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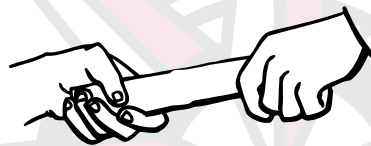


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20th Circuit Court

414 Washington Ave., Room 303
Grand Haven, MI 49417
Phone: 616.846.8320
Fax: 616.846.8179

Friend of the Court

414 Washington Ave.,
PO Box 566
Grand Haven, MI 49417
Phone: 616.846.8210
Fax: 616.846.8128

Holland Satellite Office

12185 James St. Suite 150
Holland, MI 49424

Family Division/Juvenile Services

12120 Filmore Street
West Olive, MI 49460
Phone: 616.786.4100
Fax: 616.786.4154

Holland Satellite Office

12185 James St., Suite 400
Holland, MI 49424

Probate Court

12120 Filmore Street
West Olive, MI 49460
Phone: 616.786.4110
Fax: 616.786.4124

Staff Facts

20th Circuit Court

4 Circuit Court Judges
111 Full Time Staff
11 Part Time Staff
11 Temporary Staff
4 Ottawa County Sheriff Deputies
(Assigned to the Circuit Court)

141 Total

Ottawa County Probate Court

1 Judge
5 Full Time Staff
1 Temporary Staff

7 Total



Annual Report 2007

20th Judicial Circuit and
Ottawa County Probate Courts
Ottawa County, Michigan

www.miottawa.org/Courts

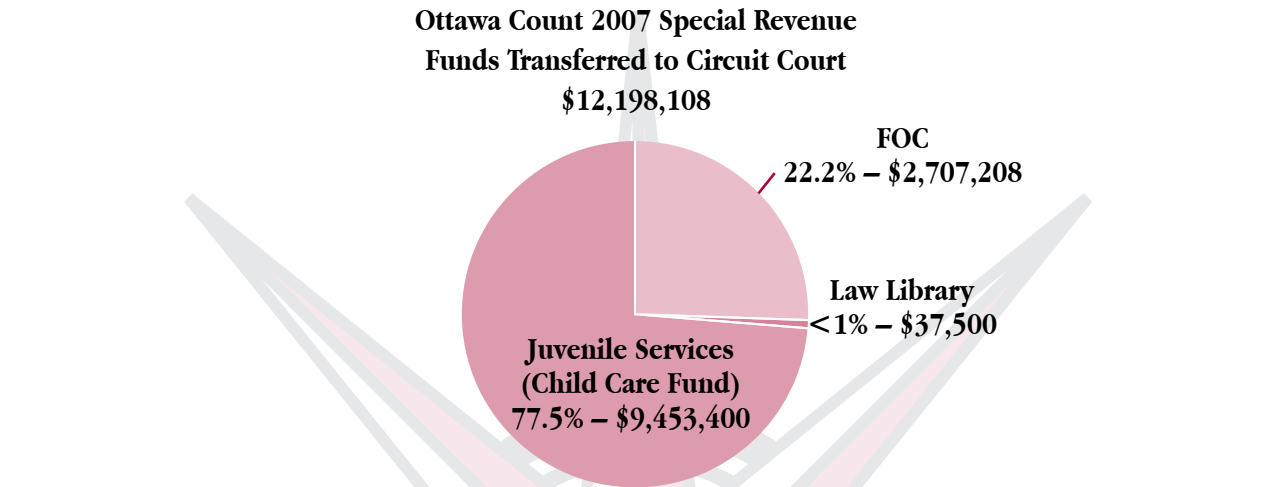
The 20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts 2007 Annual Report

The 20th Circuit and Probate Courts in Ottawa County have selected “Collaborative Partnerships”, one of the Courts’ strategic planning priorities, as the theme of the 2007 Annual Report. The Report highlights many Court initiatives which demonstrate close, effective working relationships with a variety of State, County and private sector partners. These collaborative partnerships allow the Courts to responsibly use available resources in a manner which best serves the public. The 2007 Annual Report also contains selected caseload statistics to demonstrate the significant work in which judges and Court staff are engaged when responding to the thousands of new cases filed each year. Financial data is included to provide some context for the complicated mixture of court funding and show appropriate stewardship for the public funds allocated to the Courts’ operation.

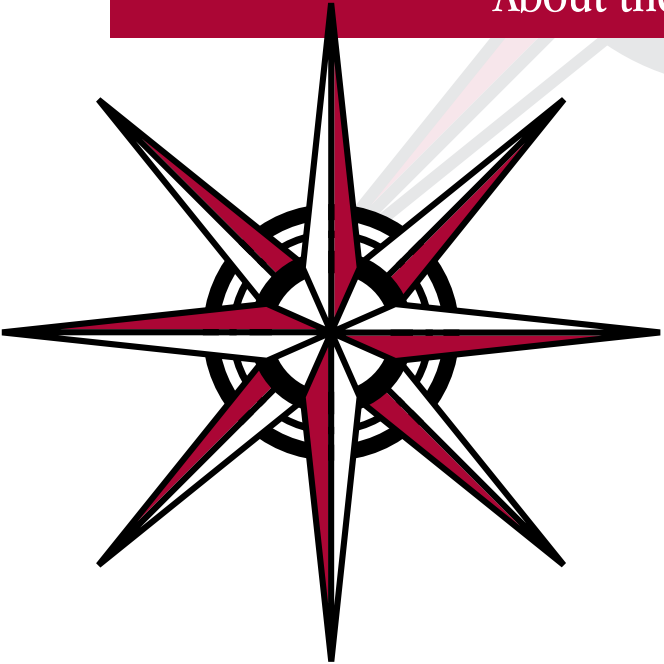


- Mission:** To administer justice, provide restorative services and apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness through trained, courteous staff in a manner that inspires public trust.
- Vision:** Through strong leadership and skilled staff, the Court will consistently provide exemplary service 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 partnerships.

