

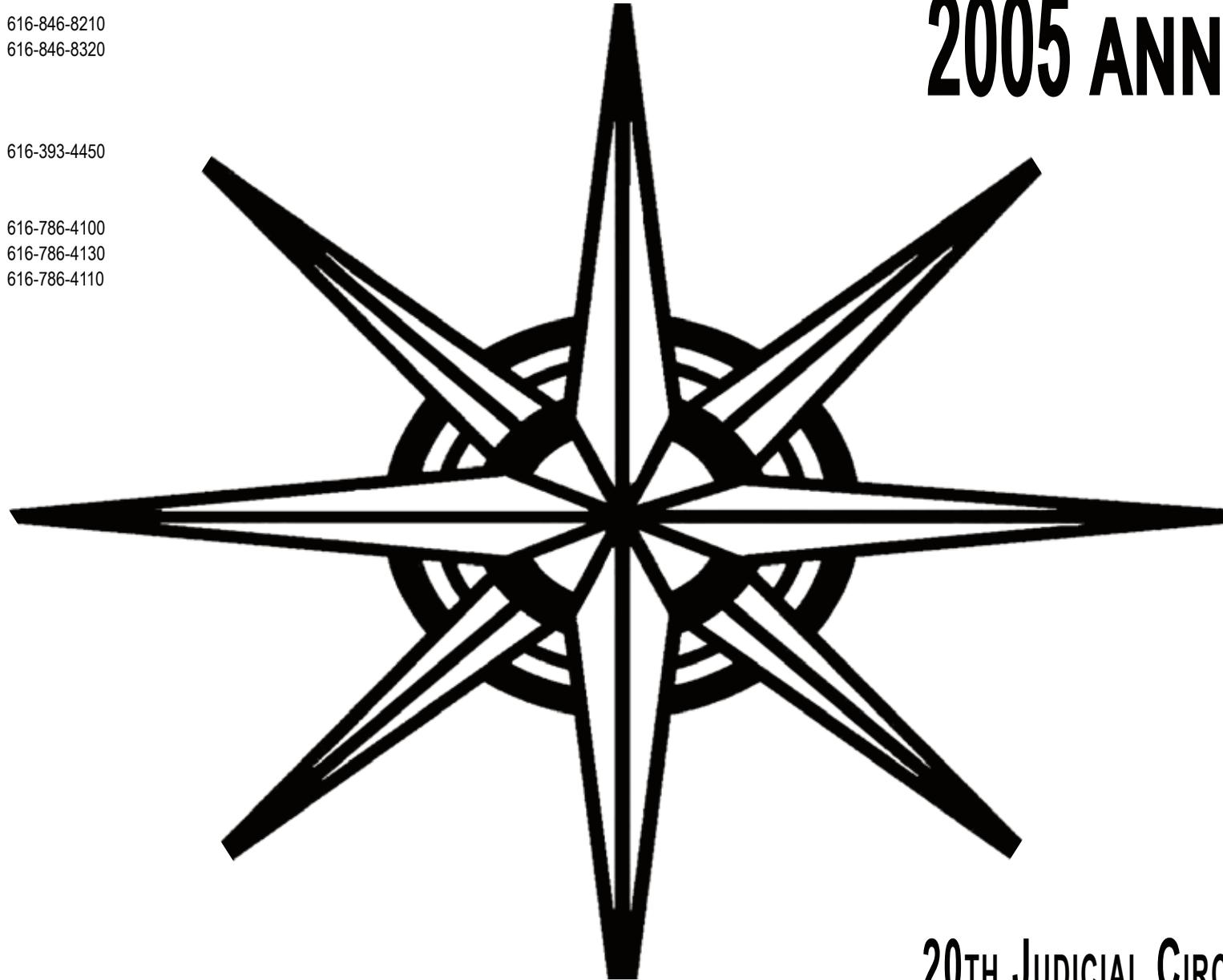
GRAND HAVEN  
414 Washington Room 206 Friend of the Court 616-846-8210  
414 Washington Room 303 Trial Division 616-846-8320

HOLLAND  
12185 James Suite 170 Juvenile Services-  
Treatment 616-393-4450

WEST OLIVE  
12120 Fillmore Juvenile Services 616-786-4100  
12110 Fillmore Juvenile Detention 616-786-4130  
12120 Fillmore Probate Court 616-786-4110

[www.miOTTAWA.org](http://www.miOTTAWA.org)

# 2005 ANNUAL REPORT



*About the cover...*

*The Compass Rose has been guiding sailors for centuries. Regardless of whether we are seafarers, we still ask "Where are we going?" We need to know our destination, and we need plans, maps and directions to guide us along the way.*

*The Circuit and Probate Courts are determining our destination and our map through a strategic planning process. The 2005 Annual Report reminds us why that destination and those plans are important. The Court, judges and staff, are in the business of pursuing justice – one case at a time. By doing so, we make life better for our community, state, nation and our world. Lofty goals, perhaps, but to do less would be a disservice to the rule of law our nation is built on and to our own potential.*

**20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT AND PROBATE COURTS**  
Ottawa County, Michigan

Dear Friends,

The year 2005 was outstanding for the Circuit and Probate Courts in Ottawa County. The community was blessed to have a distinguished and diligent group of judges resolving a variety of legal disputes. In addition, the judges were supported by outstanding court employees who strived to serve the public under a variety of circumstances. The Court also appreciated the steadfast support, financial and otherwise, offered by Ottawa County.

