens. **Michael Ellis**, R-Neenah and **Jon Erpenbach**, D-Middleton, were honored for their efforts on judicial campaign finance reform. Rep. **Pedro Colon**, D-Milwaukee, was recognized for his role in enacting 2007 Wisconsin Act 110, which addresses language that misled some Spanish speaking immigrants into believing that notaries public were licensed to practice law. Rep. **John Townsend**, R-Fond du Lac was honored for his work on 2007 Wisconsin Act 45, and 2005 Wisconsin Acts 387 and 388. These acts have improved the process for placement of individuals in need of protective services. ■

**PEOPLE** *continued from page 11*Judge **David A. Hansher**

judicial conduct, as well as maintaining the public's confidence in the judicial system. Hansher, who was appointed to the Judicial Commission by the Supreme Court in 2003, has previously served on the Judicial Conduct Advisory Committee, as co-chair of the Milwaukee Bar Association Judicial Section Committee, and on the board of directors of the Milwaukee Bar Foundation.

The fall 2004 issue of *The Third Branch* featured an article

on Waupaca County Circuit Court Judge **John P. Hoffmann**, who had celebrated a milestone by biking 60,000 miles. This July, Hoffman reached a new milestone: 75,000 miles. In 2007 alone, he biked over 5,200 miles — the most he had ever biked in a year. He also spent two weeks biking in Ireland in 2006. Adding to his accomplishment is the fact that Hoffmann has had both of his hips replaced, one in 2000 and the other in 2004. ■

Judge **John P. Hoffmann**

## Fleishauer, Nettesheim recognized for service, achievement

Justice **Ann Walsh Bradley** presented awards to two longtime Wisconsin judges in May on behalf of the Bench and Bar Committee at the State Bar of Wisconsin's Annual Convention (*see The Third Branch, winter 2008*).

Portage County Circuit Court Judge **Frederic W. Fleishauer** received the Judge of the Year award, and retired Court of Appeals Judge **Neal P. Nettesheim** received the award for Lifetime Jurist Achievement.

In presenting the award to Fleishauer, whom she called "a judge's judge," Bradley made the following observation: "He is praised by his peers and he is praised by the folks from central Wisconsin for his integrity and for his patience. He is respected by all of those who cross the threshold of his circuit court."

Nettesheim has dedicated his life of service to the judiciary, family and friends and the people of his community, Bradley said. He was also Wisconsin's second-longest sitting judge at the time of his retirement last year; he served on the Waukesha County Circuit Court from 1978 to 1983, when he joined the District II Court of Appeals. ■



From left to right, retired Court of Appeals Judge Neal P. Nettesheim, Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Ann Walsh Bradley, and Judge Frederic W. Fleishauer, Portage County Circuit Court at the State Bar of Wisconsin's Annual Convention in May. Bradley presented awards to both judges on behalf of the State Bar.

## Pro se training program to kick off this fall

A new series of *pro se* training sessions for court staff will be launched this fall in the Ninth Judicial District (headquartered in Wausau) as a part of the Wisconsin court system's continuing effort to address the issues raised by the increase in self-represented litigation. The sessions will run in late September and early October in Medford, Wausau, and Rhinelander.



Judge Neal A. Nielsen III

"The Ninth District is committed to identifying new and better ways to serve *pro se* litigants, and we are very pleased to offer this innovative program for court staff," said Acting Chief Judge Neal A. Nielsen III, Vilas County Circuit Court. "We are particularly grateful to Reserve Judge Gary L. Carlson, who will serve on our faculty. His expertise on these issues is unparalleled."

Also leading the effort to organize the sessions is Judge Gregory B. Huber, Marathon County co-chair of the Ninth District Self-Represented Litigants Committee. "We are bringing together faculty with a variety of perspectives and diverse expertise to ensure that the program is both useful and engaging," Huber said. Besides Carlson, the faculty will include St. Croix County Judge Edward F. Vlack III, State Law Librarian Jane Colwin, Clerk of Circuit Court Diane Sennholz, Ninth District *Pro Se* Coordinator Annette Barna and State *Pro Se* Coordinator Ann Zimmerman.



Judge Gregory B. Huber

Sennholz, the committee's other co-chair, said one important objective of the initiative is to develop and implement a comprehensive training plan that can be replicated across the state. "We are developing the program in partnership with the District Ten Self-Represented Committee, the State Law Library, and the Wisconsin Supreme Court," Sennholz said, "to ensure that the blueprint is useful for counties all over the state."

The day-long sessions will teach court staff the differences between legal information and legal advice, make use of example scenarios, present information about *pro se* resources, and answer questions.

After the program is kicked off in District Nine in September and October, the Ninth and Tenth Districts, the State Law Library, and the Supreme Court will work with Court Operations staff to evaluate and make any needed improvements. Next, the training program will be replicated in District Ten and throughout the state in 2009. Also in the works: a distance-learning initiative focusing on the differences between legal information and legal advice for court staff unable to attend the training sessions. ■

For further information about the *pro se* court staff training sessions, contact State *Pro Se* Coordinator Ann Zimmerman at [ann.zimmerman@wicourts.gov](mailto:ann.zimmerman@wicourts.gov).