Due to other funding streams, the Friend of the Court (FOC), Law Library and Child Care portion of the Juvenile Services budget are not reflected in the general fund budget allocations. For FY 2007, the 20th Circuit received various allocations amounting to \$12,198,108. These allocations were divided as follows: FOC received a revenue operating transfer of \$2,707,208; the law library received funding in the amount of \$37,500 and the Family Division - Juvenile Services received funding for child care programs of \$9,453,400.



About the Cover... The Compass Rose



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 their destination and map through the strategic planning process. The 2007 Annual Report is a reminder why the destination and plan 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 world. Lofty goals, perhaps; but to do less would be a disservice to the rule of law our nation is built upon and to our own potential.

EDWARD R. POST
CHIEF CIRCUIT JUDGE – TRIAL DIVISION

CALVIN L. BOSMAN
CIRCUIT JUDGE – TRIAL DIVISION

JON H. HULSING
CIRCUIT JUDGE – FAMILY DIVISION

JON A. VAN ALLSBURG
CIRCUIT JUDGE – FAMILY DIVISION

MARK A. FEYEN
CHIEF PROBATE JUDGE – FAMILY DIVISION

STATE OF MICHIGAN



TWENTIETH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT
OTTAWA COUNTY

KEVIN J. BOWLING, JD
CIRCUIT COURT ADMINISTRATOR

March 31, 2008

Ottawa County Board of Commissioners
12220 Fillmore Street
West Olive, MI 49460

Dear Commissioners:

The new County courthouse under construction provides an apt metaphor for many collective experiences of the Circuit and Probate courts in 2007. As construction crews moved to the new job site; excavated an enormous hole; laid a foundation; and eventually used tons of steel to erect the largest superstructure in Grand Haven, it has become evident there was a detailed plan. The building could not become a reality without detailed blueprints; close working relationships; and careful coordination among a variety of building trades and County departments.

Just as a court structure must be carefully planned and constructed, so must the important work within the Courts be planned and executed with great attention to detail. Judges and Court employees do much of the "heavy lifting" to insure the public is served, but we recognize the Courts are part of a larger system. The importance of effective communication, coordination and cooperation for all involved is just as critical as that which is needed to construct a new courthouse.

The 2007 Annual Report theme is "Collaborative Partnerships". The Courts work with many, outstanding collaborative partners, beginning with the County of Ottawa, which serves as the funding unit for the courts. The Courts are grateful for the long history of County support and look forward to a positive, effective, working partnership in the future.

Reflecting upon 2007, it was a successful year for the 20th Judicial Circuit and the Ottawa County Probate Courts. The Courts continue to be committed to the Mission "to administer justice, provide restorative services and apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness...". All are invited to join in partnership as the Courts' course is set in this direction.

Sincerely,

Edward R. Post

Hon. Edward R. Post
Chief Judge, 20th Circuit Court

Mark A. Feyen

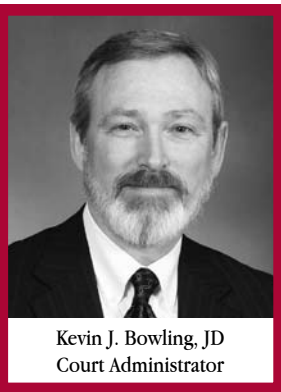
Hon. Mark A. Feyen
Chief Judge, Probate Court

20th Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts' Judges



From left to right: Hon. Edward R. Post— Chief Circuit Judge, Hon. Jon A. Van Allsburg — Circuit Judge, Hon. Jon Hulsing — Circuit Judge, Hon. Calvin L. Bosman — Circuit Judge, and Hon. Mark A. Feyen — Chief Probate Judge,

The Court has four (4) elected judges who preside over the courtrooms, trials and a variety of civil and criminal hearings. The Probate Court has one (1) elected judge that handles all Probate matters and assists in the Family Division of the Circuit Court. The Chief Judges are selected by the Supreme Court for two year terms.



Kevin J. Bowling, JD
Court Administrator

20th Circuit and Probate Courts Administrator

The Court Administrator is responsible for the traditional, administrative functions, strategic planning, caseload, personnel and financial management of the Courts and is directly accountable to the Chief Judges.

The Courts are guided by their Strategic Plan — which includes the Mission Statement — ...to administer justice, provide restorative services and apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness... This is the story told by the 2007 Judicial Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts' Annual Report.

Strategic Planning In Action

The 20th Circuit and Ottawa County Probate Courts have embarked on a rigorous and ongoing strategic planning process that has reaped beneficial achievements in 2007. Some of these achievements have been reflected in increased revenue; web-based case management; adult and juvenile drug treatment court graduations; intern program development; community service and service learning projects; improved use of technology; increased collaborations and staff development.

Increased revenue has been achieved by expanding bed rental contracts with neighboring counties who do not have a juvenile detention facility. Approximately 2,834 per diem beds were rented in 2007. In addition, the Court has maximized the use of State funding through the re-alignment of programs to expand services and qualify staff for 50% State reimbursement; the addition of another County Juvenile Officer also raised



revenue in the Family Division - Juvenile Services, and program service fees were raised to \$25 per month from a one-time, \$25 or \$50 fee for court oversight programs. The Friend of the Court office helped generate new grant funding through the Safe Havens initiative and the Trial Division continued to make strides in felony collections, with much restitution being returned to victims of crime.

The CourtStream, web-based, case management system has sparked significant interest in several detention centers throughout the State. This could result in potential revenue as demonstrations of the software in other jurisdictions may prompt purchase of the system.

The adult felony and juvenile drug treatment courts continue to provide effective treatment services to substance abusing offenders while holding them accountable. During 2007, over 5,200 drug and alcohol tests were administered between the two courts reflecting a 1% positive test result rate throughout the program year. The courts continue to be funded through sizeable Byrne Memorial and State Court Administrative Office grants.

An intern program for college and university students was launched, offering students an opportunity to learn and obtain job skills at the courts. A comprehensive orientation program was developed and exposes the interns to the various functions of the Courts in order to accurately place interns in their respective interest areas.

Community service and service learning projects were expanded in order to increase restorative justice opportunities and retain a youth's connection to the community by giving back. In 2007, juveniles performed 3,738 hours of service throughout the County.

