

Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Court

2023 ANNUAL

REPORT



County of Kane
State of Illinois



Office of the Chief Judge



37W777 IL RT 38, Suite 400A

St. Charles, IL



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Looking Ahead to 2024

MISSION, VISION, & CORE VALUES

Mission

To maintain an accessible, fair, and impartial court system, which resolves disputes in a timely and efficient manner while strengthening public trust.

Vision

We strive to be leaders within the Judicial Branch by:

- Providing the highest quality of services to all.
- Treating everyone with courtesy, dignity, empathy, and respect.
- Embracing and reflecting the diversity in our community.
- Anticipating, adapting, and responding to the needs of our community.



Core Values

FAIR

We are impartial, act without bias, and treat all people equally.

PROFESSIONAL

We treat everyone with dignity and respect.

TIMELY

We provide services and resolve legal matters in a timely and efficient manner.

EFFECTIVE

We use practices and programs that achieve effective outcomes for court participants and the community.

COLLABORATIVE

We are inclusive and work together to achieve mutual goals.

INNOVATIVE

We are proactive, creative, and experiment with new ways to enhance performance and outcomes.

ACCOUNTABLE

We are responsible for our conduct and performance and use public resources prudently and responsibly.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUDGE



Honorable Robert Villa
Circuit Judge

2023 The 16th Judicial Circuit Continues Its Progress

There are days we look forward to and days that we look back on.

In the following pages, we do a bit of both.

Every year the 16th Circuit faces new challenges and takes on new opportunities that require teamwork and commitment to complete. 2023 was no exception. I became the Chief Judge in December 2023 and have inherited the great work done by immediate-past Chief Judge Hull, our judges, judicial staff, and judicial partners throughout 2023.

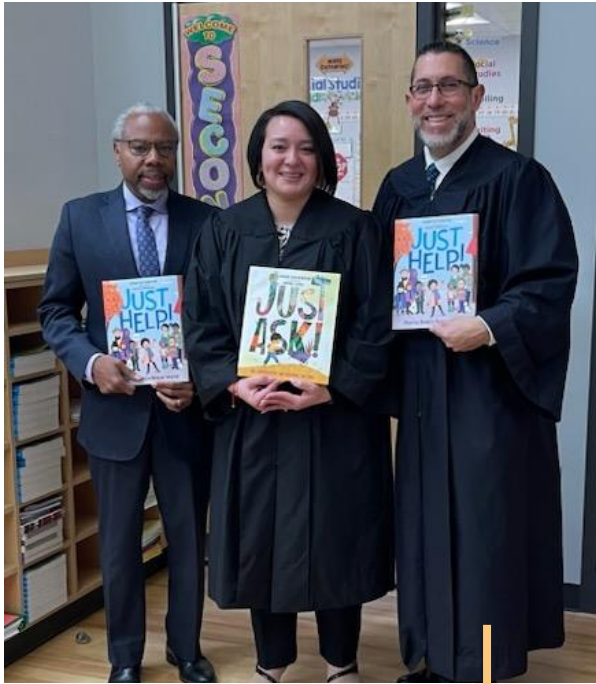
We can look back on our successful implementation of the SAFE-T Act; creating a real-time, publicly available information dashboard to promote community awareness; completing several Judicial Center construction projects that improve the public's courthouse experience; and expanding our specialty courts to include DUI treatment court — just to name a few.

We can look forward to further implementing our Strategic Plan, renovation and improvements at the Third Street Courthouse, continued technology improvements in all our courthouses, and tackling the unknown challenges the year ahead always brings.

Please take a moment to review our annual report to learn about the outstanding work performed by the 16th Judicial Circuit in 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Villa". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in the bottom right corner of the page.

2023 in the SPOTLIGHT



February 13
Kane County Judges participate in the Illinois Judges Association’s “Judges Go to School Day”



April 20
Kane County Judges Trivia Night with the Kane County Bar Association

April 28
Kane County Foreclosure Mediation Program ends

May 19
Drug Court spring graduation

June 30
Associate Judge Charles E. Petersen retires

July 5
Lark Cowart is appointed Associate Judge to fill Judge Petersen’s vacancy



March 4
14 high schools participate in the High School Mock Trial Tournament at the Kane County Judicial Center

April 11
Second Appellate Court Justice Donald C. Hudson passes away



July 5
Associate Judge Kimberly DiGiovanni is appointed At-Large Circuit Judge to fill Justice Hudson’s vacancy

July 10
DUI Problem-Solving Specialty Court is launched. Court Services receives a \$130,000 grant



July 19
Kane County Bar Association Softball Tournament, Bar vs Bench

July 24
The Kane County Law Library is awarded a \$30,000 Access to Justice grant

August 9
Tammy Williams of Court Services is awarded Probation and Pretrial Officer of the Year

September 18
Pretrial Fairness Act goes into effect

September 25
Illinois Supreme Court approved the recertification of the Kane County Veterans Treatment Court

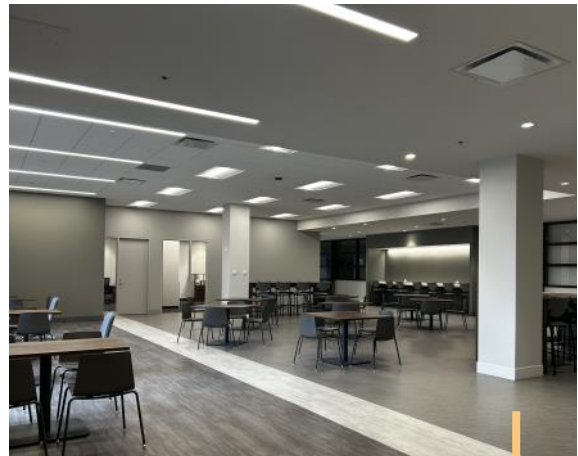
September 26
First year of Strategic Plan Implementation ends

October 5
Drug Court fall graduation

October 10
Lawrence Lobb is appointed Associate Judge to fill Judge Kimberly DiGiovanni's vacancy



October 23
Lisa Aust, Executive Director of Court Services, receives the Illinois Probation and Court Services Association award



October 23
Kane County Judicial Center construction project is completed

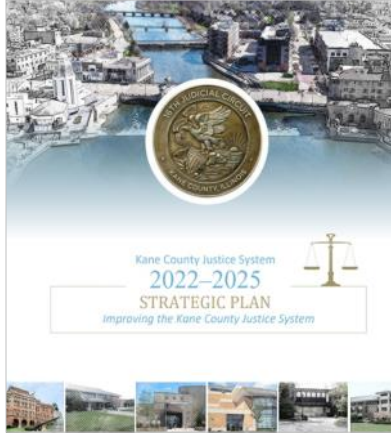
November 2
Judge Lawrence Lobb is sworn in as an Associate Judge by Circuit Judge Joseph Grady



November 2
Judge Lark Cowart is sworn in as an Associate Judge by Circuit Judge Susan Clancy Boles

November 15
Strategic Planning begins second year

December 4
Judge Robert Villa is elected new Chief Judge to serve a three-year term



Kane County Justice System 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

View the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan online at illinois16thjudicialcircuit.org

Introduction

The Justice System Strategic Plan states the goals and policy directions of the Kane County Justice System. These goals and objectives are based on values important to the effective administration of justice in our system for 2022-2025. The plan allows the Justice System to focus the use of efforts and resources toward both perpetuating the values of the court system and continuing to improve the system. The strategic plan guides the priorities and work of the justice system and is defined by our Mission, Vision, and Core Values.

Mission

The Kane County Justice System upholds the law, administers justice, and serves and protects our community.

Vision

We strive to be accessible to all, trusted by all, and responsive to the evolving needs of our communities.

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Core Values

- **FAIR** We are impartial, act without bias, and treat all people equally.
- **PROFESSIONAL** We treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- **TIMELY** We provide services and resolve legal matters in a timely and efficient manner.
- **EFFECTIVE** We use practices and programs that achieve effective outcomes for court participants and the community.
- **COLLABORATIVE** We are inclusive and work together to achieve mutual goals.
- **INNOVATIVE** We are proactive, creative, and explore ways to enhance performance and outcomes.
- **ACCOUNTABLE** We are responsible for our conduct and performance and use public resources prudently and responsibly.

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Kane County Justice System Partners are committed to working together to achieve the goals set forth. Doing so is necessary to ensure the highest quality of justice system services to the people of Kane County. **Judge Hull**



Strategic Focus Areas

The Kane County Justice System Strategic Planning Committee analyzed a myriad of external and internal trends and considered their long-term implications on the Kane County Justice System. External trends data included pandemic, social, demographic, economic, technological, policy, political, and national justice system trends. Internal trends data included crime statistics, arrests, filings, sentencing, recidivism, and probation statistics. Through this analysis, the Strategic Planning Committee identified four strategic focus areas deemed the top issues to be addressed by the committee. Strategic focus areas are internal or external issues fundamentally important to the Kane County Justice System. In the coming years, significant issues must be addressed for the Kane County Justice System to fulfill its mission, work toward the vision, and live its core values.

- **Justice System Infrastructure** - Court Locations, Facilities, and Physical Space, Access to Services, Technology, and Safety and Security
- **Justice System Reform and Continuum of Services and Programs** - SAFE-T Act, and Expanding the use of existing community resources
- **Workforce Excellence** - Recruitment, Retention, and Well-Being of our staff
- **Public Trust and Understanding** - Our commitment is to increase the public's understanding of our justice system and maintain its trust and confidence.

Each strategic focus area includes our complete list of initiatives and goals we would like to see completed or in process between July 2022 and July 2025.

