



**MINNESOTA  
JUDICIAL  
BRANCH**

**First Judicial District**

**Mission:** To provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.

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The First Judicial District has 36 judges and more than 250 staff that handle nearly 150,000 cases annually in the counties of Carver, Dakota, Goodhue, Le Sueur, McLeod, Scott and Sibley.

# The First Edition

A Newsletter about the First Judicial District of the State of Minnesota

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## Carver County Judicial Center Implements Weapons Screening

By Vicky Carlson, Carver County Court Administrator



*L to R: Carver County Commissioners: Randy Maluchnik, James Ische, Tom Workman, Tim Lynch, and Gayle Degler; Sheriff Jim Olson; Judge Michael Wentzell; and Carver County Attorney Mark Metz*

prompted a number of courts, including Carver County, to express concern for the safety and welfare of those working and conducting business in its courts.

"I recall an incident," said Vicky Carlson, Carver County Court Administrator, "where a victim came to the courthouse to apply for an order for protection and the alleged abuser followed her into the building. After a heated exchange, the individual ran out to his car and back in to the court. The clerk immediately called 911 for assistance. We had no idea if the individual was going to his car for a weapon, but we couldn't take the chance." At that time there was nothing to prevent someone from bringing a weapon into the courthouse.

There are very few individuals who are happy to be in court. Many are coming to court to settle a family

We have all heard about the courthouse incidents that make the news media. There have been numerous incident of violence in our nation's courts over the last decade. The shooting at the Cook County Courthouse in northern Minnesota

## Inside

- 1—2 **Carver County Judicial Center Implements Weapons Screening**
- 2—4 **Dan Beeson, Wayne Jagow, Lloyd Moosbrugger, Bob Morris and Jerome Wickert Receive First Judicial District Amicus Curiae Award**
- 4 **Case Documents Now Viewable on Courthouse Terminals**
- 5 **Judge McCarthy Receives Community Ally Award**
- 6 **Beau Berentson Named Director of Communications and Public Affairs**
- 6—7 **Judicial Branch's eCourtMN Initiative Wins Innovation Award**
- 8 **Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) Recommendations for the 113th Congress**

*(Continued on page 2)*

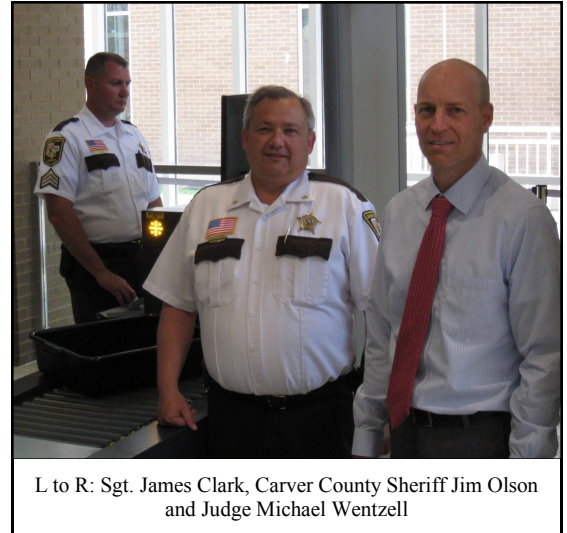
*Weapons Screening (Cont. from page 1)*

dispute, to appear before a judge on a traffic or criminal case, to litigate a contractual issue, or because their parental rights are in jeopardy. "Due to the importance of these matters, emotions can and often do run high," said Judge Michael Wentzell. "These citizens deserve a safe place for this important business to take place."

The Carver County Commissioners agreed and "demonstrated its commitment to courthouse safety through implementation of weapons screening," said Judge Michael Wentzell. On May 12, 2014, point-of-entry weapons screening was unveiled at the

Carver County Justice Center.

Carver County became the last of seven Twin Cities metro-area counties to install courthouse weapons screening at its main courthouse facilities. To accommodate weapons screening, a half million dollar expansion to the lobby was necessary. The weapons screening area is similar to those at airports. The entrance has a walk-through metal detector and baggage X-ray machine screen for weapons. The



L to R: Sgt. James Clark, Carver County Sheriff Jim Olson and Judge Michael Wentzell

weapons screening area is staffed by the Carver County Sheriff's Office.