Other areas of accomplishment included receiving two grants for staff development through the Court Management Program; increased partnerships through hosting various trainings; and working with IT to anticipate future technology needs utilizing the Court's Master Technology Plan.

...to administer justice...

Keeping Our Kids Safe: The Safe Havens Grant

The Friend of the Court and Center for Women in Transition have collaborated with Ottawa County to receive a \$400,000 grant toward improving the safety of children by implementing the Supervised Visitation/Safe Exchange (SVSE) program. The SVSE program is grounded in a long-standing, community commitment to effectively respond to domestic violence; safely provide access and resources for victims; and hold batterers accountable. Its mission is



to provide services that prioritize safety while facilitating parental access and parent-child interaction in a setting that respects and integrates the unique needs, culture and life circumstances of the people it serves. Recognizing the need for a response to separation and custody issues, the SVSE program provides supervised visitation and exchange services for parents who may present a risk to their children or to another parent.

The SVSE program is guided by six principles: 1) Equal regard for the safety of child(ren) and adult victims; 2) Valuing Multiculturalism and Diversity; 3) Incorporating an understanding of domestic violence into Center Services; 4) Respectful and fair interaction; 5) Community Collaboration; and 6) Advocacy for children and adult victims. Through these six guiding principles, the SVSE strives to provide quality, essential services that will assist children and families in maintaining the connection and develop healthy, positive, ongoing relationships.

Guardianship Trends in Probate Court

Demographic trends are converging to create an unprecedented increase in guardianships and courts are faced with the responsibility of ensuring people receive appropriate care without exploitation and neglect. The number of people age 65 and older is increasing and as baby boomers come of age, this population will more than double by 2030. Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are also increasing, leaving many in need of guardians to oversee their personal business. The number of people with mental health and developmental disabilities is also increasing as the general population grows, demanding an increase in guardianships to protect their vulnerabilities and address personal needs.

In an effort to improve the quality of court-appointed guardianships, the Ottawa County Probate Court has developed a training program for guardians. Through the purchase of a comprehensive, guardianship training video, a prospective guardian will learn how to navigate systems and advocate, protect and care for their client. The goal of the training practice is to improve the knowledge, quality and support of guardians and the vulnerable residents within Ottawa County.



The Probate Court staff also answers questions and offers additional information and/or support throughout the guardian's relationship with a client. For more information about guardianships and other important services provided by the Probate Court, please call or visit www.miottawa.org/courts.

Volunteers Welcome!

In the 20th Circuit and Probate Courts, volunteers are valued members of the team. Currently, volunteers are used in many aspects of the courts but more are always needed.

Mentors for court-involved youth provide a vital contribution to the lives of young people. On-site, time-limited and ongoing mentoring relationship volunteer opportunities are available through the Journey Mentoring Program. This is a collaborative effort with Michigan State University Extension (MSUe) and has been ongoing for over a decade. Trained mentors offer important relationship opportunities for youth who need an appropriate role model; an appropriate relationship with an adult; and companionship. Opportunities range from being a youth resident "visitor" in the Detention Center, engaging youth in conversation and listening to community-based mentoring with a matched youth. Mentors are critically needed in the Journey Program! Please contact MSUe or the Court for more information.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) represent an abused and/or neglected child's needs in the Court. Through forming a relationship with the child, a trained volunteer is able to identify his/her unique qualities and needs and make recommendations as to how their lives could be improved through the court process. The CASA



program is a collaborative effort with Pathways of West Michigan and is a special volunteer opportunity to work with a vulnerable population. CASAs make an invaluable contribution to a child's life and the professional team.

The Courts' internship program is a collaborative effort with colleges and universities. College interns are offered an extensive orientation and contribute a specified number of hours working at the courts. They obtain college credit while learning "on the job" skills. The Court is proud to offer this opportunity to young people entering the various professional fields within the court system.

Ambassadors of the Courts are sought through the Citizen's Council volunteer opportunity. Ottawa County residents meet on a regularly scheduled basis in order to share information and obtain citizens' perceptions about the operations of the Courts. Their understanding of the Courts is a valuable asset in the communities in which they reside as they share their knowledge about the Courts with others. Further, member's feedback about Court initiatives and operations assists in the guidance of the Courts. This is an important dialogue and the Citizen Council volunteers are truly a valued part of the team.

Coming soon... With the advent of the new Grand Haven Courthouse, volunteers will be sought to assist in the new Self-Help Center. This Center will offer information, frequently used forms and assistance on various services offered by the Courts.

Opportunities to volunteer are always expanding and changing. For more information on volunteer opportunities, please call any of the Court offices.

...to provide restorative services...

Effective Educational Collaborations: The Juvenile Justice Institute

One of the most challenging tasks for juveniles is the completion of school. Many have been kicked out and have no where to go, which leaves the door open for continued criminal behaviors. As part of the Juvenile Community Justice Program – an initiative to treat juveniles in the community rather than spend enormous sums for residential facilities – the Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) was established in 2003. It is a cooperative endeavor with the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District (OAISD).

JJI provides educational opportunities to juveniles through many skill-building components. Last Summer and Fall, students participated in weekly activities on the Court's ropes course. The group developed a love – hate relationship with the required activities, but often spoke of how good it felt to accomplish what they originally saw as an impossible task. The group has continued with weekly activities



indoors throughout the winter and is excited for the return of warm weather so they can get back on the ropes course.

The students doing well earn privileges, one of which is to sit on the jury of the newly developed, "Student Court". Any student attending JJI can be referred to Student Court for repeat / problem behaviors. At Student Court, they are required to answer questions from the jury in front of their peers with their parents and probation officers present. The jury renders appropriate consequences, and all staff assist the students; teachers and students have found it to be an effective learning and management tool.

