

Third Circuit Courts and Community Committee Review of Activities in 2015

The Third Circuit Courts and Community Committee had a very active year in 2015. Below are highlights of some of the activities that our judges participated in throughout the year as part of the Committee's ongoing effort to connect our courts to our communities and improve understanding of the role of the judicial system in our democracy.

Judge Chats

Dozens of our Judges participated in the "Judge Chats" program at the National Constitution Center (NCC) in Philadelphia. The Judge Chats allow school students and judges to engage in an open and informative dialogue about judging and the judicial system. Judges talk to students and teachers about interpreting law and the implications of the Constitution on everyday life. For the 2014-2015 school year, 29 chats were held at the NCC, and 10 chats to date for the 2015-2016 school year. Many chats were conducted in conjunction with "civic holidays" such as Law Day and Constitution Day.

Take your Child to Work Day

The United States District Court and Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey (Camden) hosted "Take Your Child to Work Day" on April 23, 2015. The theme was "*Ahoy Mate – Join Us For A Nautical Adventure.*" Judge Andrew B. Altenburg, Jr. led the introduction and welcome followed by a presentation on the *US Coast Guard Auxiliary* by Tony Lopez from GSA. There were additional presentations by the Probation Office, Pretrial Services, and the Marshals Service. Judge Renee Marie Bumb presided over a Mock Trial. The program concluded with pizza for everyone.

Law Day

The celebration of Law Day took place on May 1, 2015 with events in many courts. The District of the Virgin Islands hosted a Jury Poster Contest. High school students in private, public, and parochial schools were given the opportunity to submit a jury poster depicting the concept of **Legal System + Community = Jury**. The 2015 Law Day theme was the *Magna Carta: Symbol of Freedom Under the Law*. The District Court embraced the opportunity to focus on the importance of the jury process and to create a consciousness and willingness to serve as jurors. The first place winners received a 16 GB iPad Mini and second place winners received a Kindle Fire. The winning posters were displayed in the Jury Assembly Rooms of the Courthouses in each of the respective Divisions.

In the Western District of Pennsylvania, Judge Nora Barry Fischer hosted a naturalization ceremony with Judge Cathy Bissoon in Pittsburgh. Judge Fisher also attended the “grand opening” of a new Immigration office named in honor of Leslie Sabo, local winner of the Medal of Honor who was killed during the Vietnam War.

Judge Karen M. Williams from the District of New Jersey partnered with Judges from Camden County Superior Court to celebrate Law Day with students of Camden County Technical High School in Pennsauken, New Jersey. The program was entitled – *Law Day 2015 Magna Carta: Symbol of Freedom Under Law – 800 Years Since Runnymede*.

In the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Judge Cynthia Rufe hosted high school students at the Byrne Courthouse in Philadelphia to discuss the Elonis case and focus on teen cyberbullying. Judge Lawrence F. Stengel, the Elonis presiding trial judge, led one group of students in the Reading Courthouse and Judge Jeffrey L. Schmehl led another class (from Reading and Antietam High Schools). Judges James Knoll Garner, Joseph F. Leeson Jr., and Henry S. Perkins also hosted two schools in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Also on Law Day, Judges Harvey Bartle, III, John R. Padova, Mitchell S. Goldberg, M. Faith Angell, Lynne A. Sitarski, Richard A. Lloret, and Elizabeth T. Hey hosted 150 students in Philadelphia. The students were selected from schools in Philadelphia and the suburban counties. Attorneys from the U.S. Attorneys’ Office, Defender Association, CJA Panel, and private practice volunteered to support the event. County Bar Associations provided boxed lunches to all participants.

The EDPA also held a Law Day Naturalization Ceremony, with Judge Rufe presiding. The ceremony was attended by students from the William Penn Charter School. A guest speaker offered remarks about the Magna Carta and the rule of law in American society.

ACE Program

On May 29, 2015, the Advancing Civics Education (ACE) program, in conjunction with The Rendell Center for Civics and Civic Engagement, held its Culminating event at the Byrne Courthouse in Philadelphia. The high school students participated in a mock grand jury deliberation of *Commonwealth v. Peter Minsky*. Philadelphia Police Officers from the 19th district also participated in the event. A representative from the NCC led the students in an interactive program on the Bill of Rights.

Anniversary of the Magna Carta

June 15, 2015 marked the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta. As mentioned earlier, the District of the Virgin Islands selected the anniversary of the Magna Carta as the theme for its Law Day celebration. The Western District of Pennsylvania presented an entertaining performance by members of the Honorable Amy Reynolds Hay American Inn of Court. Held in the Pittsburgh Federal Courthouse, Inn members recreated historical figures central to the creation of the Magna Carta and its application in the United States. Presented as four historical vignettes, from the genesis of the Magna Carta in 1215 through 16th Century England and America from 1787 to the present, the performers led the audience through a discussion of the events of the day and how the precedents established by the Magna Carta continue to resonate in our country and beyond.

