



Welcome Back to *On Balance*



Marla S. Moore

It doesn't feel like it, but it has been over a year since we published *On Balance* – our staff newsletter **TO** you about what the AOC is doing **FOR** you. Now we're back on track and offer you the latest of what we've been doing.

Many of our projects have been spurred on by our efforts at streamlining our services: digitizing paper records in the office, utilizing the AOC Portal for caseload submission and Georgia Courts Directory Verification, increasing the AOC's visibility on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, and reorganizing our staff into clear functioning work units.

Chances are the staff member you've been working with for so many years may have moved offices in recent months. These moves have enabled work units to be closer together, improving the efficient use of scarce resources.

We have lost some of our valued employees. Be sure to check out our "Staff Notes" section for staffing updates.

Discussing Judgeship Studies



The hall is just as good as any place to discuss judgeships. Above, Molly Perry, right, Court Services Division Director, discusses matters with Christopher Hansard, left, and Greg Arnold.

The AOC Goes Paperless!

Starting in April, the AOC started a concerted effort to go paperless. This ongoing process will allow the agency to be more efficient, make files more accessible, and eliminate storage space and paper use. To date, the AOC has scanned 158 boxes of paper files and has shredded twenty-six boxes. This scanning and shredding process also fits in with the major office cleaning effort currently underway, as the agency works to remove file cabinets and reclaim previously occupied square footage.

Several departments within the AOC have already completed the paperless project, including: Financial Administration, Information Technology, County and Municipal Probation Advisory Council (CMPAC), the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, and the Board of Court Reporting. Currently working on going paperless are the Office of Dispute Resolution, the Director's Division, and Court Services.

Files are being destroyed or scanned based on judicial records retention rules. The AOC is using Laserfiche to store all of the electronic files securely allowing staff to quickly search for notes, files, applications, and other documents. Ashley Garner, a former paper hoarder said, "CMPAC had 72,000 pages of V.I.P.s (very important papers) when the Macon office closed. No one loves paper more than I do, but with Laserfiche I can search all 72,000 pages at once! Good indexing and training is critical. It has been two years and I would never consider going back to paper. We are a much more efficient and effective team now."



One stack of boxes to be scanned, then shredded

Staff Notes

Director's Division

Billie Bolton, Assistant Director for Communications, retired on June 30, 2011. Billie began with the AOC in 1993 after working with the Council of Juvenile Court Judges for several years.

On July 1, **Ashley Stollar** became team lead for the Communications Section. **Maggie Reeves** moved from the Georgia Commission on Family Violence to Communications.

Financial Administration Division

Mark Seymour, Purchasing Administrator, left the agency for an opportunity in the Executive Branch. **Andrew Theus** began as Facilities and Operations Planning Specialist on August 1, 2011.

Kelly Steele, Policy Fiscal Analyst, will leave the AOC in October. Kelly is moving to Denver, CO.

Information Technology Division

Jorge Basto completed the Executive Development Leadership Program on August 17, 2011. For more details, see story on page 8.



Billie Bolton, left, holds a statue presented to her by Marla Moore, AOC Director. Billie retired from the AOC on June 30, 2011. A retirement party was held in her honor on July 8 in the AOC training room.

AOC Public Information Officer Attends D.C. Conference

The 20th meeting of the Conference of Court Public Information Officers (CCPIO) was held August 8-10, 2011, in Washington, D.C. Ashley Stollar, AOC Public Information Officer, attended the meeting which focused on utilizing social and emerging media for the benefit of the judicial community and education of journalists and the public.

CCPIO is a national organization that holds annual meetings at different sites around the country. These professional development opportunities place an emphasis on the specific issues that confront today's court PIOs. Hands-on problem solving, professional advancement and development, and networking are the focus of the annual meeting sessions. In 2010, the Georgia courts hosted CCPIO in Atlanta.



From left, Don Plummer, Jane Hansen, Supreme Court of Georgia; Ashley Stollar, AOC; and Will Simmons, 6th District Court Administrator in a US Supreme Court conference room.