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Highlights of our shared and completed goals accomplished in year 1 included the following:

- Successful implementation of the SAFE-T Act by the Kane County Justice System
- Implementation of a technology installation plan for the court locations in the 16th Judicial Circuit
- The launch of a Legislative Action Committee that actively engages with state and local representatives
- Expansion of the Justice System presence on Social Media and an increase in public access and awareness
- Members of the Strategic Planning Committee have also applied elements of the Operational Plan to their individual offices. 2023 saw a dramatic, circuit-wide increase in incentives and ideas to retain employees and keep their wellness at the forefront of a competitive workforce
- Bringing the employees and families of the Justice System together with Spooktacular, an annual Halloween event pictured below

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As we move into 2024, we continue to utilize the Strategic Plan as a roadmap for improving the Kane County Justice System. We plan to complete:

- The expansion of technology in all 16th Circuit courtrooms
- Incorporate a renewed focus on maximizing the use of our current facilities
- Explore ways to contribute on a system-wide level in Behavioral Health
- Execute a plan to increase our level of involvement in the legislative process
- Continue to focus on how we serve the community and how we recruit and retain the best workforce to make these shared goals a reality

Kane County Justice System Strategic Planning Team Year 2

Hon. Robert Villa Chief Judge	Corrine Pierog Chair, Kane County Board
Hon. Clint Hull Circuit Judge	Hon. Christine Downs Associate Judge
Theresa E. Barreiro Circuit Clerk	Myrna Molina Kane County Board
Rachele Conant Public Defender	Jamie Mosser State’s Attorney
Roger Fahnestock Kane County IT Department Executive Director / Chief Information Officer	Hon. René Cruz Circuit Judge
Andrea O’Brien Court Administrator	Dr. Alexandra Tsang Director of Diagnostic Center, Court Services
Jason Mathis Deputy Court Administrator	Lisa Aust Executive Director, Court Services
Hon. Bianca Camargo Circuit Judge	Ellen Schmid Law Librarian, Kane County Law Library
Hon. Julio César Valdez Associate Judge	Monica Lawrence Chief Information Officer, Circuit Clerk’s Office
Karin Herwick Circuit Clerk’s Office Chief Deputy Clerk / Chief Operations Officer	Kristy Sharpness Operations Liaison / Payroll, Circuit Clerk’s Office
Michael Isaacson Executive Director, Health Department	Charles Lasky Dep. CIO / Chief of Staff, Kane County IT
Kim Bilbrey Attorney Public Defender’s Office	Vincent Coyle Attorney, State’s Attorney’s Office
Pam Bradley Administrative Support, State’s Attorney’s Office	Jessica Orsini State’s Attorney’s Office Deputy Director of Deferred Prosecution Program
Hon. Susan Boles Circuit Judge	Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey Strategic Planning Consultant, PRAXIS Consulting
Hon. Elizabeth Flood Circuit Judge	Julie Mann Director of Public Information Office
Ron Hain Kane County Sheriff	Hon. Julia Yetter Associate Judge
Amy Johnson Kane County Undersheriff	Adam Tedder Project Manager, IT Department
Perparim Osmani Commander of Jail, Sheriff’s Office	

Circuit Judges

Hon. Donald C. Hudson
2nd District
Appellate Court Judge
Passed away 4/11/23

Hon. Robert K. Villa
Elected Chief Judge 12/1/23

Hon. John A. Barsanti
Presiding Judge of the Felony
Division

Hon. Susan Clancy Boles
Presiding Civil Division

Hon. Kevin T. Busch

Hon. Bianca Camargo

Hon. René Cruz
Presiding Judge of the Traffic/
Misdemeanor Division and DUI
Problem-Solving Court

Hon. John G. Dalton

Hon. Kimberly DiGiovanni
Presiding Judge of the Family
Division 12/23; Appointed from
Associate to Circuit Judge on
7/23 to fill Justice Donald C.
Hudson's vacancy

Hon. Elizabeth K. Flood

Hon. Joseph M. Grady

Hon. Clint Hull
Chief Judge ending 11/30/23

Hon. Michael J. Noland

Hon. D.J. Tegeler
Presiding Family Division Judge
until 12/4/23

Hon. Julio César Valdez

KANE COUNTY JUDGES



Overview

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit has 14 Circuit Judges and 17 Associate Judges. In Circuit Courts, there are two types of Judges: Circuit Judges and Associate Judges. Circuit Judges are elected by popular vote for an initial six-year term and may be retained by voters for additional six-year terms.

Circuit Judges

Circuit Judges can hear any circuit court case. Circuit Judges are initially elected either circuit-wide, from the county where they reside or from a sub-circuit within a circuit, depending on the type of vacancy they are filling.

Associate Judges

Circuit Judges appoint and vote to retain Associate Judges for four-year terms. Associate Judges may hear all types of cases, except felony matters, which require special authorization from the Illinois Supreme Court.

Chief Judge

Circuit Judges elect one of their members to serve as Chief Judge. The Chief Judge of the Sixteenth Circuit from 12/1/2019 to 11/30/2023 was the Honorable Clint Hull. The Honorable Robert Villa was elected as Chief Judge and started his three-year term on 12/1/2023.

Notable in 2023

On July 5, Associate Judge Kimberly DiGiovanni was appointed to Justice Donald C. Hudson's Circuit seat after his passing on April 11. In July, Lark Cowart was appointed as Associate Judge to fill Judge Charles E. Petersen's seat after his retirement on June 30. In October, Lawrence Lobb was appointed to Judge Kimberly DiGiovanni's vacancy when she was elevated to Circuit Judge.

KANE COUNTY JUDGES



Honorable Donald C. Hudson
2nd District Appellate Court Judge
Passed away 4/11/2023

Remembering Justice Donald C. Hudson

With a heavy heart, Chief Judge Clint Hull of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit (Kane County) announced the passing of Justice Donald C. Hudson of the Illinois Appellate Court, Second District, on Tuesday, April 11, 2023. Justice Hudson steadily rose through the Kane County legal community ranks, ultimately being assigned by the Illinois Supreme Court in January 2009 as a Justice in the Illinois Appellate Court, Second District. Once assigned, Justice Hudson shared, "It's absolutely the pinnacle of my career." This is a role he held until his death.

His early years

Chicago-born Donald Hudson received his undergraduate degree from DePaul University and Juris Doctorate from John Marshall Law School. What few know is that before going to university, while in high school during the 1960's, Donald Hudson was a rock 'n roller. As lead guitarist in the band Edges of Wisdom, they played to crowds as large as 500 people and even recorded and released a 45 RPM of Hudson's song "That Lonely Road." Though he was always hesitant to speak of his band days, he could not hide the broad smile that would sneak across his face when he did speak of them.

Professional journey begins in Kane County

Nearly a decade after his band days ended, Donald Hudson was hired as an assistant state's attorney in Kane County. Only

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Associate Judges

Hon. Reginald N. Campbell

Hon. M. Lark Cowart
Appointed 7/5/23

Hon. Bradley P. David

Hon. Christine A. Downs

Hon. William G. Engerman

Hon. Keith A. Johnson

Hon. Kathryn D. Karayannis
Presiding Judge of the
Juvenile Division

Hon. David P. Kliment

Hon. Marmarie J. Kostelny
Retired 12/1/23

Hon. Lawrence W. Lobb
Appointed 10/10/23

Hon. Salvatore LoPiccolo Jr.

Hon. Sandra T. Parga

Hon. Charles E. Petersen
Retired 6/30/23

Hon. Mark A. Pheanis

Hon. Divya K. Sarang

Hon. Todd B. Tarter

Hon. Alice C. Tracy

Hon. Julia A. Yetter

KANE COUNTY JUDGES

Justice Donald C. Hudson continued from page 13



Justice Hudson was just as fair, thoughtful, and even-tempered in the trial court as he was on the Appellate bench.

Retired Chief Judge Judith Brawka

one year after that, in 1976, under then State's Attorney Gene Armentrout, he was promoted to the first assistant state's attorney position. He stayed with the Kane County State's Attorney's Office until 1980 when he chose to try his hand at private practice, where he remained for the next thirteen years. April 1993 heralded another promotion for Donald Hudson when he was appointed an associate judge in Kane County. He eventually rose to the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Division. Then, in 1996, he became the only associate judge assigned to hear major felony trials.

Colleagues remember Justice Hudson

Former Kane County State's Attorney Gary Johnson remembers Justice Hudson as an "outstanding trial lawyer. Everyone learned something from him. And he led by example – he wasn't afraid to mix it up in the courtroom." Gary remembers him as "One of the good guys. A wonderful human being." Retired Kane County Chief Judge Judith Brawka, in remembering Justice Hudson, shared, "Sadly, the Kane County Justice system has lost three decades of judicial wisdom with the passing of Justice Don Hudson. As a colleague, he was always supportive of his fellow judges and never hesitated to share his time and knowledge. Justice Hudson was just as fair, thoughtful, and even-tempered in the trial court as he was on the Appellate bench. He did not cre-

ate or tolerate drama in any legal proceedings and demanded no more of the lawyers and parties than he did of himself.

Little-known personal fact

Don was a music trivia genius. So, he would hopefully appreciate this riff on the closing line from "The End" being sung about him - 'And in the end, the respect he was given, was equal to the respect he gave others...' As retired Judge Brawka noted, Justice Hudson lived by his own words. He mentioned in a Chicago Daily Law Bulletin article published on December 18, 2002, "there are two good qualities a judge should have, and that's having respect for yourself, and having respect for those people who appear before you." This philosophy served him well.

Circuit Court Judge and Chief Judge

In December 2000, Judge Hudson was elected as a Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Court Judge. Earlier this same year, the Illinois Committee for Honest Government recognized then Associate Judge Donald C. Hudson for his work on behalf of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit. By 2004, now-Circuit Judge Hudson had risen to be chosen by his fellow Circuit Judges as Chief Judge, who then, in 2006, elected him as Chief for a second term. Under his term as Chief Judge in 2006, Hudson proudly established the Treatment Alternative

Justice Donald C. Hudson continued from page 15

16th Judicial Circuit 2023 Annual Report

KANE COUNTY JUDGES

Justice Donald C. Hudson continued from page 14



He cared deeply about the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit and everyone who worked on its behalf. His impact will be felt for years to come. He will be missed."