Also, JJI has been active in the community in many ways including Project MOVE, in which JJI students work with disabled students at the Ottawa Area Center. It is an incredible sight to see the JJI students nurture and guide children with lesser abilities. Other community service projects include a six week youth employment summit; an adopt-the-troops program; a community cleaning project; and a food drive. Each student is also required to develop a portfolio including a resume and documentation of their progress from start to finish. It is hoped, parents will soon be able to monitor their child's progress on-line, including up-to-the-minute grades, missing assignments, due dates and much more. Through JJI, Juvenile Services and the OAISD are proud to work together for the enrichment of youth and the community!

Partnering to Respond: Truancy

Truancy has challenged jurisdictions across the nation, and there appears no easy answer. In Ottawa County, the 20th Circuit Court partners with the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District (OAISD) to address this issue, with promising results.

When a child or juvenile is chronically absent from school – truant – after several failed attempts at getting the child in school, the local school makes a referral to the OAISD’s Juvenile Services Director and Truancy Officer. The Truancy Officer has experience as a law enforcement officer for the Holland Police Department and, as a surveillance officer with Juvenile Services, so she is well-versed in the areas of making home visits and holding people accountable. Upon receipt of a referral, the Truancy Officer investigates the situation and works with youth and families to get the child(ren) into school. In cases when parental neglect is responsible for young children not attending school, the Truancy Officer facilitates either a return of the child to school or refers the parent(s) to the Prosecutor’s Office for District Court prosecution. In most cases, she is successful working with the parent(s) and returns the child to school. In juvenile cases, the Truancy Officer works with the youth and parent(s) toward the youth’s return to school. When needed, the Truancy Officer calls upon the help of the 20th Circuit Court – Juvenile Services, for support and/or enforcement. Each month, the OAISD staff meet with a collaboration of court, law enforcement and other agency staff monthly, to discuss referrals and approaches to address specific issues.

The result of this partnership has been a remarkable success over the years and with the advent Holland Public Schools joining the truancy coalition, the Truancy Officer’s position was made full time in 2007. The outcomes continue to be a success story in that during 2007, there were 140 referrals and only 12 students did not return to school. Of those 12, many had moved or were not able to return to school for valid reasons. The Court values the partnership with the OAISD and lauds them for the hard work, resulting in such positive results!

Juvenile Community Justice... A Partnership That Works

“Without JCJ, I know I’d be stuck sitting in the system. People who knew me back then thought I was a lost cause.” – Dan Murphey.

This reflective statement was made by a graduate from the Court’s Juvenile Community Justice (JCJ) program. It was highlighted in an article in Wedgwood Christian Services’, *The Impact* (Winter, 2008), written by Teri Clark, Director of Prevention and Community Outreach Services.

Residential treatment is not only expensive but also, it removes the youth from their family and community. In 2003, Juvenile Services profiled juveniles who had been ordered into residential facilities after failing to meet the Court’s probationary expectations. Residential placements were growing, resulting in marginal outcomes and increased expenditures, but based on the profile of those in placement, Juvenile Services decided step out of the crowd and make a bold move to treat these youth, when appropriate, in the community.

The Program model includes contracting with two, lead agencies to “wrap” services around youth in an effort to get them back on track. As lead agencies, Wedgwood Christian Services and Pathways of West Michigan provide a vast array of services and rigorously apply them to the benefit of JCJ youth. In addition, a Court caseworker and group leader provide pro-social skill development opportunities and supervision. The personal care and concern for each youth is reflected in frequent home and school contacts – sometimes several times per week, with positive results.

One goal of the program is to increase self-reliance. “Recognition in the form of early-completion incentives provides motivation for them to build on their success. Helping under-supervised youth recognize their God-given potential can make the difference that turns them away from more serious problems”, stated Ms. Clark in her article. Dan Murphey is a prime example of JCJ’s and the Court’s partnership with Wedgwood. Struggling in the community, Dan was placed at the Adrian Training School and later was placed in a foster home, which was not his first choice. “...his caseworker and judge told him he would have to work through the system until he was old enough to choose for himself – provided he didn’t get into more trouble” (Clark, 2008). As Wedgwood and Court staff worked together to integrate services and develop a strong relationship with him, Dan gained the confidence to re-focus his energy into positive things. Referring to the commitment of his Wedgwood worker, Dan identifies the importance of their relationship, noting his worker was always willing to listen to him.

“Without JCJ, I know I’d be stuck in the system. People who knew me back then thought I was a lost cause. Nobody wanted to waste their time on me. When I left the training school, I was pretty hard and stubborn. I used to think the world owed me everything – but now, I know better. I’m out to live life to the fullest” (Dan Murphey as told by Ms. Clark, 2008).

The impact of the JCJ program extends to several Court-involved youth. Through devoted Court and lead agency staff willing to do whatever necessary to help these youth successfully return home, JCJ has not only saved the County and State significant monies by dramatically reducing residential placements, but most importantly, it helps youth become whole.

The Court thanks Wedgwood and Pathways for their hard work in making this program work for youth. It is truly a partnership that works!



Working Together to Identify Trends — Solve Problems: The Gang Concern

Last October, the 20th Circuit Court sponsored the annual P.A.C.K. (Professionals Advocating and Caring for Kids) meeting in Holland. The room was packed with school teachers, administrators, non-profit agency staff, law enforcement, state and local governmental agency staff, youth service clubs and many others who work with juveniles. The purpose of the meeting is to identify juvenile trends in the county that represent potential concern. This year the focus was on gangs.

Increased gang activity emerged during early Spring and Summer. This prompted professionals working with youth in the community to be concerned and to come together toward a common solution. The Boys and Girls Club of Holland spearheaded a community meeting in the Spring and the P.A.C.K. meeting followed-up by convening a panel of experts from the Holland Police Department, Boys and Girls Club, Ottawa County Sheriff's Department and the 20th Circuit Court to discuss specific concerns; potential threats; and implemented strategies. The Friend of the Court also discussed parenting time and custody issues. Other issues such as youth homelessness and truancy were discussed.

Over 140 people attended the 2007 meeting, which reflects the strong, unified interest in working together to solve problems. The court has hosted this meeting for over a decade and continues to be excited about planning the meeting for 2008 in order to improve services and safety for all.