Diane Sennholz

## Joint meeting *continued from page 5*

of Legal Counsel, both of the state Division of Children and Family Services.

Their program was designed to help familiarize judges with the provisions of the Act, identify resources available to assist in applying the Act, and to describe recent legislation that affects the courts.

Mark Carey, a consultant, made a presentation on *Evidence Based Practices for Judges*. "Evidence-based practices are a progressive, organizational use of direct, current scientific evidence to guide and inform efficient and effective correctional services," Carey said. He described the factors affecting recidivism and the features of effective interventions. He was followed by Jim Moeser of the Office of Justice Assistance. He presented judges with a CD of information entitled *What Works Wisconsin*, that contains materials which apply the concepts of evidence based practices in the juvenile arena. ■



Loa Porter and Therese Durkin of DCFS pose in front of the Spring Green scenery outside the District Five and Seven joint meeting.

## Jury *continued from front page*

To mark the occasion this year, many counties, including Dane and Waukesha, will hold press conferences. A variety of other activities to demonstrate appreciation for jurors, their families and employers are expected in other counties.



Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson

Forest County, for example, will post notice in the local newspaper to invite jurors who have served in the past to an open house at the courthouse, said Clerk of Court Penny Carter. The open house could in some ways resemble a wedding reception, she said. Carter said she has ordered gold and green M&M Candies, each embossed with the words "Thanks" and "Jurors." The M&Ms will be wrapped in bunches, tied with "juror appreciation" ribbons and set out next to a cake that will be served, Carter said. Local officials, including the judge, district attorney, chief of police and county board chairman are expected to address visitors. Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson also will attend.

Both houses of the Legislature also drafted citations

in support of the occasion, and many county boards are expected to pass supporting resolutions. The Court Information Office is working on articles and materials for the media, which will be posted on the court system's Web site.

The statewide juror appreciation program was initiated by the Chief Judges Subcommittee on Juror Treatment and Selection and was spearheaded by District Five Court Administrator Gail Richardson.

Sample press releases, talking points and related materials have been made available to judges, clerks of circuit court and other court officials on CourtNet, the court system's Intranet. More than two dozen counties have ordered commemorative and display items, such as banners, posters, magnets and pins, Richardson said.

The right to a jury trial is a fundamental component of the American and Wisconsin justice systems, and the willingness of Wisconsin residents to serve as jurors is critical to preserving this right, Abrahamson wrote introducing the project.

"A number of courts and states have established juror appreciation programs in the past few years. I am glad that Wisconsin now joins those ranks. I encourage you to meet and discuss the possibilities for your court..." Abrahamson wrote. ■

Justice David T. Prosser discusses functions of the Supreme Court with a group of high school students participating in UW-Madison's PEOPLE (Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence) program. The group visited the Capitol in July. The PEOPLE program is intended to help students successfully make the transition to college.



## PPAC *continued from page 10*

used to develop the Critical Issues report; conducted a review of other state court plans; surveyed PPAC members, PPAC Planning members, and district court administrators about their readiness to engage in long-range planning; and reviewed "Framework for Action." The subcommittee's recommendation was presented and approved by PPAC at its August Meeting. The report will now be distributed to the Supreme Court for consideration.

## Videoconferencing

Following the completion of Bridging the Distance 2005, the Videoconferencing Subcommittee shifted its focus to research and the development of a legislative/rulemaking effort. PPAC commissioned the subcommittee to move forward and the subcommittee filed a formal petition to the Supreme Court to create a rule governing the use of videoconferencing in the courts. The Supreme Court approved the petition and the rule, Use of Videoconferencing in the Circuit Courts, became effective July 1, 2008. The full rule petition can be viewed by going to the following link:

[http://wicourts.gov/supreme/sc\\_hearing\\_rules.jsp](http://wicourts.gov/supreme/sc_hearing_rules.jsp)

Please contact Judge W.M. "Mike" McMonigal or Judge Edward E. Leineweber for further information.

## Court security

The Court Security Subcommittee has met a number

of times. Their current undertaking is the "state of security" survey. This is a lengthy and comprehensive survey created to gather a baseline of information on local facilities, protocols, security, remodeling and construction plans. Additionally the subcommittee is seeking to gain an understanding of security concerns and unmet needs at the local level. (See also A. John Voelker's column this issue). Information collected from survey responses will be considered by the subcommittee as it suggests revisions or updates to SCR 70.39 and the semi-annual security and facility report process. A comprehensive report of survey results and analysis will be made available upon completion.