Not only was the past year outstanding, it was a year of growth and change. Notable changes include the addition of a new Circuit judge, expansion of public hours, the initiation of juvenile and adult Drug Treatment Courts, implementation of the Courts' long-range strategic plan, employee impact from a County wide wage and classification study and preparation for the installation of a document imaging system.

The 2005 Annual Report is a departure from the Courts' traditional statistical approach. Exciting new resources are available through the Ottawa County website ([www.miOTTAWA.org](http://www.miOTTAWA.org)), thus the Courts decided to provide access to statistical data on the website and use the Annual Report to highlight who we are and what we do in a more accessible format. We also provided contact information so one can call with any questions.

We hope you find the highlights on the following pages informative and encouraging. Your Court system in Ottawa County is working well with an eye toward continual improvement.

Excellence in public service is as much an attitude as it is a goal. I trust your experience with the Circuit and Probate Courts in Ottawa County will reflect excellence in our attitude as we strive to attain our goals.

Respectfully,



Kevin J. Bowling, JD  
Circuit and Probate Court  
Administrator



THROUGH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND SKILLED STAFF, THE COURT WILL CONSISTENTLY PROVIDE EXEMPLARY SERVICE BY: DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STRONG, POSITIVE, COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

*Collaborative Partnerships* allow continual improvement in services to clients. The following non-profit agencies and governmental departments represent long-standing relationships that contribute a richness and depth to the Court's services:

- Crossroads/Catholic Social Services
- Child and Family Services of West Michigan
- Wedgwood Christian Services
- Barnabas Ministries
- Michigan State Extension (MSUe)
- Children's Advocacy Center
- Arbor Circle
- Ottawa County Sheriff's Department
- Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office
- Ottawa County Health Department
- Ottawa County Planning and Grants
- Ottawa County Financial Services Dept.
- Michigan Department of Human Services
- Ottawa County Mental Health
- Mediation Services
- Michigan WORKS!
- O.A.R.
- Ottawa County Bar Association
- Michigan Office of Child Support



Community service participant shoveling snow at Parkview Adult Foster Care Home

The Courts appreciate these agency contributions and look forward to forming additional partnerships toward the goal of service excellence.

THROUGH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND SKILLED STAFF, THE COURT WILL CONSISTENTLY PROVIDE EXEMPLARY SERVICE BY: PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE, PUBLIC EDUCATION ABOUT COURT FUNCTIONS.



Citizens Council eating dinner with Detention residents

*Coordination Conferences* conducted by the Friend of the Court (FOC) have been a successful way to protect the rights of children and assist divorcing parties in their understanding of the FOC services. The conferences assist the parties in reaching an agreement on issues involving children and temporary custody orders supporting parenting time are entered. In 2005, the FOC conducted 548 Coordination Conferences.

*Citizen's Council* provides the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court an opportunity to receive feedback and guidance from volunteer citizens residing in Ottawa County. It offers citizens the ability to learn about the Courts' services and become Court ambassadors by sharing with the public their understanding of the Courts. Meeting bi-monthly, the Council includes representation by local business owners, schools, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Child and Family Services, Latin Americans United for Progress, Mediation Services and Juvenile Services Division mentors.

Membership is scheduled to expand to include a broader public and private entity base from various communities, as identified in the Courts' three year strategic plan.

*Adoption Day* is celebrated annually, in order to increase awareness of the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court's adoption services available throughout the year. More than 4,000 children in Michigan are waiting for permanent homes; Adoption Day's purpose is to invite potential adoptive parents to reach out to these children and make a life-long commitment. Also, on Adoption Day, agencies such as Adoption Associates, Bethany Christian Services and Catholic Social Services bring together prospective parents with children in need of a permanent home and finalize their adoptions. On Adoption Day 2005, the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court confirmed eight adoptions including a 17 year-old, young man.

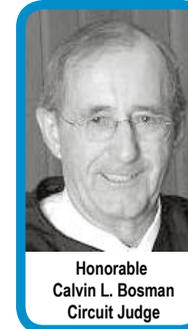


Adoption Day 2005

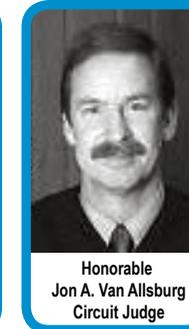
**Mission:** To administer justice, provide restorative services and apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness through trained, courteous staff in a manner that inspires public trust



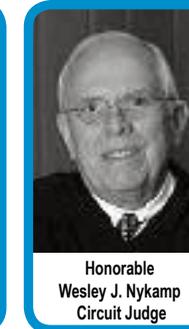
Honorable Edward R. Post  
Chief Circuit Judge



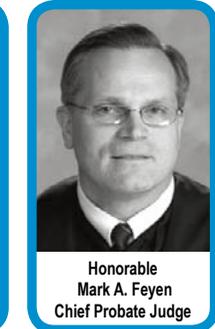
Honorable Calvin L. Bosman  
Circuit Judge



Honorable Jon A. Van Allsburg  
Circuit Judge



Honorable Wesley J. Nykamp  
Circuit Judge



Honorable Mark A. Feyen  
Chief Probate Judge

**Vision:** Through strong leadership and skilled staff, the Court will consistently provide exemplary service by:

Assuring accessibility to innovative, restorative, continually improving and efficient, professional service.