## Dan Beeson, Wayne Jagow, Lloyd Moosbrugger, Bob Morris and Jerome Wickert Receive First Judicial District Amicus Curiae Award

The First Judicial District presented its fourth annual Amicus Curiae Award to Dan Beeson, Wayne Jagow, Lloyd Moosbrugger, Bob Morris, and Jerome Wickert on June 12, 2014. The Amicus Curiae Award, meaning Friend of the Court, is an annual recognition of attorneys and others who have provided exceptional service, leadership or other contributions to assist the courts in the

First Judicial District discharge their constitutional responsibility for the administration of justice. Beeson, Jagow, and Moosbrugger were nominated by First District Judge Michael Mayer for their leadership and efforts on the First District Ethics Committee. Morris and Wickert were nominated by First District Judge Karen Asphaug for their

contributions to the Dakota County Adult Drug Court.

Dan Beeson is a partner with the law firm of Levander, Gillen & Miller, P.A. in South St. Paul. Representation of property owners in eminent domain litigation is his area of practice. Representative clients include national, regional and local corporations and

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Amicus Award (Continued from page 2)*

businesses, as well as individuals, involving complex total and partial taking condemnation cases.

He has been recognized as a Super Lawyer in eminent domain practice area from 2006 to 2014, as

well as listed among the Top 100 Attorneys in Minnesota. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Eminent Domain Institute (MEDI). Mr. Beeson was appointed as the Chair of the First District Ethics Committee by the Minnesota Supreme Court on September 1, 2008, and has served as a member of the First District Ethics Committee for over twenty-five years. "Dan's service to the legal community and particularly to the Ethics Committee has been invaluable," said Mayer. "His willingness to get out front and do his best to improve the image of lawyers and the court system is a tremendous asset to the members of the bar and the Court."

Wayne Jagow has been in private practice in Burnsville, Minnesota since 1988. He is a former president of the

First District Bar Association and has served on the First District Ethics



Committee since 2001. He has been recently recognized as a North Star Lawyer for providing legal services for individuals who otherwise could not afford counsel. Mr. Jagow continues to participate in the Dakota County Legal Assistance volunteer attorney program and as a volunteer at the Dakota Family Court Self-Help Center. Mayer noted, "Wayne has dedicated countless hours to the Ethics Committee and his other volunteer activities. His willingness to serve and help those in need makes him a natural recipient for this award."

Lloyd Moosbrugger began practicing law in 1958. He was in private practice doing general civil litigation until 1963. Beginning in 1963 and continuing through 1996, he was an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Minnesota. His area of expertise was,

and continues to be, eminent domain. Mr. Moosbrugger is a Past President of the District 16 Bar Association (Big Stone County) as well as a Past President of the First District Bar Association. He has served as the Director of the International Right of Way Association where his expertise in eminent domain was vital. Mr. Moosbrugger has served faithfully and continuously on the First District Ethics Committee of the Minnesota State Bar Association since approximately 1974. He chaired that committee from 1974 through 2008. "Lloyd has been a dedicated and diligent servant to the legal community and the public since 1974," said Mayer. "His leadership on the Ethics Committee has helped numerous attorneys find resolution with clients."

Bob Morris served in the U.S. Army in World War II and went on to run a successful publishing company. He spent over 20 years in the publishing business and upon the later stage of retirement began volunteering for the newly established Dakota County Adult Drug Court program in 2008. Mr. Morris has helped numerous adult drug court participants throughout the past six years. He established an Alcoholics

*(Continued on page 4)*



*Amicus Award (Cont. from page 3)*

Anonymous (AA) meeting held to engage and educate new participants on the concepts of AA and sobriety. Mr. Morris has transported clients to appointments such as court and dental appointments, and he makes himself available for coffee, late night talks, and has opened his home to many participants. He volunteers weekly and has been instrumental in the drug court program's

philosophy of taking a holistic approach to changing lives.