Former Chief Judge Clint Hull

Court (Mental Health Court) to help treat people in a more holistic social services nature with addiction and mental health issues, in an effort to keep them out of the jail system and get them back on their feet. In March 2014, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) gave him an award, recognizing his initiative and dedication in creating the Kane County Treatment Alternative Court.

Chief Judge Hull shared his memories of Justice Hudson, "In 1993, my first assignment as a new prosecutor was traffic court, and Judge Hudson

was the judge assigned to the courtroom. I look back at those years, and I am so grateful that Judge Hudson was the first judge I appeared in front of. He was respectful to all those who appeared before him, always prepared, and helpful in teaching me and countless other young attorneys the skills necessary to be successful attorneys. As a Chief Judge, I knew Justice Hudson was only a phone call away if I needed advice. He cared deeply about the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit and everyone who worked on its behalf. His impact will be felt for years to come. He will be missed."

New Associate Judges

Attorneys Lark Cowart and Lawrence Lobb received the most 16th Judicial Circuit judges' votes, qualifying them to fill the positions left by the retirement of Judge Petersen and the elevation of the Honorable Kimberly DiGiovanni to the seat of Circuit Judge left by the passing of Justice Donald C. Hudson.



**Honorable
Lark Cowart**
Associate Judge



**Honorable
Lawrence Lobb**
Associate Judge

Chief Judge Clint Hull expressed his utmost confidence in the selection of Judges Cowart and Lobb for the Kane County associate judge vacancies.

Judges SPOTLIGHT



Judge Clint Hull
Circuit Court Judge
Chief Judge 12/1/2019 - 11/30/23

- Completed his second term as Chief Judge which ended on December 4, 2023.
- Received the John Powers Crowley Award from the Lawyers Assistance Program, given to a member of the judiciary who has contributed to the goals and mission of the Lawyers Assistance Program.
- Received the 2023 President’s Award from the Kane County Chiefs of Police Association in recognition of his outstanding contribution, service, and unparalleled dedication to the Kane County Chiefs of Police Association for his work on the implementation of the SAFE-T Act. Judge Yetter also received this award.
- Invited by the Wisconsin Supreme Court Office of Education to present “Worries of the World Wide Web” program along with Judge Boles, to discuss the problems of cyberbullying, electronic harassment, and sexting; along with the consequences of poor choices when using social media.
- Participated in the Illinois Judges Association’s program, “Judges Go to School Day.”



Judges SPOTLIGHT



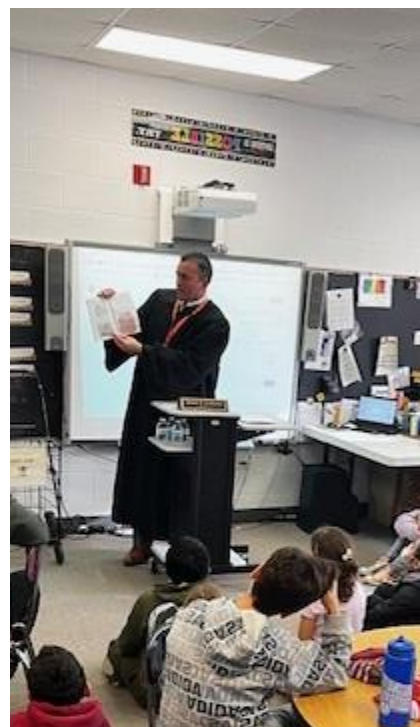
Honorable Sandra Parga
Associate Judge

- Received the 2023 MST Whatever It Takes Award for her dedication to her work, strong interest in youth, and genuine interest in keeping families and communities safe and successful. This recognition is on behalf of the board of directors of MST Services, and is given to individuals within the MST community that have demonstrated outstanding and meritorious service.



Judge Bradley David
Associate Judge

- Serves as the 2nd District Chairperson for the IJA Pro Bono Committee.
- Read to 23 classes in 2 different schools as part of the Illinois Judges Association Reading in Schools initiative.
- Taught domestic violence case concerns for the New Judge's Seminar.
- Volunteered for the High School Mock Trial Tournament where 14 local teams competed.



Judges SPOTLIGHT

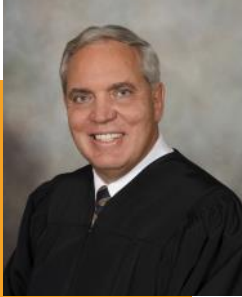


**Honorable
Keith Johnson**
Associate Judge

- Serves on the Board of Directors for the Illinois Judges Association and on the In School Programs Committee for the IJA.
- Participated in the Illinois Judges Association’s “Judges Go to School Day” where judges visit local elementary schools to read a books to students to promote the importance of reading and talked with them about the court system.
- Taught the Domestic Violence course to new judges at the state-wide New Judge Orientation in Chicago.
- Sat on a Judges’ Panel at the AAML (American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers) Illinois Annual Seminar for Experienced Matrimonial Lawyers.
- Presented “Worries of the World Wide Web” at local middle schools discussing the problems of cyberbullying, electronic harassment, and sexting; along with the consequences of poor choices when using social media.
- Volunteered as a judge for college and high school mock trial tournaments.



Judges SPOTLIGHT

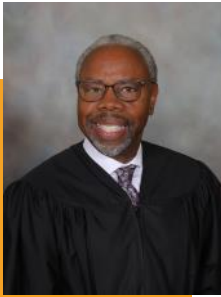


Judge John Dalton
Circuit Court Judge

- Worked on a first-in-the-nation Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) program for eviction cases.
- Participated in the Illinois Judges Association’s “Judges Go to School Day” where judges visited local elementary schools to read a books to students to promote the importance of reading and talked with them about the court system.
- Volunteered for the High School Mock Trial Tournament where 14 local teams competed.
- Regularly administers the oath of office to elected officials.



Judges SPOTLIGHT



**Judge
Reginald Campbell**
Associate Judge



- Received the Partner’s in Peace Award from the Community Crisis Center at the 33rd Annual Partners in Peace Awards Breakfast. Judge Campbell was selected as an individual who has provided outstanding service to victims of domestic and sexual violence and their children.
- Volunteered for the High School Mock Trial Tournament where 14 local teams competed.



**Judge
Michael Noland**
Circuit Judge



- Participated in the Illinois Judge’s Association’s “Judges Go to School Day,” where judges visited local elementary schools to read books to students, promoting the importance of reading and talking to them about the court system.
- Volunteered with other judges from the 16th Circuit at the Northern Illinois Food Bank to put their shoulders to the task of helping to feed those in need.
- Volunteered for the Collegiate Mock Trials where 18 college teams competed in Kane County.

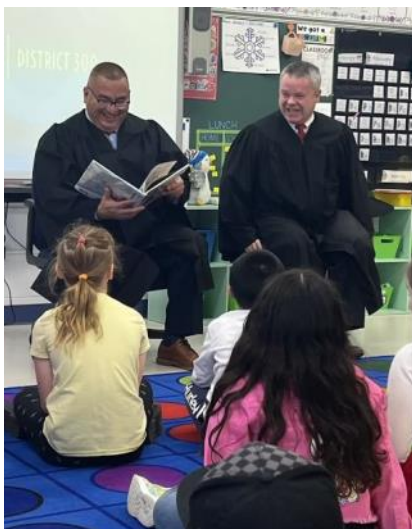


Judges SPOTLIGHT

“

When the judges of the 16th Circuit are not on the bench, you can find them participating in a variety of heart-centered community activities. Judges are often spotted administering the oaths of office to elected officials, officiating wedding ceremonies, swearing in their newly elected or appointed colleagues, teaching at judicial conferences, visiting school classrooms, judging Mock trial competitions, and volunteering at local food banks.

Judge Hull



SAFE-T ACT SPOTLIGHT



**Honorable
Julia Yetter**
Associate Judge



**Honorable
Clint Hull**
Circuit Judge

SAFE-T Act goes live!

On September 18, 2023, the SAFE-T (Safety, Accountability, Fairness, and Equity-Today) Act went into effect. The SAFE-T Act mandated many changes in the criminal justice system, but none were more impactful than the elimination of cash bail. The SAFE-T Act was originally signed into law in February of 2021 but didn't go into effect until September of 2023, giving Kane County time to prepare for its implementation.

To prepare the 16th Circuit for those changes, Chief Judge Clint Hull created the Kane County SAFE-T Act Task Force and appointed Associate Judge Julia Yetter as its chairperson. The task force, comprised of members from the State's Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Court Services, Circuit Clerk's Office, Sheriff's Department, community-based services, and local police departments, as well as the judiciary and court administration, met biweekly beginning in January of 2022 and continued throughout the next year-and-a-half working toward the development of a system that would implement those changes required to the current bail bond system. This group spent countless hours working together and in subcommittees to identify the areas that required change and then to develop policy and procedure to implement those changes.

As a result of the hard work and collaboration by its members, the task force developed new policy and procedures to implement the no cash bail system, created all of the new forms required to be used by law enforcement and the courts, as well as created training materials for the judicial and community partners who would be involved in the operation of the new system. In addition, Courtroom 005 was dedicated to hearing only SAFE-T Act cases.

Between September 18 and December 31, 2023, approximately 930 cases were heard by the judiciary in Room 005. Domestic violence cases accounted for almost 31% of the cases heard. To ensure the public had the most up-to-date information, a dashboard was created and posted on the court's website to keep the public informed. "The goal of the dashboard is to push out to the public real-time information collected on defendants, cases, and court orders to show how the moving parts related to the SAFE-T Act are working here in Kane County," said Judge Hull.