Civic Responsibility Takes Shape in Holiday Cookies

Christmas cookies for the Holland Rescue Mission were created by the students at the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center during Mrs. Dahlhoff's world studies class. Each group of students selected (or created) their own recipe and worked together to make holiday treats knowing they would be able to eat very few of the delicious baked goods despite being away from their own families this holiday season. This was the first time many of the students had done any holiday cooking and most felt fortunate to be able to prepare food those in need. The twelve dozen cookies, chocolate covered pretzels, candied hearts, and Christmas mice were delivered to the Rescue Mission on Friday, December 22, to extremely grateful recipients.

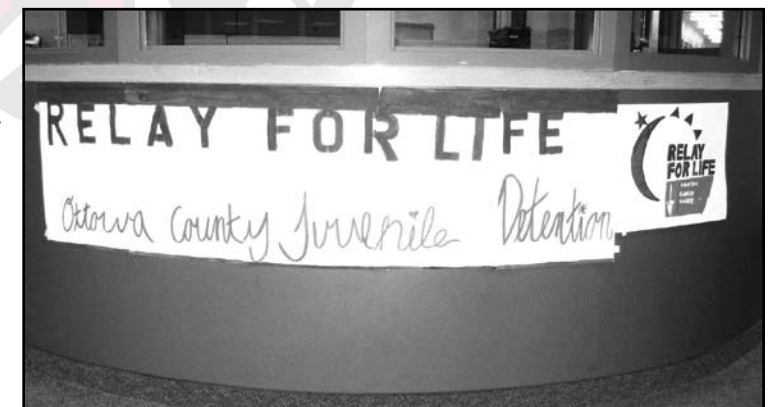


Helping to Save Lives at the Ottawa County Detention Center

The Detention Center held its annual Relay for Life on Tuesday, July 3. A kick-off assembly was held to show the importance of cancer research and how everyone can contribute to this research through the Relay for Life program. A video showed other community Relays and how they raise money through fun activities. It also showed the victory of the survivor's walk and the solemnity of the memory walk with luminaries lighting the track.

Throughout the process, the students participated in fun activities and wore pedometers to determine the number of miles they cumulatively walked during Physical Education class. They also made luminary bags to be used at the Allendale Relay for Life and had a cookout lunch.

The students at the Detention Center are to be congratulated. They walked a total of 32½ miles and raised \$225 pledged by Court, teaching and Detention Center staff. The following week, the students viewed a video of the Relay in Allendale so they could see their luminaries and hear the names of loved ones being read. They also made thank you notes for all who donated money. This initiative represents one of the many community projects in which Court-involved youth participate, creating a sense of belonging and contribution. Congratulations to the youth and staff at the Detention Center!



...to apply the law with equality, integrity and timeliness

The 20th Circuit Improves Efficiency Through Imaging

During the past two years, Ottawa County has participated in an energetic and far-reaching imaging project with a direct impact on the Courts, County Clerk's office, Prosecutor's office and Sheriff's Department. These offices have collaboratively worked with the County's Information Technology (IT) department and ImageSoft, Inc. to electronically capture several past years of records and establish more efficient methods for processing daily files.

The process began in the County Clerk's Office, moved to the Friend of the Court's office, and since that phase was completed, the Trial Division has been added. In addition, two Family Division judges and one Trial Division judge are able to receive files and sign orders, electronically, in domestic relations cases. In the Probate Court, the imaging workflow has been implemented for staff use and has proven helpful in better serving the public. In 2008, it is planned to implement workflow and electronic signing (i-sign) for the judge's use in chambers and the courtroom. As the imaging project continues to move forward, the Attorney Referees will be trained and have access to all relevant imaged documents in the hearing rooms. Also, the system will be implemented in the Juvenile Services Division of the Circuit Court. Future plans include the expanded use of this technology to civil and criminal cases.

At every level, the "workflows", i.e., the manner in which documents are routed and processed within and among offices, have been carefully created so unnecessary steps and delays have been removed from Court processes. This directly benefits attorneys and litigants and helps the Courts meet Supreme Court case processing guidelines.

Although the County criminal justice system was the starting point for document imaging in Ottawa County, it will not likely be the end point. In September 2007, representatives from several County departments gathered for a long range planning session regarding this innovative technology. It quickly became apparent there were many potential uses for imaging, resulting in cost-savings and/or improved service levels for the public. Considering the positive feedback received from many sources, it appears imaging is a technology that is here to stay, and the 20th Circuit and Probate Courts will continue to maximize such technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness.



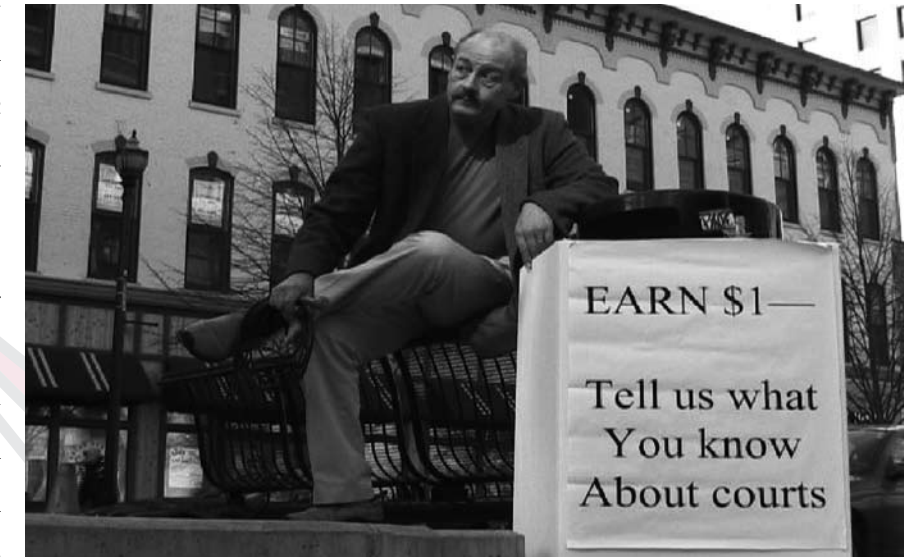
The "You and the Courts" Video Receives National Recognition

The 20th Circuit Court received Honorable Mention for a Justice Achievement Award from the National Association of Court Management (NACM) for its 2007 "You and the Courts" video project. As cited in their quarterly publication, the *Court Manager* (Fall, 2007), "the *You and the Courts* outreach project addresses the Court Communication core competency by educating the public about the court's purpose, function and available services. It is the direct result of the court's strategic planning process and reflects an identified goal to increase public understanding of the courts and access to services".