The AOC Co-Hosts National Court Event

Q&A with Kelly Steele, AOC Policy Fiscal Analyst

From July 31 - August 3, Chief Justice Carol W. Hunstein and AOC Director Marla Moore hosted the 2011 CCJ/COSCA meeting at the Ritz-Carlton in Atlanta, GA. Kelly Steele, AOC Policy Fiscal Analyst, was on the local planning committee.

Q: What is the CCJ/COSCA meeting?

A: CCJ/COSCA is the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators.

The groups meet annually in a different state to discuss the latest trends, best practices, and policy affecting our nation's court system. The hot button topic this year was the language interpreters' mandate from the Department of Justice; however, the conference theme was around courts and the media.

Q: Who organized the conference?

A: The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) hosts the conference in conjunction with staff from the state's Administrative Office of the Courts and Supreme Court. It's about an eight-month planning process to get the program organized. The NCSC serves as the secretariat and host for the CCJ/COSCA conference. NCSC coordinates all conference planning details and staffs all committee meetings.

Q: How were you designated as the AOC planning coordinator for the event?

A: I think I was chosen because I attended the conference a lot as a child. I'm pretty familiar with how it is run. I know some people at the

National Center for State Courts. *(Editor's Note: Kelly Steele is the daughter of Mary McQueen, NCSC President.)*



Kelly Steele, left, with her mom, Mary McQueen, NCSC President.

Q: How many attendees were there?

A: There were 241 conference attendees.

Q: How many states/territories were represented?

A: 47

Q: How many volunteers helped with the conference?

A: Over the course of the six-day event, we had roughly thirty-six volunteers – twenty-nine from the AOC and seven from the Supreme Court.

Q: What was the most enjoyable part of the planning process?

A: I think getting to work with the volunteers from the Supreme Court. Tia Milton and I worked really closely together and also met constantly with our volunteers. It was nice to have an opportunity to work across judicial branch organizations.

AOC and Supreme Court Clerk's staff (in "peach" shirts) volunteered during the CCJ/COSCA. Georgia State Patrol troopers provided security for the meeting.



AOC Department Spotlight: County and Municipal Probation Advisory Council

The mission of the County and Municipal Probation Advisory Council (CMPAC) is to ensure the provision of quality, ethical, and professional misdemeanor probation service to the courts and citizens of Georgia through evaluation, education, and regulation. To learn more about CMPAC, please click *here*.



Ashley Garner

CMPAC Staff Director



Ashley Garner

AOC Experience: I have worked at the AOC for a little more than nine years. I started in June of 2002.

Most Valuable Job Skill: I think the two most valuable skills in my job are the ability to see the potential others have and the ability to tell

people “no.” We spend a great deal of time motivating others to believe they can do a difficult job well, but we must also stand firm when practices must cease.

Best Part of the Job: My favorite part of working with CMPAC has been traveling across Georgia, enjoying the mountains, farmland, coast, and everything in between.

Family: My husband (of seventeen years) and I have a twelve year old son, Jonathan.

Fun Fact: Scooby-Doo is my favorite cartoon!

Amy Hartley

CMPAC Compliance Monitor



Amy Hartley

Most Valuable Job Skill: Observation skills and being detail oriented are the most important.

Growing Up: I have lived in Georgia my entire life. I was born in Statesboro but raised in Kite. I now live in Wilkinson County-Gordon, GA.

Family: I have been married to my wonderful husband, Jerry, for five years and have five rescue dogs.

Favorite Holiday: Halloween, for obvious reasons... candy and costumes.

Deborah Boddie

CMPAC Administrative Assistant



Deborah Boddie

AOC Experience: I've worked for the AOC for the past eighteen months.

Growing Up: I grew up in Mississippi.

Favorite Hobby Outside of Work: I love to do home remodeling projects.

Shawn DeVaney

CMPAC Compliance Monitor



Shawn DeVaney

Job Function: My primary function is to conduct Compliance Reviews of misdemeanor probation providers throughout the state. These require on-site visits, face-to-face meetings with providers, and random case file reviews.