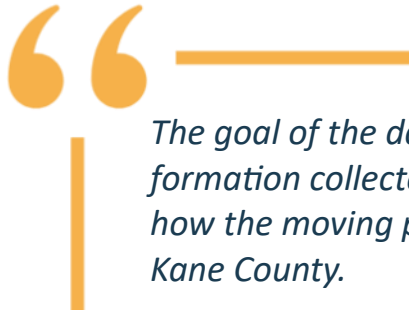
In January of 2024, the SAFE-T Act Task Force met again in subcommittees and as a group to conduct a first-quarter review of the procedure implemented. A review confirmed that due to the commitment and cooperation of the many judicial

continued on page 23

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partners and law enforcement agencies involved, the system developed was working well, and only a minor change to the data collection process to provide additional information to the public via the dashboard on the court’s website was recommended. The Task Force members remain com-

mitted to ensuring that the 16th Circuit continues to carry out the mandates of the SAFE-T Act effectively.



The goal of the dashboard is to push out to the public real-time information collected on defendants, cases, and court orders to show how the moving parts related to the SAFE-T Act are working here in Kane County.

Judge Hull



Kane Court Partners

Illinois 16th Judicial Circuit

SAFE-T Act Data from 12/01/2023 to 12/31/2023

The data and graphics displayed on this page are current as of 2/27/2024 10:00:19 PM.

This data is refreshed daily to include new case filings from the past 24 hours with an initial appearance in courtroom 005.

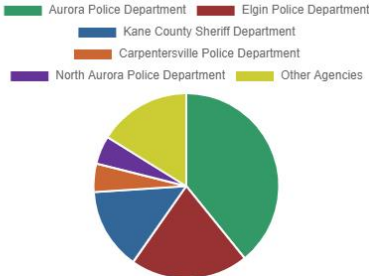
The SAFE-T Act went into effect on 9/18/2023, and data collection began on that date.

Effective 11/1/2023, this page will also include initial appearance data from served probable cause warrants that are processed under the SAFE-T Act.

Filter Data Based on:

Agency: Start Date: End Date:

Arresting Agency



Aurora Police Department	143
Elgin Police Department	75
Kane County Sheriff Department	52
Carpentersville Police Department	18
North Aurora Police Department	18
Other Agencies	59

[Show More](#)

The SAFE-T Act dashboard is available at <https://kanecourt.org/safe-t-act>

COURT OVERVIEW

The 16th Judicial Circuit is a single county circuit comprised of Kane County

Article VI, the Judicial Article of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, provides for a unified, three-tiered judiciary consisting of the Supreme Court, Appellate Courts, and Circuit Courts.

The Illinois Supreme Court is the highest court in the State. The Illinois Supreme Court is comprised of seven Justices, three from the First Appellate Judicial District and one from the four remaining Appellate Judicial Districts.

The Illinois Appellate Court is the second tier of the judiciary. The Appellate Court is divided into five Judicial Districts. The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit and five other circuits are grouped together to form the Second Judicial District of the Appellate Court.

Circuit Courts, also known as trial courts, are the first tier of the judiciary. The State of Illinois is divided into 24 Judicial Circuits, including our Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, which is a single county circuit comprised of Kane County.

The Circuit Court is a court of general jurisdiction, which means it has original jurisdiction in all matters except those limited cases in which the Supreme Court has original jurisdiction. Trial courts hear a wide variety of civil and criminal cases ranging from small claims and evictions to family/domestic relations and criminal felonies.

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There are six courthouses in Kane County

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit consists of six court locations: two main courthouses, juvenile court, and three branch courts.

Different case types are heard at each location:

- The Kane County Courthouse hears Civil, Arbitration, Chancery, Small Claims, Probate, and Foreclosure matters.
- The Kane County Judicial Center hears Family, Felony, Domestic Violence, Driving Under the Influence (DUI), Treatment Alternative and Drug Rehabilitation cases.
- The Kane County Juvenile Justice Center hears Juvenile Delinquency and Abuse & Neglect cases.
- The Kane Branch Court, the Aurora Branch Court, and the Elgin Branch Court hear Traffic, Misdemeanor, Petty Offenses, and Ordinance.

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Kane County Courthouse
100 S. Third Street
Geneva, Illinois 60134

Kane County Judicial Center
37W777 Route 38
St. Charles, Illinois 60175



Kane County Juvenile Justice Center
37W655 Route 38
St. Charles, Illinois 60175



Kane County Branch Court
530 S. Randall Road
St. Charles, Illinois 60174



Aurora Branch Court
1200 East Indian Trail Road
Aurora, Illinois 60505



Elgin Branch Court
150 Dexter Court
Elgin, Illinois 60120

COURT DIVISIONS



Honorable Susan Clancy Boles
Presiding Judge Civil Division

Civil Division

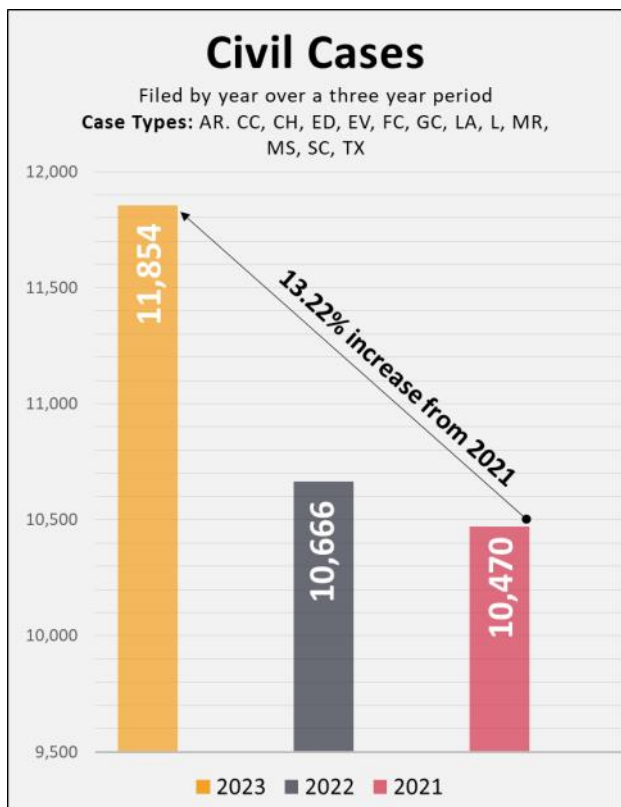
The Civil Division remains busy and is current with no backlogs in trials or any residual slowdown as we fully emerged from all pandemic protocols in 2023. All courtrooms have remote proceeding capabilities, and we continue to develop ways to increase the efficiency of the Division overall with our judges' use of hybrid court calls and balancing the use of technology with a dedication to in-person appearances.

We continue to upgrade the technology and systems in the old courthouse. We have installed and are utilizing smart court technology in most of the civil courtrooms, which provides an accurate record of courtroom proceedings. Additional wiring has been installed to allow for better and more accurate remote court proceeding capabilities, greater bandwidth, and an expansion of electronic recording. In addition, many of the courtrooms and hallways in the old courthouse are getting a much-needed fresh coat of plaster and paint.

The Civil Division is also engaged in a pilot online dispute resolution program. Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) guides parties step-by-step through a web-based process to resolve disputes as quickly as possible. This system works to resolve some of the most common and time-consuming landlord/tenant disputes with greater ease and favorable outcomes. The goal is to encompass all of the functionality, workflows, and communications tools necessary to build any kind of resolu-

tion. We hope to have some functional data on the success of this pilot program by the end of 2024.

The outlook for 2024 remains strong as we will continue to upgrade and improve our technology and infrastructure to meet the needs of today's court users.



COURT DIVISIONS



Honorable Kathryn Karayannis
Presiding Judge Juvenile Division

Juvenile Division

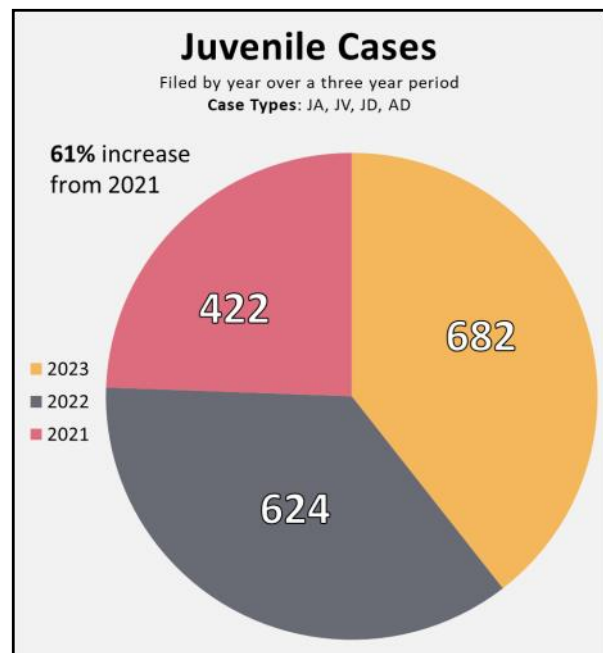
A full year of operating two courtrooms at the Juvenile Justice Center has provided Judges Parga and Karayannis additional opportunities to recognize the benefit of having both courtrooms, staff, and judges in the same building. The juvenile justice courtrooms have also been a model for technology planning and updates in other courtrooms in Kane County and throughout the state. While our courtrooms remain open for in-person participation, we are ready, willing, and able to accommodate virtual and hybrid appearances when appropriate easily.

In juvenile cases, research shows the importance of staff consistency. However, the reality is that many agency and judicial partners are currently experiencing significant personnel turnover and staffing issues. The flexibility and convenience afforded by both courtrooms being in the same building in conjunction with available virtual technology has facilitated the best use of these limited resources. Additionally, we continue to see the benefit of our setting for parents, foster parents, and the youth involved in our cases, all of whom have the opportunity to appear virtually in appropriate cases.