Through a determination that a video/DVD could be an effective, entertaining method to reach citizens everywhere, the team hit the streets and paid the "man (or woman) on the street" \$1 to

share what they knew about the courts. The responses are included in the video in addition to accurate, essential information about the courts provided by Supreme Court Justice, Elizabeth Weaver.

The *You and the Courts* video/DVD is a flexible, outreach, teaching tool that has many applications for individual, group, school, media or targeted presentation learning. It has been disseminated throughout the County and in many areas of the state and country, receiving a warm and enthusiastic response. The court is pleased to have received the NACM Justice Achievement Award – Honorable Mention and invites anyone to contact the court for a copy of the video.



Caseflow Management: Critical Improvements in the 20th Circuit Trial Division

In 1991, the Michigan Supreme Court explicitly recognized that “...the management of the flow of cases is properly the responsibility if the judiciary.” At this time, the Court affirmed its commitment to provide the citizens of Ottawa County “... an effective, fair and efficient system of justice” through the strategic planning process. As reflected in the 20th Circuit Court’s 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.” – the management of the flow of cases throughout the Court is a priority.

Caseflow Management was highlighted in response to the Michigan Supreme Court’s mandate and has recently been revised to incorporate changes produced by the Michigan Supreme Court’s Administrative Order 2003-7 which, in part, requires trial courts to:

- Maintain current caseflow management plans consistent with case processing time guidelines established
- Report to the State Court Administrative Office caseflow management statistics and other caseflow data required by that office
- Cooperate with the State Court Administrative Office in assessing caseflow management plans implemented pursuant to this order.

To comply with the Court’s mission and Michigan Supreme Caseflow Management Standards, the 20th Circuit Court revised its Case Preparation Orders. These orders are sent to each attorney or litigant in Divorce and General Civil cases. The order sets forth time deadlines for discovery, property appraisals, disclosure of expert and lay witnesses, as well as other applicable time limits. The order also includes scheduled dates for case evaluation, settlement pretrial and trial which are all within the time guidelines set forth by the Michigan Supreme Court. By providing scheduled action dates, the Court is able to track open cases and keep cases moving through the system in a timely, effective manner. This significantly benefits the average citizen in Ottawa County who has a legal case in the Trial Division as it results in less wait time to have a case heard and resolved.

Caseload Trends... Circuit Court

Trial Division	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	% Change
Appeals	85	40	68	64	51	-20.3
Criminal	1136	1046	1055	1169	1218	+4.0
Civil	444	502	468	512	567	+10.7
Total Trial Division Filings	1665	1,588	1591	1745	1,836	+ 5.2
Family Division	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	% Change
Divorce	1033	1004	1026	987	975	- 1.0
Other Domestic Relations	489	609	575	652	590	- 9.5
Personal Protection Orders	696	653	666	661	645	- 2.4
Delinquency	2305	2051	2151	2197	2285	+ 4.0
Traffic	54	61	63	48	38	-20.8
Child Protective	128	94	115	109	74	-32.1
Adoptions	219	205	234	193	170	-11.9
Misc. Family	75	68	67	66	73	+10.6
Total Family Division Filings	4705	4745	4897	4913	4850	- 1.3
Grand Total Filings & Reopened Cases	6370	6333	6488	6658	6686	+ 0.04

Caseload Facts – Trial Division

The Trial Division caseload includes Appeals, Criminal and Civil Cases. In addition, the Trial Division handles the Domestic Relations portion of the Family Division docket.

Judge Bosman and Chief Judge Post handle the Criminal cases and 80% of the Civil cases. Judge Van Allsburg hears 20% of the Civil docket, all Appellate cases and 50% of the Domestic Relations cases assignments. Judge Hulsing is assigned 50% of the Domestic Relations cases, and he shares the Personal Protection Order petitions (adult and juvenile) with Judge Van Allsburg.

From 2006 to 2007, the Appeals, Criminal and Civil caseload (new filings and reopened cases) increased 5.2 %. Individually, the Appeals from administrative agencies, District and Probate Courts declined by 20.3%; however, the two larger portions of the docket (Criminal and Civil) increased by 4% and 10.7%, respectively.

In addition to managing a diverse and growing docket, the Trial Division is responsible for the public and judicial law libraries (including new acquisitions and maintenance). The Trial Division also manages an active collections program with defendants who are ordered to pay restitution, court costs, fines, fees, etc. The outcome of the collections program in 2007 was payment of \$845,800.27 to the Court. Approximately 50% of these payments are returned to victims of crime as restitution. Other payments cover statutorily mandated fees and partially reimburse the County for funds expended in the daily operation of the Court.