In addition, the subcommittee has received a presentation from the United States Marshal Service about federal court security and judicial safety as well as toured the Dane County Courthouse. The subcommittee will continue to research and make recommendations to PPAC on these and other issues including courthouse security training; development of a comprehensive security plan; incident reporting and tracking; and extending outreach on this topic to educate those outside of the court system. ■

*Direct questions about PPAC and its subcommittees to Shelly Cyrulik in the Office of Court Operations at (608) 266-8861 or [michelle.cyrulik@wicourts.gov](mailto:michelle.cyrulik@wicourts.gov)*

## RETIREMENTS *continued from page 3*

five years.

Simons said one of the biggest changes she has seen in the court system has been the computerization of the opinions. "When I first came to the court, we typed opinions on legal-sized paper on a typewriter," she said. "Needless to say, opinions were changed less frequently than they are today." In 2007, she was nominated as a legal community "Unsung Hero" in the *Wisconsin Law Journal*.

In retirement, Simons plans on traveling and working for one of the presidential campaigns. She said she is looking forward to leisurely mornings and afternoon matinees.

Succeeding Simons in Crooks' chambers is **Rita Lord**, who previously worked as Justice **Louis B. Butler's** judicial assistant. **Marjorie Kittleson** has joined the Wisconsin Supreme Court staff as Justice **Michael J. Gableman's** judicial assistant. Kittleson has previously worked as a legal assistant at a private practice firm and had also served as a judicial assistant to a federal circuit court of appeals judge.

## District Eight court management assistant retires

After 27 years on the job, Court Management Assistant Carol J. Wolslegel retired from her post in the Court Administrator's Office in District Eight (headquartered in Green Bay) on Sept. 1.

Wolslegel began her career with the court system on June 16, 1981, when the only piece of equipment in the district office was an IBM typewriter. The next three decades saw massive changes, not only in office technology but also in personnel. During her career, Wolslegel worked

for District Court Administrators Bill Sucha, Jane Schetter, Kathleen Murphy, and Keith Pereira. She also worked with a number of chief judges, including Clarence Nier, William Duffy, Harold Froehlich, Philip Kirk, Joseph Troy, and Sue Bischel.

Wolslegel said she was privileged to work "with the nicest group of people anyone could hope to be blessed with" and attributed her job satisfaction and success to the cooperative spirit of the Eighth Judicial District judges, court reporters, judicial assistants, clerks, and registers.

In retirement, Wolslegel plans to garden, travel, and spend time with her two grandchildren. "It's like being on vacation all the time," she said. "Who wouldn't enjoy that?" ■



*District Eight Court Management Assistant Carl J. Wolslegel shows off her retirement plaque*

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## 2008 Equal Justice Conference features Wisconsin speakers

A judge and a court administrator from Wisconsin were among the invited presenters at a national conference on issues related to self-represented litigants in May. The American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association sponsored the *Equal Justice Conference* in Minneapolis. More than 1,000 attendees with backgrounds in *pro bono* services, legal assistance programs, law library administration, court services, *pro se* programs, and education gathered to focus on improving the delivery of legal services.

The first Wisconsin presenter was Judge Edward F. Vlack III, St. Croix County Circuit Court. Vlack discussed the Wisconsin court system's Public Library Initiative, which is an effort to foster communication between the courts and public libraries to improve librarians' ability to direct self-represented litigants to appropriate resources.

Following Vlack was District Court Administrator Scott Johnson, District Ten. Johnson spoke about the Ninth and Tenth Districts' successful efforts to fund *pro se* initiatives. Other Wisconsin participants included Annette Barna, *pro se* coordinator for District Nine; Tera Nehring, director of the Waukesha County Self-Help Center; and Jane Colwin, librarian, Wisconsin State Law Library.

Colwin said the conference was well attended, offered broad professional perspectives, and featured extensive

programming on law library and public library initiatives. She offered the following glimpse of a few conference highlights:

- The impact home mortgage foreclosures are having on the courts and legal services organizations. Courts and legal services providers are trying to meet the challenge by recruiting more *pro bono* participation. The State Law Library can assist by developing information for our Web site focusing on this topic and providing links to local organizations that may be able to assist our users.
- The many efforts to assist self-represented

litigants, and the lack of a one-size-fits-all approach. Any effort, no matter how small, will make a difference – so court officials should not hesitate to try something. Partnership opportunities include: local bars, paralegal training programs, law schools, public libraries, retired citizens' groups, etc.

• Georgetown Law Professor Peter Edelman's opening speech, which reflected his strongly held conviction that curing poverty is the only way to solve the myriad problems facing the legal services community.

Edelman is chair of the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission.

Using the information and ideas gleaned from the conference, the Wisconsin participants will continue to adapt and further develop educational programs aimed at training Wisconsin court officials to more effectively assist *pro se* litigants. ■



Judge Edward F. Vlack III, Annette Barna, Tera Nehring, Jane Colwin, and Scott Johnson participated in the Equal Justice Conference sponsored by The American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association.



A group of law students from Japan visited the Supreme Court Hearing Room with host Susan Steingass in July. The group, pictured here with Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson and Justice N. Patrick Crooks, are from a Cross Cultural Negotiation class offered by the UW Law School and the Nagoya Graduate School of Law.