Filings in virtually all juvenile division case types increased in 2023, resulting in an overall increase in the number of juvenile cases filed in 2023. Of course, this results in higher caseloads for all judicial and agency partners and leads to the need for increased court monitoring. In both our Child
16th Judicial Circuit 2023 Annual Report

Protection Cases, formerly identified as Juvenile Abuse and Neglect Cases, and our Juvenile Justice Cases, formerly identified as Juvenile Delinquency Cases, we continue to afford each case the court time necessary to address the needs of our Kane County youth and their families.

Additionally, outside of the courtroom, each of our Juvenile Judges participates in committees and trainings, both as attendees and faculty, to enhance our understanding of the issues facing families involved in the juvenile court system and our knowledge regarding implementing best practices in our courtrooms.



COURT DIVISIONS



Honorable Kimberly DiGiovanni
Presiding Judge Family Division

Family Division

The Family Division, in 2023, continued serving the citizens of Kane County by implementing new procedures, opening new courtrooms and reception areas, working on perfecting technology for ease of access, and providing excellence in judicial knowledge and skill. In December, Chief Judge Villa appointed Judge DiGiovanni as the presiding judge of the Family Division, with Judges Tracy, David, Johnson, Lobb, and Campbell presiding in their respective courtrooms. The Family Division would like to thank Judge D.J. Tegeler for his past leadership as presiding judge.

Throughout the year, all of the judges in the Family Division continued to work diligently, as many of the issues affected families throughout the changing landscape and the ending of the pandemic made their way to the family courtrooms. The Family Division dealt with concerns involving job losses, mental health, substance abuse concerns, parenting time, marital and nonmarital funds allocation, orders of protection, weddings, and any other issues affecting families in Kane County. Thanks to the access to technology and the hard work of the judges, the Family Division was able to provide access to justice and resolve many of the issues presented.

The Family Division has continued to refine our schedules to promote maximum transparency and access to courtrooms. We have continued with Zoom access for status and some hearings.

The Family Division has also opened the courtroom doors to allow participants, litigants, attorneys, and any interested individual to appear in person. We welcome all people into our courtrooms. Additionally, all divorce courtrooms are now located on the first floor of the Judicial Center to increase ease of access to all people.

After the Illinois Supreme Court issued rule 45 (remote appearances), the Family Division was one of the first divisions to comply with this rule. This resulted in changes that helped create consistency in divorce courtrooms schedules and allowed attorneys and the public to determine whether they needed to attend court remotely or in person. The judges in the Family Division continued a partnership with the Kane County Bar Association Family Committee to have volunteers in the Kane County Law Library on Monday mornings to aid self-represented litigants.

One of the larger projects accomplished in 2022-23 was opening a new courtroom. Courtroom 007 is a brand-new, state-of-the-art technology courtroom dedicated to the hearings concerning orders of protection. It is with great thanks to former Chief Judge Hull, Chief Judge Villa, and the Kane County Board for their work getting this courtroom open. This courtroom allows the public to file and litigate orders of protection. Before 007, the public had to go to whichever courtroom may have had the ability to hear their case. Courtroom

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COURT DIVISIONS

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007 is dedicated to orders of protection and gives the public consistency on where their order of protection case is heard.

Additionally, improvements to Room 149 were completed in 2023. Room 149 is the reception/waiting area for people wishing to file an order of protection. We have made Room 149 more conducive to the work that occurs there and made it easier for the employees to work with petitioners coming in for emergency orders of protection. The modifications to the room have made it look more like a reception area with separate windows and stations so that the Family Division can work one-on-one with the petitioners. We are also working on the future implementation of remote filing of orders of protection. *(See page 42 for a more in-depth look at the Room 149 renovation project.)*

The next project in the works for 2024 is to re-wire all family courtrooms to make Zoom easier to access and to provide a constant record of proceedings in court.

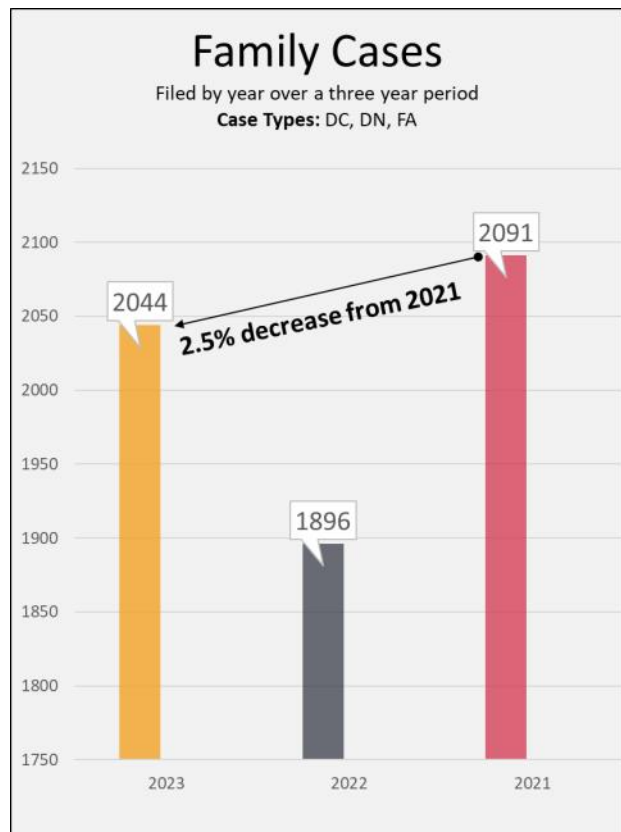
In addition to their judicial duties, the Family Division judges have also dedicated and donated their time to promote the judiciary and help educate the public. Virtually the whole Family Division donated their time on a Saturday in March to be mock trial judges for several schools located in Illinois. On Lincoln's birthday, several judges gave their time to travel to several schools to participate in reading programs. All the judges of the Family Division enjoy giving their time to present issues of interest to the public.

In 2023, the Family Division continued working with and communicating with the Kane County Bar Association's Family Division through town hall Zoom and in-person meetings. The Family Division also routinely updates the 16th Judicial Circuit's website and keeps the Kane County Law

Library up-to-date on any changes. This allows the public better access to the courts and the Family Division.

In 2023, 1502 divorce actions were open, 542 family cases were open, and 1971 orders of protection opened. With these numbers, an average of 669 cases per family court judge were open in 2023. Of the divorce cases opened in 2023, almost 50% were concluded within the calendar year, and every order of protection case had a final disposition entered.

The judges of the Family Division consider it a privilege to serve our community. The Family Division will continue to work diligently for all people and the 16th Judicial Circuit.



COURT DIVISIONS



Honorable John Barsanti
Presiding Judge Felony Division

Felony Division

The Felony Division ran as a well-oiled machine in 2023. In reviewing and analyzing the Division's annual performance, including court calls, jury and bench trials, and pre-trial motion practice were met and disposed of quickly and fairly by all concerned.

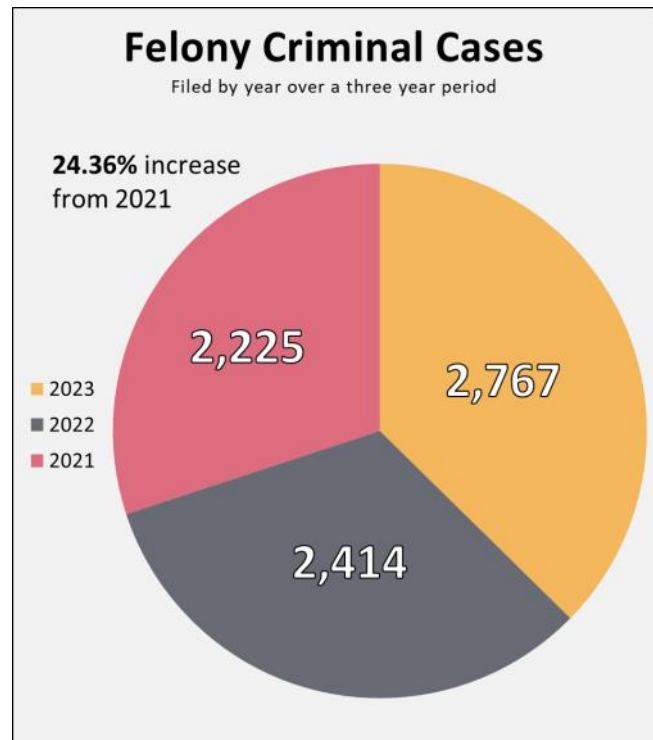
The year saw two previous Felony Division circuit judges returning to their seats. Judges Clint Hull and Judge D.J. Tegeler returned from their respective terms as Chief Judge and Family Division Presiding Judge to seamlessly slip back into the lineup. Both are highly experienced, and they hit the ground running.

The Felony Division saw two very qualified and professional Judges be reassigned. Judge Alice Tracy and Judge Elizabeth Flood are now assigned to the Family Division and Civil Division, respectively. I also would like to credit Circuit Judge René Cruz, the presiding judge of the Traffic and Misdemeanor Divisions, for his assistance and cooperation in the many interactions between the Felony and Traffic and Misdemeanor Divisions. That interaction is crucial to the smooth running of both divisions.

Zoom continues to be an integral part of the felony courts. Each courtroom is open on

Zoom and in person for every court call except jury and bench trials. This allows the community to get a real-time look at the functioning of the felony courts and allows defendants not to miss work when it is unnecessary to be present.

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COURT DIVISIONS

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Sixteenth Circuit Judges presided over 39 criminal jury trials, for offenses that included but were not limited to murder, predatory criminal sexual assault, and unlawful use of a weapon by felon.

The greatest increase in offense for 2023 was Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse.

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A special thanks to the Kane County State’s Attorney’s Office, Kane County Public Defender’s Office and the citizens of Kane County who served as jurors.