Jerome Wickert worked in the construction industry and trades for over 20 years before his semi-retirement status brought him to begin volunteering for the Dakota County Adult Drug Court program in 2011. His commitment and leadership in hosting a weekly Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting has contributed significantly to the program.

Mr. Wickert's ability to look at the positive qualities of the participants, along with his quick wit, has been indispensable. The drug court program would not be what it is today without the dedication of volunteers like Mr. Wickert.

Past recipients of the Amicus Curiae Award are: Liz Reppe, Dana McKenzie, Merlyn Meinerts, Mary Freyberg, the law firm of Lindquist & Vennum, Sharon Freiling, and Karissa Richardson.

## Case Documents Now Viewable on Courthouse Terminals

Members of the public are now able to view case documents on public access terminals in all Minnesota state courthouses, regardless of which district court the documents were filed in.

"Increasing public access to case records is one of the key goals of our move to electronic case records," said State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba.

Since 2007, the general public has had

access to the registers of actions in cases through courthouse terminals and via the



Judicial Branch website. That service allows people to find information about a case such as the names of the parties and attorneys; a list of case events, including

hearings; and a list of documents that have been filed.

District courts are currently converting documents in all active cases to digital images. The images are stored in the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), which is accessible through the courthouse terminals. Confidential and sealed case documents are not available through this new service. The effort is part of the Judicial Branch's eCourtMN Initiative.

Documents can also be viewed at the State Law Library in St. Paul, MN.

## Judge McCarthy Receives Community Ally Award



*L to R: Brenda Sharp, Sibley County Attorney Victim Witness Advocate, Renita Robinson, CADA Executive Director, Judge Thomas McCarthy, Erin Kissner, CADA Advocate and Sara Neidecker, CADA Advocate*

The Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA) presented Judge Thomas McCarthy with its first annual Community Ally Award at their annual breakfast on April 25. This award recognizes a person who demonstrates outstanding service to survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault, including improving services for survivors or fostering fair and respectful treatment of survivors.

Erin Kissner, CADA Victim Advocate for Sibley and Brown County, nominated Judge McCarthy for this recognition. She observed, "In his work both on and off

the bench, Judge McCarthy displays exceptional service to survivors of domestic and sexual violence. In the last year, Judge McCarthy has been instrumental in getting the MENDING Project started in Sibley County. He has been able to get area community groups, such as the Knights of Columbus and area Masons, to see the necessity of helping survivors and assisting in getting the MENDING Project off the ground. Judge McCarthy also shows care and compassion for survivors from his role as district court judge. His friendly and calm

demeanor from the bench helps survivors to feel more relaxed when having to confront their abusers in OFF hearings."

In his remarks, Judge McCarthy noted that does not always rule in favor of victims of domestic or sexual assault, as his oath as judge must take priority. McCarthy also noted that if we are to seriously reduce the number of victims entering the system the men of our society must take a stand to stop this type of violence. "That is why it is the men in Sibley County that are taking the forefront in the MENDING Project," noted McCarthy. He acknowledged the support of CADA, as well as Brenda Sharp, Victim Witness Coordinator for the Sibley County Attorney's office, in the effort to establish the MENDING Project in Sibley County.

CADA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is providing safety and support to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault through education, advocacy and shelter. CADA provides services in eight counties in southern Minnesota.

## Beau Berentson Named Director of Communications and Public Affairs



Beau Berentson

Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea and Minnesota State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba have announced that Beau Berentson will be the new Director of Communications and Public Affairs for the Judicial Branch, effective May 21, 2014. He will replace John Kostouros, who retired in January 2014.

This selection comes after a national search that produced a deep pool of applicants.

Berentson's experience includes nearly a decade of service at the Minnesota Legislature, with his last position there being the Director of Communications and Media Relations at the Minnesota State Senate. He currently serves as a policy analyst and lobbyist for the Association of Minnesota Counties, where his role is focused on

communicating the interests of local governments to state officials through direct lobbying, legislative testimony, and written communication.

"Beau brings to the position exceptional communication skills, with a proven ability to develop effective external and internal strategic communications," said Shorba. "His work at the Legislature and with local units of government will also significantly help the Judicial Branch maintain our relationships with these important partners."