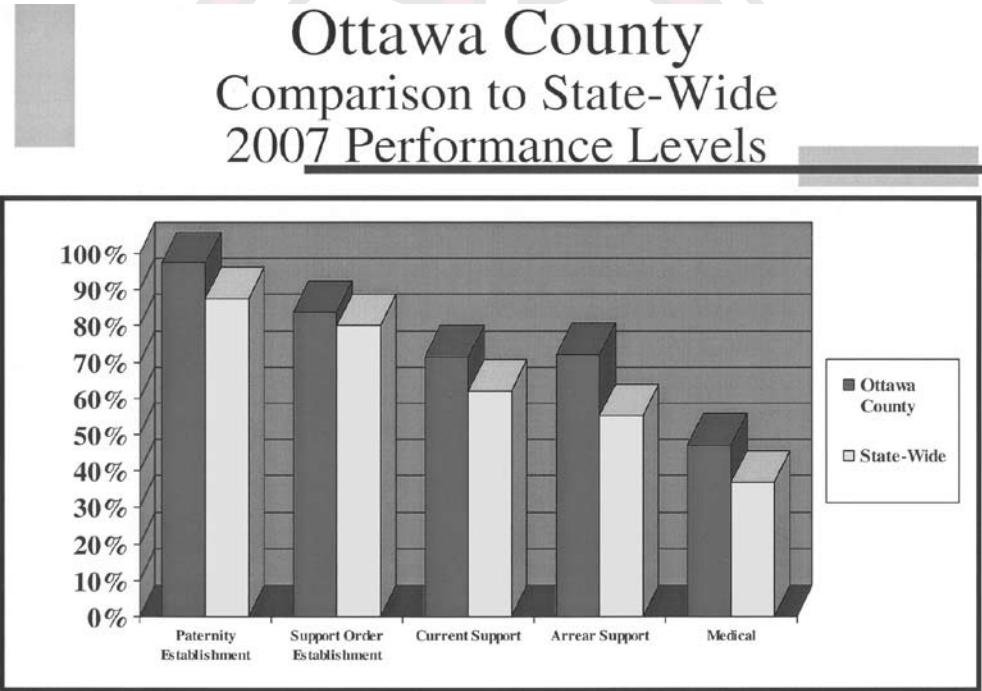
Caseload Facts – Family Division/Friend of the Court (FOC)

During 2007, the FOC was responsible for a Title IV-D (child support enforcement) caseload of 11,721, including 1,309 cases, which were closed. From 2006 to 2007, the IV-D caseload percentage increased from 98.08% to 98.87%, effectively increasing federal performance incentives owed to the County. Within the same time period, FOC staff increased child support collections by 4.7%; total collections were \$29,798,532. To achieve this level of collection, FOC initiated 7,200 “Show Cause” hearings and had 1,874 Bench Warrants authorized. Two dramatic results from this effort were an 893% increase in collections upon arrest (\$5,500 in 2006; \$54,644 in 2007) and the collection of \$24,389 on “pay or stay” orders (a 142% increase over 2006).

The FOC also increased the number of case reviews and modifications (required in 3 year cycles) from 290 cases in 2006 to 1,983 cases in 2007, a 584% increase in one year. Attention to client service is always a FOC priority; however, activity in this area increased in 2007. For instance, scheduled client appointments were up 36% over 2006 - an increase from 1,872 appointments in 2006 to 2,548 appointments in 2007. The FOC also established a satellite Holland office to accommodate “walk-in” client visits each Wednesday. The Holland office handled 847 client appointments in 2007.

All of the workload increases noted above occurred in 2007 in spite of a small 1% overall decrease in new divorce filings. Divorces without children slightly increased from 2006 to 2007, but divorces with children decreased by 3.7%.

The FOC performance measures continue to show the 20th Circuit office as a State leader in many categories. Percentage comparisons prepared by MAXIMUS, Inc. demonstrate the 20th Circuit’s FOC exceeds State-wide levels in paternity establishment, support order establishment, current support, arrears support and medical enforcement.



Caseload Facts – Family Division/Juvenile Services

The Family Division experienced a slight (-1.3%) decrease in new and reopened cases in 2007. However, the Juvenile Services caseload grew by 4% in overall delinquency petitions, including a 26% growth in Probation Violations due to the Court’s increased enforcement practices. However, the Juvenile Services caseload grew by 4% in overall delinquency petitions, including a 26% growth in Probation Violations. Drug and alcohol offenses continued to be the largest segment of new, juvenile petitions (597). However, this is a 15% decrease from 2006 (700). The next highest number of new petitions was in larceny cases. The filing of 549 petitions represented a 16% increase from 2006. Other petition increases were experienced in Weapons charges (+80%), Assault charges (+6%), Ordinance and Disorderly (+45%), Criminal Sexual Conduct (+60%) and Miscellaneous charges (+4%). Decreasing petitions occurred with Breaking and Entering (-15%), Malicious Destruction of Property (-38%) and Arson (-52%). The growth in new petitions resulted from the actions of 1,235 youth who were petitioned to Court in 2007. Within this group, 814 (65.9%) were male and 421 (34.1%) were female.

When Court-involved youth are on probation or otherwise ordered to receive treatment, there are numerous programs designed to assist both the youth and families. Programs include community-based treatment, community service, anger management, habitual offender group, sex offender program, intensive supervision, a ropes course and more. In 2007, Juvenile Services’ treatment programs provided counseling through the Choice program (208 youth and families); educational alternatives through the Juvenile Justice Institute (48 youth); residential placement alternatives through the Juvenile Community Justice program (32 youth and families); and substance abuse treatment through the Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (26 youth and families).

During the year, there were 835 detention admissions, which translated into 11,289 days of secure detention in the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center. This represents a 31.3% increase in admissions and a 15.2% increase in detention days. Most secure detention beds are used by Ottawa County youth; however, beds are also rented to neighboring jurisdictions which have no local, secure placement options. Thus, bed rental revenue increased by 3% in 2007 - from \$392,384 in 2006 to \$406,098 in 2007.

2007 Attorney Referee Activity

Attorney Referees

The Circuit Court Attorney Referees are appointed positions and supervised by the Court Administrator. Each Referee is an independent hearing officer who is cross-trained to conduct hearings in the Juvenile Services Division and the Trial Division of the Court. Based on the assigned docket, a Referee may hear testimony and recommend orders in cases involving juvenile delinquency, abuse/neglect, child support, parenting time, paternity and more.

Delinquency and Child Protective petitions are scheduled shortly after filing. Domestic Relations hearings are typically scheduled within three to five weeks after filing. In 2007, as referee caseloads increased (8.6% overall), the Court’s three Attorney Referees were assisted by three staff attorneys who volunteered to handle cases as needed. This was done to prevent case delays, which may inconvenience the public and attorneys.