Judge Barsanti

2023 Felony Jury Trials	
By Offense	Total
Aggravated Battery	2
Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse	5
Aggravated Criminal Sexual Assault	2
Aggravated Discharge of Firearm	1
Aggravated Domestic Battery	2
Aggravated Driving Under the Influence	3
Aggravated Unlawful Use of a Weapon	1
Armed Habitual Criminal	1
Burglary	1
Criminal Sexual Assault	1
Domestic Battery	2
Murder	2
Possession of a Firearm	2
Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault	9
Robbery	1
Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance	1
Unlawful Restraint	1
Unlawful Use of Weapon by Felon	1
Violation Stalking No Contact Orders	1

COURT DIVISIONS



Honorable René Cruz
Presiding Judge Misdemeanor & Traffic Division

Misdemeanor & Traffic Division

In 2023, the Misdemeanor & Traffic Division continued providing remote access to the most high-volume courtrooms in Kane County. Additionally, all courtrooms can conduct Jury Trials without delay, and there is no post-pandemic backlog of cases.

The Judges in the Division continue to recognize that multiple court appearances may be required to resolve a matter and, therefore, regularly waive a defendant's presence at routine status dates to minimize the necessity of lost work/wages for defendants as long as they remain in communication with their attorneys and appear when requested.

As a result, all three Branch Courts (Aurora Branch Court, Kane Branch Court, Elgin Branch Court) continue to conduct a 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in-person court option and a 10:30 a.m. to noon remote/Zoom option.

In 2023, the DUI Court Sentence Monitoring Program was established. This program requires first-time offenders to contact Adult Court Services within 48 hours after their plea so that all of the terms of the sentence can be reviewed. Most importantly, the program allows for individuals placed on Court Supervision to have their final return date canceled if

all terms of the sentence are completed at least 60 days prior to said date. This should allow individuals more accountability to finish the terms of their sentence satisfactorily, but also avoid having to take time off to attend final court appearances and reduce court call volumes.

The DUI Problem-Solving Court was also commenced in June of 2023. This court is held in the DUI courtroom and provides an alternative to incarceration for non-violent DUI Felony offenders, focusing on intensive monitoring, treatment programs, and rigorous supervision protocols. Much like the other Kane County Treatment Court Programs (Drug Court, Veteran's Court, and Mental Health Court), this program is a multidisciplinary approach that aims to holistically address the underlying causes of DUI offenses and provide comprehensive support to offenders toward recovery. The DUI Problem-Solving Court Team attended both National and State-wide training in preparation for launching this Program. Initial capacity was projected at 20 participants, but steps have already been taken to expand beyond 20 participants in response to the community's needs.

Driving Under the Influence and Domestic Violence courtrooms continue to conduct most

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COURT DIVISIONS

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status appearances remotely in the mornings with the option to appear in person in the afternoons when necessary. More importantly, this conforms with the recent Supreme Court Rules prescribing remote access options for all criminal matters.

The Misdemeanor & Traffic Division shall continue innovating and finding ways to increase justice access for Kane County court users in 2024.



By combining judicial oversight, evidence-based treatment, and comprehensive support services, we believe we can make a substantial impact on reducing DUI incidents, preventing future offenses, and promoting public safety.

Judge Cruz

2023 Misdemeanor Jury Trials	
By Offense	Total
Battery	5
Criminal Damage to Property	2
Domestic Battery	9
Driving Under the Influence	1
Driving with Revoked License	1
Endangered Child	1
Fleeing	1
Speeding	1
Violation of Stalking/No Contact Order	1
Violation Order of Protection	1

PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS



Honorable René Cruz
Presiding Judge
DUI Problem-Solving Court



Honorable Marmarie Kostelny
Retired
12/1/2023

New DUI Treatment Court and Judge Kostelny's Retirement

2023 saw big changes in Kane County's Problem-Solving Courts. Kane County began its fourth specialty court in June of 2023 with Judge Cruz as the presiding. Judge Marmarie Kostelny chaired a multi-disciplinary team to develop this DUI-specific treatment court in Kane County. As of the end of 2023, Kane County was the only county in Illinois to operate all four specialty courts authorized by the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts. The number of immediate applications received for this court speaks to the need in Kane County.

On December 1, 2023, Judge Kostelny retired from the judiciary after serving since 2006. She spent the last eleven years of her career dedicated to specialty courts. She worked tirelessly to implement best practices by national and state standards so that participants could have the best possible outcomes in each specialty court. She was extremely thoughtful in her retirement plans by proposing a transition strategy for Judge Downs, who would ultimately be assigned to Drug Rehabilitation Court, Treatment Alternative Court, and Veterans Treatment Court. The careful planning allowed Judge Downs to spend time in the specialty courts observing and being introduced to the participants in the weeks leading up to Judge Kostelny's retirement. Judge Kostelny

wanted to reduce the stress the participants would likely feel with a change of judge. This transition also allowed Judge Downs to get to know each team member by participating in staffing and other events. None of this could have happened without Judge Kostelny's dedication and passion for the specialty courts.

It is always said that once you are part of the specialty courts family, you are always part of the specialty courts family, and Judge Kostelny has promised that applies to her.

True to her word, Judge Kostelny was back at the Judicial Center the week after she retired for both the DRC and TAC holiday parties. She was the main speaker at the December TAC graduation. She will continue to be a presence and a resource for the participants by attending graduations, alumni social events, and serving on boards. The people of Kane County were lucky to have her as a judge, and she will be an integral part of the specialty courts in the future.

Perhaps the most burning question was whether Forrest would be retiring also. Forrest will not retire until 2025. As a result, Judge Kostelny is regularly seen around the Judicial Center and JJC

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16th Judicial Circuit 2023 Annual Report

PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

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with Forrest. She will continue to bring him to work until he retires, much to the delight of everyone they encounter.



The Specialty Courts Foundation has remained an important partner for all four specialty courts. The Foundation assists participants with unique needs. They continued to supply incentives for those who achieved milestones in their recovery. They provided financial support for pro-social activities.

The individuals who serve on the Foundation attended graduations, holiday parties, other activities, and court to encourage and congratulate the participants. The Specialty Courts Foundation was the beneficiary of a fundraiser by Sheriff Ron Hain. This lovely dinner event at the Sheriff's Office was well received and attended and provided funds for the Foundation to continue to do its essential work.



**Honorable
Christine Downs**

Drug Rehabilitation Court (DRC)

The Kane County Drug Rehabilitation Court program is designed for high-risk individuals with a substance use disorder. The drug court team consists of justice and treatment professionals working in a non-adversarial manner to reduce the incidence of drug use and reduce recidivism. Drug court is a voluntary program for Kane County residents charged with felony offenses. Participants are required to complete all recommended treatment while being closely supervised by the court and in the community. Participants must regularly appear in court to monitor progress and are frequently drug tested.

DRC saw a change in 2023 when a long-time dedicated coordinator, Alicia Klimpke, took on new challenges at the Kane County Sheriff's Office. While the team and participants were sad to see her go, they knew the Sheriff's Office would bene-

fit from her many gifts and talents. Rae Andrews was hired as the new DRC Coordinator in the summer of 2023, bringing with her 15 years of work in the substance use disorder and criminal justice fields. Andrews' passion for serving those who have found themselves involved in the criminal justice system due to substance use disorder was evident right away, and DRC is in very capable hands.

The Kane County DRC's customary pro-social activities halted during the pandemic and returned as 2023 progressed. A substance use disorder is often a disease of isolation, and learning to be social again is an important part of recovery that DRC promotes for their participants. The DRC alumni group continued to meet monthly and assisted those about to graduate. DRC hosted a book club for its participants along with an art

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PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

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show which was another great event where participants could exhibit their artwork or attend as spectators. A picnic was also held for all participants and alumni at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve along with the opportunity to participate in goat yoga. DRC also hosted a night out at a Kane County Cougars game for participants and alumni.

Rounding out the year, DRC hosted a holiday party in December for all participants and their families, with a special visit from Santa. Thanks to generous donations from the Judges of the

16th Judicial Circuit and the Kane County Specialty Courts Foundation, everyone and their children received special gifts.

In 2023, 80 applications were submitted for entry into the program. After a rigorous screening process, 47 individuals were accepted. Sixteen individuals successfully completed the strict requirements of the program.

The graduation ceremonies were held in person in May and October and were live-streamed on YouTube.

Treatment Alternative Court (TAC)

Treatment Alternative Court (TAC) is a Kane County specialty court program established in 2006 to serve defendants with serious mental health disorders, co-occurring disorders, or developmental disabilities. TAC works with participants to establish appropriate psychiatric and therapeutic care to reduce symptoms and reduce new arrests.

The TAC team identifies individual treatment needs for each participant and provides services to reduce their contact with the criminal justice system and promote public safety. TAC is a voluntary program for Kane County residents charged with either felony or misdemeanor offenses. In addition to mental health treatment, participants receive various forms of evidence-based therapy, housing assistance, and benefits assistance while under intensive judicial monitoring.

The program brings together community-based agencies to address the needs of defendants. It provides comprehensive case management with intense judicial supervision in an effort to reduce future criminal activity and incarceration. Two local agencies serve on the TAC team. The Ecker

Center for Mental Health provides outpatient mental health treatment for participants residing in the northern half of Kane County. The Association for Individual Development (AID) provides outpatient mental health services for those living in the county's southern half. Various treatment facilities in the area provide substance abuse disorder treatment.

With the help of grant funds and Specialty Court Foundation funds, TAC was able to provide baskets of necessary items for its participants in need. The baskets included food, paper products, hygiene items, detergent, towels, and other basic necessities. Participants also received baskets at Thanksgiving. TAC hosted prosocial activities, including alumni meetings, an art show, and a holiday party. Each participant received holiday gifts at the party due to the generous support of the 16th Judicial Circuit Judges and the foundation.