Using state-of-art technology to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.

Providing comprehensive, public education, about Court functions.

Developing and nurturing strong, positive, collaborative relationships.

THROUGH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND SKILLED STAFF, THE COURT WILL CONSISTENTLY PROVIDE EXEMPLARY SERVICE BY: ASSURING ACCESSIBILITY TO INNOVATIVE, RESTORATIVE, CONTINUALLY IMPROVING AND EFFICIENT, PROFESSIONAL SERVICE.

*Drug Treatment Court* (DTC) is a new approach to treating drug offenders. It addresses substance abuse and the accompanying criminal activity through diversion from incarceration while protecting public safety. Eligibility criteria include a history of chronic drug offenses without a serious, criminal record. Participants experience daily contact by Court staff at school, work and/or home. The Drug Court Judge tracks individual progress and emphasizes accountability through weekly meetings and incentives. In 2005, approximately 94% adult and 67% juvenile Drug Treatment Court participants did not commit another offense while in the DTC.

As participants experience success through recovery, they graduate through the Four Phase program, ultimately reclaiming their lives within the community.

*The Trial Division* of the Circuit Court provides oversight of civil cases of more than \$25,000, case flow management, assignment of counsel in criminal cases and bonding agency approval. It is proactive in improved accessibility and understanding of Court services. As a result, it has joined the 58<sup>th</sup> District and Probate Courts in developing an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) plan to assist individuals in resolving their civil disputes without a trial. In addition, the Trial Division has implemented a felony collections process that includes restitution, court fines/costs, court appointed counsel costs and statutorily mandated State fees. Staff work with clients and their probation officers toward reasonable payment plans. Annually, over \$850,000 has been collected through the collections process, and the ADR program is experiencing consistent growth.

*Child Support Enforcement* has been a focused effort by the Friend of the Court (FOC) in 2005. The FOC has a statutory responsibility to enforce all child support orders - including child care and medical support. In an effort to increase collection efforts, the FOC scheduled 7,914 Show Cause hearings for non-payment of support. In addition, the FOC provides the Prosecutor's Office information on felony, non-support cases, which allow the Prosecutor to file felony, criminal charges against non-custodial parents who are seriously in arrears paying their child support. In 2005, the Prosecutor's Office secured 17 individuals who had felony warrants, resulting in \$75,000 in past-due child support, and the FOC collected \$32.5 million in child support.

*Mediation Services* (formerly know as Dispute Resolution Center) is a perfect mechanism by which disputing parties can resolve their differences without Court intervention. Mediation Services offers an opportunity to discuss facts, express feelings and negotiate restitution in a neutral setting. Mediators who have completed a 40-hour course approved by the State Court Administrative Office, guide the process toward mutual agreement. Agreements are reached in over 85% of the mediations.



Adult Drug Court in Grand Haven

THROUGH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND SKILLED STAFF, THE COURT WILL CONSISTENTLY PROVIDE EXEMPLARY SERVICE BY: USING STATE-OF-ART TECHNOLOGY TO MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS.

*Interactive Video Technology* (IVT) allows the Courts to hold hearings for individuals without them being physically present in the Court. IVT vastly reduces transportation costs of individuals who are in prison or hospitals in need of a mental health hearing while preserving their comfort and respect.

*Video Conferencing* (utilizing the CODEC system) in the Juvenile Services Division's Detention Center was acquired through an SBC grant and is similar to IVT. Residents attending the Center's school receive special instruction and interact with instructors who are off site. To date, special instruction has been received from NASA, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Glenn Research Center.

*Circuit Court Case Management System* (CCCMS) is a secure, web-based, software program that allows professionals to communicate with one another on common cases and affords the Court a dynamic, common data base. Through the support of Michigan's Child Care Fund and Ottawa County, the Circuit Court's Juvenile Services Division partnered with Technology Professionals Corporation of Grand Rapids to develop this program. It was successfully launched in October 2005. Refinements continue but currently, the Court has witnessed enormous contributions from this program and hopes to expand its use into other divisions within the Court. Also, inquiries from other courts throughout the State regarding the purchase of this software have ignited further discussion about potential revenue that may result from its development.



Video Conference in Detention Center

*Probate Court* provides services to many who need special consideration including the mentally ill, adults and minors in need of guardians or conservators and families of deceased individuals. The Probate Court has enhanced the Court's effectiveness by the use of IVT technology, document imaging, video court recording, credit card payment capability and on-line case management.