Juvenile Services Division (Fillmore Complex)

DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS	2006	2007	% Change
Preliminary Inquiries	562	1190	+ 112
Preliminary Hearings*	188	202	+ 7.4
Pre-Trial Conferences	544	536	-1.4
Pleas of Admission/No Contest Hearings	134	177	+32.1
Original Disposition Hearings	95	54	-43.2
Dispositional Review Hearings	66	58	-12.1
Supplemental Dispositional Hearings	446	504	+ 13.0
Consents/Holds/Other	205	164	- 20.0
Phase I Waiver Hearings	3	2	-33.3
(*Includes 48 Saturday Prelims)			

CHILD PROTECTIVE PROCEEDINGS	2006	2007	% Change
Preliminary Inquiries	9	5	-44.4
Preliminary Hearings	78	44	- 43.6
Release/Consent/Emancipation/Emergency Removal/Other	99	83	-16.2
Pleas of Admission/No Contest Hearings	10	0	- 100.0
Total Fillmore Complex Hearings	2439	3019	+ 23.8

Trial Division (Grand Haven)

DOMESTIC/CIVIL PROCEEDINGS	2006	2007	% Change
Support Hearings	1,232	1,103	-10.5
Parenting Time Hearings	407	361	-11.3
Pro Con Hearings	474	292	-38.4
Paternity Arraignments	743	681	- 8.3
Total Grand Haven Hearings	2,585	2,437	- 8.3

GRAND TOTAL OF ATTORNEY REFEREE HEARINGS	2006	2007	% Change
	5,024	5,456	+8.6%

Caseload Trends... Probate Court

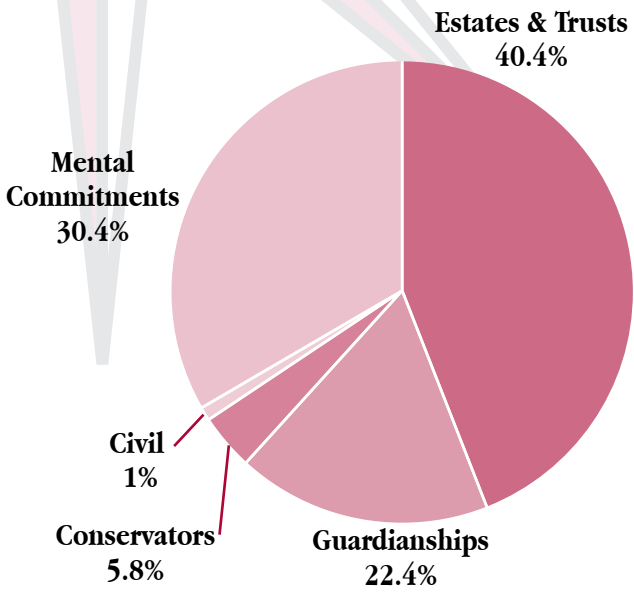
Ottawa County Probate Court Caseload Trends	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	%Change
Estates, Trusts	369	371	408	332	399	+ 20%
Civil, Other	6	15	10	19	9	+ 53
Guardianships	228	215	208	180	221	+ 23
Conservators	109	75	75	65	58	- 10.7
Admissions/Mental Commitments	266	282	302	270	300	+ 11
Grand Total Filings and Reopened Cases	978	743	1003	866	987	+ 13.9

Caseload Facts – Probate Court

Ottawa County Probate Court experienced significant caseload growth in 2007. When considering the Probate Court caseload, it is important to begin with the understanding the Court has 6031 open cases being managed by one judge and five full-time employees. During 2007, the staff handled an overall caseload increase of 13.9% with the largest growth pattern from 2006 to 2007 in Estates and Trusts (+20%) and in Guardianships (+23%). The Civil and Conservators case categories had a drop in cases during the year, but since these cases represent a much smaller portion of the Probate filings, it did not substantially alter the general percentage increase in total filings and reopened cases. Another area of growth was the mentally ill cases. Admissions/Mental Commitment cases showed an 11% increase from 270 filings in 2006 to 300 filings in 2007.

The ability of the Probate staff to cope with these caseload increases is aided by new technology through the County imaging system. Immediate access to all Probate files online has allowed staff to reduce time searching and refileing case files. The imaging system also allows for more timely and effective public service for interested parties who are seeking case information. In addition, the Court has made excellent use of a temporary employee (two days per week) who is able to assist, especially with mandatory records retention requirements.

In keeping with the collaboration theme of this Annual Report, it is important to note Ottawa County Probate Judge, Hon. Mark A. Feyen, handles all required Probate matters and assists the Circuit Court by serving as Presiding Judge of the Family Division. He also serves as the Drug Treatment Court Judge for the Adult and Juvenile drug courts



Financial Information

As an interdependent branch of government, the Courts generate revenue but do not operate like a for-profit business. Other than case filing fees established by the state legislature, the public is not charged for many court services. Instead, the Courts rely on the Michigan Supreme Court to cover judicial salaries and partially reimburse the County for Court-specific operating expenses through the Court Equity Fund. During the past five years, the Court Equity Fund disbursements to Ottawa County averaged \$1,160,229 per year. In 2007, the Court Equity fund payment was \$1,108,749.

The Juror Compensation Fund is used by the State to reimburse the County for a portion of Court-related expenditures. During FY 2007, \$36,892 was paid to Ottawa County from this Fund.

Other Court expenses are paid in part, by federal Title IV-E funds (for child support collection); the State's Child Care Fund (Family Division - Juvenile Services programming); and various state and federal grants (e.g., partial Drug Treatment Court funding). The substantial balance is paid through an appropriation from the Ottawa County general fund.

In FY 2007, the County general fund expenditure budget as amended, was \$64,356,452; the judicial portion was \$9,294,791 (14.4%). Of the 14.4% expenditure, the Circuit Court Trial Division was allocated as 21.7%; Juvenile Services was allotted 14.4%; and Probate Court received 8.5%. The remaining 58.4% went to District Court, with a small 1.4% allocation to "other".

**Ottawa County 2007 General
Fund Budget (Amended) — \$64,356,452**



**2007 Judicial General
Fund Budget (Amended) — \$9,294,791**