In 2023, 31 applications were reviewed for entry into the program, 8 were accepted into TAC, and 6 participants graduated. Each graduate has their own unique graduation ceremony.

PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

Veterans Treatment Court (VTC)

Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) is a specialty court program designed for our Kane County veterans who have provided an invaluable service to our nation. While providing service, some have suffered the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, mental health conditions, or substance use disorders, leading to contact with the criminal justice system. This voluntary program is for veterans charged with felony or misdemeanor offenses. VTC is a highly structured intervention process for the treatment of eligible participants that brings together substance use professionals, mental health professionals, VA professionals, and local service providers and requires intensive judicial monitoring.

The VTC team continued to offer two tracks, high risk, and low risk, to make the program accessible to more veterans. An important part of the program is connecting participants with veteran mentors. To that end, Peter Olson was added to the team as the mentor coordinator. He

has added mentors who assist the participants in many ways.

VTC provided a Veteran's Day luncheon to honor the participants, alumni, and mentors. There was a guest speaker and excellent food.

The success of this event was evident and will become an annual tradition. VTC participants were also part of the annual show, displaying their art and coming as spectators.

In 2023, the Veterans Assistance Commission of Kane County, in cooperation with the US Department of Veterans Affairs and the 16th Judicial Circuit, hosted a training event for all law enforcement agencies within our county. The program included training for handling situations involving veterans and provided an introduction to our Veterans Treatment Court. VTC Coordinator Phil Wessel and Judge Marmarie Kostelny explained the purpose and operations of this problem-solving court and offered resources to local police departments.



16th Judicial Circuit 2023 Annual Report

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AOIC observed and evaluated the Veteran's Treatment Court operating in compliance with statutes and standards. The high level of proficiency exhibited by Judge Kostelny and the team members is remarkable. AOIC not only recommends recertification for the Kane County Veterans Court but would like to refer other courts to observe this court as an example of excellence in problem-solving courts in Illinois.

AOIC comments on their VTC evaluation

COURT ADMINISTRATION

Court Administrators



Andrea O'Brien
Court Administrator



Jason Mathis
Deputy Court Administrator

Under the direction of the Chief Judge, the Court Administrators of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit are responsible for supervising the court's non-judicial staff and managing court operations.

The Court Administrators supervise staff at two courthouse locations. Staffing includes Bailiffs, Judicial Assistants, Staff Attorneys, OP Staff, Interpreter Staff, Jury Commission Clerks, Paralegals, and our Case flow Manager.

The management of court operations includes personnel management, fiscal/budget coordination, public relations, space and equipment/technology management, long-range planning, case flow management, jury management, management of our interpreter program, as well as oversight of our Law Library, Mandatory Arbitration, and our various court mediation programs.

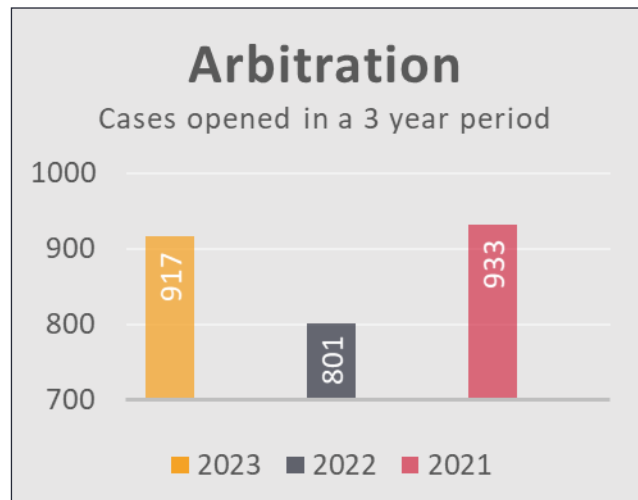
The Office of the Court Administrator is dedicated to the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit's mission and vision, ensuring equal and timely court access while fostering public trust and confidence.

Arbitration Center

Mary Barnett
Arbitration Center Administrator

All civil actions exclusively for money damages that are filed in an amount not greater than \$75,000.00 are automatically assigned to non-binding mandatory arbitration.

The day-to-day management of the program is the responsibility of the Arbitration Center Administrator.



COURT ADMINISTRATION

Children’s Waiting Room

Ann Lobb

The Children’s Waiting Room (CWR) is located on the lower level of the Kane County Judicial Center. The CWR provides supervised short-term childcare for children, ages infant to 12 years old, whose parents and or guardians are appearing in court.

The CWR is staffed with 2-3 employees each day. The hours of operation are Monday-Thursday, 8:15 a.m.-4:15 p.m., and Fridays from 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.



Bailiffs

Nancy Hudson

Chief Bailiff
Kane County Judicial Center

Lan Nielsen

Chief Bailiff
Kane County Courthouse

Monica McCullough

Chief Bailiff, Kane County
Juvenile Justice Center

The Bailiffs of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit help promote and encourage the public’s confidence and respect for the judicial system through their presence and behavior in the courtroom. They are responsible for maintaining order and decorum in the courtroom, ensuring that all orders from the bench are carried out.

In addition, when the court has jury trials, Bailiffs provide the first line of security and information to jurors. They keep jurors free from contact with anyone not authorized to be in their presence.

Outside of the courtrooms, Bailiffs provide public information, non-legal directions, and assistance accessing Zoom to parties, attorneys, and litigants.

Mediation Programs

Christina Wright

Eviction Mediation Program Coordinator

The 16th Judicial Circuit Mediation programs provide a confidential process in which a neutral mediator assists parties in reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. Mediation is intended to be a more informal and non-adversarial process where the mediator assists the parties in identifying issues, fostering joint problem-solving, exploring settlement alternatives, and reaching an agreement. The 16th Judicial Circuit has five Mediation Programs: Civil, Family, Residential Foreclosure (ended on June 30, 2023), Eviction, and Child Protection.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

Jury Commission

Mari Moore and Stacey Payne

The Office of the Jury Commission is tasked with preparing the general jury list, summoning, selection, drawing, examination, and verification of persons for jury service. Illinois law requires that the names of prospective jurors be randomly drawn from a combined list of registered voters, Illinois Driver's License holders 18 years of age and older, Illinois Disabled Persons Identification Card holders, Illinois Identification card holders, and claimants for unemployment insurance.

The Jury Commission was instrumental in launching CourtFunds, the contactless way to disburse payment for service as a juror. This service has allowed the 16th Circuit to eliminate the printing and mailing a paper check in favor of a much faster payment method.

In 2023, a total of 8,205 jurors were summoned for jury duty. There were 13 civil jury trials conducted at the Kane County Courthouse and 61 jury trials conducted at the Kane County Judicial Center.

Interpreting Services & Language Access



Elizabeth Cull
Interpreter Coordinator

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit is committed to ensuring access to the judicial system for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The interpreter division staffs the judiciary with the highest quality interpreters and collects, analyzes, and reports data regarding the various languages requested by the court and litigants.

Within 2023, Kane County's interpreter division fulfilled, on average, 4,000 requests per quarter for interpreters. While Spanish is the most frequently requested language, the Interpreter Division also provides court interpreters for languages as familiar as Polish, French, and Russian and as rare as Uzbek, Tagalog, Q'eqchi, Purepecha, and Urdu.

The Interpreter Division also utilizes the interpreting reimbursement program provided by the Administrative Offices of Illinois Courts (AOIC). Furthermore, the division collaborates with the AOIC and other local and national interpreter associations to ensure that language interpreters contracted by Kane County are up to date with interpreter professional standards, conduct, ethics, and continuing education opportunities.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

Protective Orders



Beth Williamson
Coordinator



Karen Zajicek
Senior Staff Attorney

The 16th Judicial Circuit Court assists self-represented litigants weekly at the Kane County Judicial Center with protective orders. The coordinator and clerks assist with filling out petitions for filing Emergency Orders of Protection, Civil No Contact Orders, and Stalking No Contact Orders. The staff attorneys and paralegals assist the judge with completing orders during the plenary court call.

In April, staff introduced small cards with QR codes that can be distributed by law enforcement and social workers to anyone looking to file a protective order. The QR codes direct them to the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit Court website, providing information about protective orders, directions, forms, and support services.

In July, the department welcomed Cassandra, a bilingual Spanish-speaking clerk, to assist our diverse population, and the increased number of self-represented litigants filed protective orders.

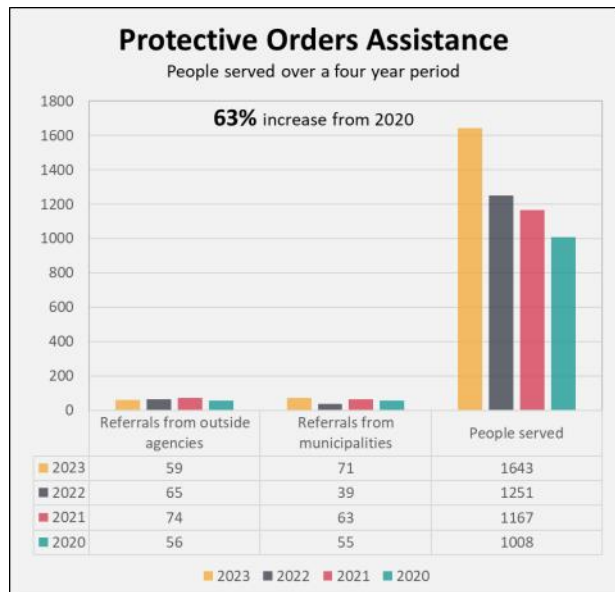
In October, the construction of the office space, Room 149, was completed. The space is now a bright space with a purpose. There are new cubicles for staff to speak to litigants with more privacy and a space for each staff member to have a desk. Additionally, new technology is being added to make it easier for litigants to review their filings. Soon, an information screen will be added to the space so that litigants will be aware of additional support agencies and services in the county. *(See page 42 for more information about the renovation of Room 149.)*

In late November, staff collaborated with Batavia and South Elgin Police Departments to test the new, entirely remote Emergency Order of Protection process for

self-represented litigants. There is an anticipated launch date process for the county in early spring 2024.