Berentson received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and his Master's Degree in Advocacy and Political Leadership from the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

## Judicial Branch's eCourtMN Initiative Wins Innovation Award

A multi-year project to improve the efficiency of Minnesota's courts by replacing paper-based court files with an electronic information environment has been awarded a 2014 State Government Innovation Award. The eCourtMN Initiative, an effort of the

Minnesota Judicial Branch, will be recognized as one of ten State Government Innovation Award winners by the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs during a ceremony on Thursday, August 7.

"The eCourtMN Initiative is the largest transformation in the 150-year history of Minnesota's Judicial Branch," said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Lorie S. Gildea. "This initiative will produce efficiencies in our court system and increase on-demand

*(Continued on page 7)*



*Innovation Award (Cont. from page 6)*

access to information for the public and our justice partners. This project represents true innovation and redesign in state government, and we are honored to have this recognition.”

The eCourtMN Initiative began in 2011, and is being completed in four phases, each lasting approximately one year. The initiative will transform the state’s court system by replacing paper-based court files with an electronic information environment that will allow electronic filing, service, and transfer of court documents. Through eCourtMN, court documents will be filed and served electronically, while judges and court staff will be given new tools to review, sign, and process court documents on their computers. Through this process, the delivery, processing, and transfer of court documents will be done almost entirely electronically, producing considerable efficiencies in court operations and faster results for court customers.

In addition, the move to electronic court records has made it easier for the public to access certain court documents without



having to travel to county courthouses to view paper documents.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has completed the first two phases of the initiative, including an 11-county pilot project where electronic filing and service of court documents was tested

and refined. The Branch is currently testing the electronic tools that judges and court staff will use in the courthouse, and will begin the process of expanding electronic filing and service of court documents to the rest of Minnesota’s 87 counties next summer. A full, statewide transition to eCourtMN is expected by the end of 2015.

“While we are still in the early stages of eCourtMN, we are already seeing significant benefits for the court system, our customers, and the public” said Minnesota State Court Administrator Jeff Shorba. “We have realized efficiencies in our 11 pilot counties, and we have made it faster and easier for our customers to file court documents and gain access to court records. The eCourtMN Initiative is modernizing Minnesota courts while making our justice system more efficient and transparent.”

The 2014 State Government Innovation Awards are sponsored by the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center. The award is designed to “recognize the great work of state government agencies and encourage an environment of experimentation and innovation in Minnesota.” An award ceremony will be held on Thursday, August 7, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Minnesota History Center. More information on the award and the ceremony can be found at <http://sgia.umn.edu/>.

More information on the eCourtMN Initiative can be found at <http://www.mncourts.gov/ecourtmn>.

**About the Minnesota Judiciary**

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is made up of 10 judicial districts with 289 district court judgeships, 19 Court of Appeals judges, and seven Supreme Court justices. The Judicial Branch is governed by the Judicial Council, which is chaired by Lorie S. Gildea, Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. The Minnesota Judicial Branch is mandated by the Minnesota Constitution to resolve disputes promptly and without delay. In 2013, there were more than 1.4 million cases filed in district courts in Minnesota. For more information please visit [www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov).



## Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) Recommendations for the 113th Congress

Recently Minnesota’s Juvenile Justice Advisory Commission (JJAC), along with JJAC members from across the country, met with Congressional Representatives in Washington D.C. to advocate for:



- Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act
- Restoration of Appropriations for Juvenile Justice Programs
- Building on proven strategies to increase school engagement and success for all youth and prevent the conflation of school discipline policy and juvenile justice sanctions, also known as the “school to prison pipeline”

Juvenile Justice funding across the Nation has taken a tremendous hit over the past 10 years. Minnesota, for example, has seen federal funding decrease from approximately 6.2 million dollars in 2003 to less than \$500,000 for this year. The impact on juvenile justice programs has been devastating. Minnesota’s Juvenile Justice Advisory



*L to R: Attorney Hao Nguyen, Judge Michael Mayer and Chaska Police Chief Scott Knight*

Committee has been working to educate our Congressional Delegation on the impact that these cuts have had.



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