Following the program, a reception hosted by Inn members provided participants the opportunity to meet attorney performers and view various publications about the Magna Carta, which were provided by the Pittsburgh branch of the Third Circuit Library.

Constitution Day

The District of New Jersey hosted their Fourth Annual Constitution Day Mock Trial Program on October 15, 2015. Students from Atlantic City High School and Rutgers Undergraduate Program presented a scripted Mock Trial - "*The First Amendment and Freedom of Expression.*" The program began with a welcome by Chief Judge Jerome B. Simandle, followed by a question and answer session lead by Judge Jerrold N. Poslusny Jr. The Mock Trials were conducted by Judges Robert B. Kugler and Renee Marie Bumb. The program ended with a brown bag lunch and student summaries of the Mock Trial experience.

Veterans Day

In the District of New Jersey, Judge Douglas E. Arpert, and Rafael Torres, a Court Analyst, attended a Veterans Day Event at the Joyce Kilmer Middle School in Trenton on November 11, 2015. Judge Arpert and Mr. Torres swore in leaders of the student government and participated in the celebration honoring local Veterans.

Courthouse Tour and School Visits

The Western District of Pennsylvania hosted a tour of the Pittsburgh Federal Courthouse for 50 patrons from the Mattress Factory, a contemporary art museum located in Pittsburgh. This group of art enthusiasts was given a behind-the-scenes look at courthouse art and architecture.

In the District of New Jersey, Chief Judge Simandle and Judge Karen M. Williams in conjunction with members of the Burlington County Bar Association visited Shawnee and Pemberton Township High Schools for a presentation about the Fourth Amendment as it relates to the school environment.

In the District of New Jersey (Newark), Judge Esther Salas hosted the annual Hispanic Bar Association Passaic Pipeline Program, where students from the Passaic High School are invited to observe court proceedings followed by a question and answer period.

The District of New Jersey (Newark) annually hosts the Rutgers School of Law (Newark) Minority Student Program. Judge Esther Salas hosted the incoming class for a day of courtroom observation followed by a question and answer session.

Judge Claire C. Cecchi of the District of New Jersey (Newark) annually hosts a mock trial for sixth graders from Essex Fells School. This year's trial was held over breakfast and the topic was cyber bullying. The students presented openings, closings, and performed full witness examinations, in addition to serving on the jury. The students learned about the history of the federal judiciary and federal procedure from various attorneys and Judge Cecchi. They participated in an interactive presentation with one of the Court's Deputy Marshals where they learned about the role of the U.S. Marshals Service. The students competed in a game of legal Jeopardy to test what they learned throughout the day.

Reading Programs and Mock Trials

During the week of March 2, 2015, several Judges from the District of New Jersey read their "favorite" books to students at Howard R. Yokum Elementary School for the school's *Distinguished Readers Week* program. On July 24, 2015 the Philadelphia Reads Summer Camp visited the Byrne Courthouse in Philadelphia. The elementary school students engaged in a mock trial based on *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Judges Marjorie O. Rendell and Cheryl Ann Krause presided over the mock trials. Over 150 students attended from three camps.

On November 24, 2015, Judge Joel Schneider presided over students at the Leap Academy's rendering of the criminal case described in a mock trial "*To Kill a Mocking Bird*." This student rendering received tremendous accolades and was featured in several news articles. Judge Noel L. Hillman also coached the Moorestown High School Mock Trial Team. In addition, Newark held their own Mock Trial Program with Magistrate Judge Michael Hammer presiding over the mock trial.

Bankruptcy Education

On December 3, 2015, the Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania delivered an outreach program for high school students titled “*Credit & the Bankruptcy Court: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Student Finances.*” This event provided a forum for students to learn more about pertinent financial issues challenging students such as debt, long-term implications of student loans, responsible use of credit, and student budgeting. The students also met with bankruptcy judges and attorneys who provided an overview of the role of the bankruptcy courts in the federal judicial system. Judge Carlota M. Bohm designed the program to address the need for today’s students and young adults to consider financial choices to prepare them for the future.

Special Events

In the District of New Jersey (Newark), Judge Esther Salas spoke to Women in Government at the Westwood in Garfield, NJ in April, as well as to Women in Law Enforcement at their annual luncheon in May.

Law School for Journalists

Judges Marjorie O. Rendell, D. Brooks Smith, Cheryl Ann Krause, and Circuit Executive, Margaret A. Wiegand are actively engaged in planning a one day program – Law School for Journalists - slated for Fall 2016 at the National Constitution Center. Journalists will leave this interactive program with a “toolkit” to enhance press coverage of the federal courts and the judiciary. Judges will gain insight into the “life of a journalist”, and journalists will better understand the responsibilities of a judge.