The court assisted 1,643 petitioners, an increase of 31% over 2022. It should also be noted that the court assisted with 80% of all the 2,075 protective orders filed this fiscal year.

Individuals who sought emergency protective orders came from 71 municipalities: 26 municipalities in Kane County and 45 municipalities outside of Kane County. This year, 59 agencies, including law enforcement, domestic violence shelters, health providers, and other state agencies, referred Petitioners to the court in 2023. We saw a 28% increase in law enforcement referrals and a 75% increase in people referring themselves.



Family Division **SPOTLIGHT**

How a simple room renovation offers comfort to victims of domestic violence

by Julie Mann, *Kane County Connects*

When Kane County Supervisor Christy DeChristopher took charge of the Family Division Room, also known as Room 149, she started by surveying it. The area is dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence begin the process of obtaining a Civil Emergency Order of Protection. DeChristopher looked at the lighting, where people were told to wait, how they were welcomed, where they filled out paperwork and level of privacy.

"They come here to get an order of protection or a no stalking contact order and may have just left a police department and don't know what to expect," said DeChristopher. "Before we had a large window that people would approach, and others could overhear information that people were sharing," according to DeChristopher. "There were steel benches and it wasn't very inviting."

DeChristopher quickly found a solution in a few simple improvements to Room 149 that prioritized the comfort of those seeking assistance. "We created a more supportive atmosphere by improving the flow of the room, giving people a welcoming starting point and adding additional space to sit down with a place to fill out paperwork," said DeChristopher. "We also introduced private one-on-one spaces for victims to talk with Clerks that replaced the previous practice of shared public space."

Kane County Court Administrator Andrea O'Brien, says the renovation to Room 149 is part of a push to make court buildings more user friendly. "We have the ability to design a layout that is understandable, ensures accessibility and offers a sense of helpfulness to all visitors," said O'Brien.



COURT ADMINISTRATION

Court Reporting Services



Jill Gasparaitis
Administrator of Court Reporters

In 2023, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts began the second phase of installing electronic recording at the Kane County Judicial Center, St. Charles, for courtrooms that do not have an official record provided by Court Reporting Services (CRS).

The ground-level courtrooms of the Kane County Judicial Center had the wiring completed in 2023. The first floor and second floor of the judicial center are slated to be wired next for electronic recording, encompassing the family division, misdemeanor, and specialty courts.

CRS began monitoring the recording and providing transcription of proceedings for Courtroom 007 in June, coinciding with the commencement of the Pretrial Fairness Act detention hearings/terms of release in September, Courtroom 005.

To prepare for this project, new office spaces

were created on the ground floor of the judicial center, which houses the electronic recording control room.

The control room encompasses four staff monitoring stations and equipment storage. Currently, the Kane County official court reporters provide the official record by transcribing proceedings captured on the electronic recording for seven courtrooms, in addition to their courtroom coverage in person of criminal, juvenile, specialty courts, and grand jury.

In 2023, the CRS staff of 19 licensed, certified official court reporters saw a significant increase in transcript production, both by the addition of the electronic recording courtrooms and the Pretrial Fairness Act detention appeals. An added responsibility in 2023 was the coverage of the detention call on weekends and holidays, so there is an official record of 365 days a year.

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In the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, Court Reporting Services employees capture the verbatim record of the courtroom proceedings presented in the Felony, Misdemeanor, Juvenile, Specialty Court, and Mental Health courtrooms as well as oversee the monitoring and transcript production of the digital recording system in the Law, Chancery and Probate courtrooms.

Jill Gasparaitis

COURT ADMINISTRATION



Hallē Eichert
Director

Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center

The mission of the Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center (KCLL) is to ensure equal and open access to the legal system. In furtherance of this mission, the Law Library staff strives to create informed legal consumers and empower court-goers by assisting them in using the legal system effectively and efficiently.

Supporting Our Community

KCLL created and hosts such programs as the Divorce & Family Law Help Call-In and Walk-In services and the Lawyer in the Public Library at both the Gail Borden (Elgin) Public Library and the Santori (Aurora) Public Library. KCLL works diligently to enlist volunteer attorneys and bring them together with community members who could most benefit from free legal guidance. In 2023, volunteering attorneys assisted 841 members of the public through these four programs alone.

The Lawyer in the Public Library services are so popular that in 2023, KCLL was approached by the Fox River Valley Public Library to create a new partnership, hosting Lawyer in the Public Library at their facility, further supporting the legal needs of those within our communities.

KCLL also partners with the Kane County Bar Association, acting as the host site for their Drivers' Privilege Clinic. In 2023, the once-a-month clinic provided drivers' license issue assistance to 31 people.

Access to Justice

KCLL continues to be active in and benefits from the Illinois Supreme Court's push for stronger public access to justice. In 2023, KCLL applied for and was granted \$30,000 from the Illinois Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission and Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts to further efforts supporting self-represented litigants involved with Kane County courts. Due to this funding, Spanish language interpreters are now available at the Divorce and Family Law Help Walk-In service and all the Lawyer in the Public Library programs. The money has also been translated into Spanish documents corresponding to these programs and general informational materials.

Employee Recognition

Hallē Eichert, Director of the KCLL, was again in 2023 named Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator for the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit (Kane County) and was invited to co-teach an Illinois Judicial Education Conference program, Self-Represented Litigants Best Practices and Tips for Working with SRLs, and to be an active member of the statewide Court-Library Partnership Steering Committee. Additionally, Eichert was invited to conduct basic legal research seminars at several local libraries and participate in the Law Library as a Virtual Hearing Hub panel at the American Association of Law Libraries annual conference.

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Illinois JusticeCorps

In 2023, the Illinois Bar Foundation once again awarded the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit a full-time Illinois JusticeCorps Fellow. The role of the Fellow is to help ensure positive court experiences for self-represented litigants. To this end, they work out of the Kane County Law Library and are overseen by the Law Library Director. They assist people with e-filing, Zoom court, locating legal forms and resources, and creating plain language documents to help guide self-represented litigants through the legal process.

National Night Out

KCLL once again had the pleasure of participating in the ever-popular 2023 National Night Out hosted by the Kane County Sheriff's Office. The Librarian and IL JusticeCorps Fellow staffed a table, handing out donated gently used children's books and speaking with the public about the Law Library's various resources.

Juvenile Justice Center

KCLL, in partnership with the Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) and the St. Charles Public Library, continued to help administer and upkeep the JJC Library and the JJC Book Club.

Kane County Drug Rehabilitation Court

New Beginnings Book Club continued to be supported by and held in the KCLL in conjunction with Court Services.

Brunch with the Best

In celebration of National Pro Bono Week, KCLL, along with cohosts, Kane County Bar Association's Access to Legal Services Committee, Administer Justice, and Prairie State Legal Services, hold Brunch with the Best in the Law Library as a yearly thank you to all the attorneys who donate their time to local legal aid agencies and legal aid programs. It is through the efforts of these attorneys that many in the community are able to successfully move through their legal issues.



16th Judicial Circuit 2023 Annual Report

Librarian

SPOTLIGHT



Ellen Schmid
Law Librarian

- Appointed to the Information Technology and Libraries (ITAL) Editorial Board, one of the three open-access peer-reviewed journals published by CORE: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures (a division of the American Library Association).
- With the institution of the Pretrial Fairness Act in 2023, Ellen worked diligently with Judges Yetter and Hull to create and make freely available the [Pretrial Fairness Act Guidebook for the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit](#).
- Continues as Team Leader for the Public Trust and Understanding operating committee and co-team Leader of the Social Media Plan and Community Events operating committee of the Kane County Justice System Strategic Plan.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Worries of the World Wide Web



Worries of the World Wide Web is a program created by Judge Susan Clancy Boles and Judge Clint Hull that addresses the increasing problem of cyberbullying, electronic harassment, and sexting/pornography. The program is directed toward middle school students and speaks to the social and legal consequences of this potentially criminal behavior.

Judges Boles and Hull, along with other Kane County Judges, have been presenting the program throughout Northern Illinois Counties to students and their parents for the past eight years. In 2016-17, the Illinois Judges Association (IJA) worked with Judges Boles and Hull and expanded the program statewide. The first training session for the program was conducted in January 2017, during which over seventy judges were trained to give this presentation.

The 50-60 minute program is meant to increase awareness of what cyberbullying, harassment, and sexting are and how they may impact the lives of those students who participate in this type of activity.

The presentation ends with a question and answer session and a video titled "Cyber Bullying Victims Gone Too Soon," which is a compilation of pictures and a summary of teenagers who have taken their own lives as a result of being victimized by social media. The goal is to increase awareness of social media's dangers and attempt to prevent them from making a mistake that could impact their lives and others in the future.

School Visitations

Court facilities are available for in-circuit school field trips at the Kane County Judicial Circuit and the Kane County Courthouse.

These visits offer groups the opportunity to see firsthand the operations and inner workings of the many components of the justice system.



SPECIAL PROGRAMS



Mock Trials

The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit, in conjunction with the Kane County Bar Association and St. Charles North High School, annually host a high school Mock Trials competition.

Mock Trials allow students the opportunity to present cases in a courtroom and in front of Sixteenth Judicial Circuit judges.

For the past several years, the Judicial Center has also been a host site for the American Mock Trial Association's opening championship round. This college mock trial tournament hosts about two dozen teams from around the country and provides a full weekend of mock trial competitions.



Looking Ahead to 2024

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Thank you for taking a moment to reflect on our year of accomplishments. We look forward to 2024 and more opportunities to move the 16th Circuit forward.

Handwritten signature of Robert H. Villa.