Our goal is to minimize the threat to public safety and maximize the overall effectiveness of probation within local communities.

Growing Up: I grew up in Gwinnett County, but went to high school in Panama City, FL, and St. Marys, GA.

Favorite Holiday: July 4th

Favorite Hobby Outside of Work: I'm an avid reader. I like to go camping and kayaking in north Georgia, and enjoy frequent trips to Panama City, FL, to see friends.

The AOC Goes Social

What do Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have to do with the Georgia Courts? The Administrative Office of the Courts now has a presence on all three social media outlets. Why? Because it offers the AOC an in-the-moment way to update judges, court employees, press outlets, and the public about what's affecting the courts.

Which judicial circuits received Judicial Council recommendations for new judgeships?

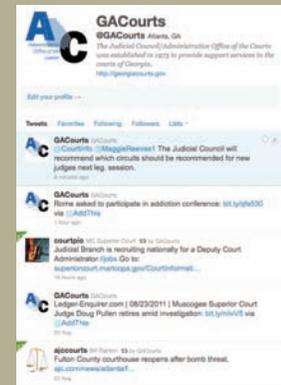
It was tweeted live from the meeting August 26. [Twitter.com/#GACourts](https://twitter.com/GACourts)



The AOC Facebook Page

What job opportunities are there in the AOC or court administration?

They are posted on our Facebook page. [Facebook.com/GACourts](https://facebook.com/GACourts)



The AOC Twitter Feed

How can YouTube be useful?

Training videos can be posted as well as public service announcements and historical information. [Youtube.com/GACourts](https://youtube.com/GACourts)

Justice for Children Summits

Submitted by Christopher Church



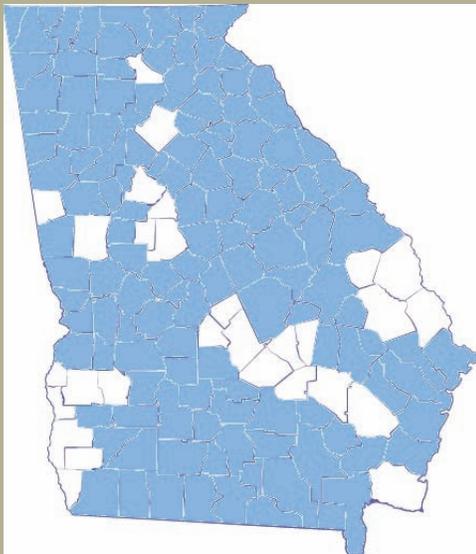
Christopher Church

In 2006, the Supreme Court of Georgia Committee on Justice for Children¹ (“J4C”), staffed by the Administrative Office of the Courts, developed a strategic plan to bring localized child welfare trainings to every county in Georgia. These day-long Justice for Children Summits

include a substantive curriculum designed to inform the development of local action plans aimed at improving outcomes for children and families involved in civil child abuse and neglect proceedings.

On February 23, 2007, the first training was held in Jasper, GA, presided over by Judge John Worcester, Juvenile Court, Appalachian Judicial Circuit. Last month, Presiding Judge Christopher NeSmith, Juvenile Court, Northern Circuit, convened local child

welfare professionals in Hartwell, GA, to host a summit. To date, J4C has partnered with juvenile court judges to host nearly 50 trainings, reaching 130 counties.



Counties in blue represent the 130 counties reached through J4C Summits.

As J4C gets closer to achieving the goal it set almost five years ago, we cannot help but reflect on how much these trainings have informed our understanding of Georgia’s juvenile courts.

A sizeable portion of the summit agenda is devoted to reviewing local child welfare data. Outcome and process measures are reported on the county level and compared to historical and statewide trends. The statistics are compiled from agency data provided by the Georgia Division of Family & Children Services through a data-sharing agreement between J4C, the Division, and Fostering Court Improvement, a non-profit providing volunteer data analysis to state agencies.² These data provide not only context for development of local action plans, but also a feedback loop for professionals working on the front-lines. For perhaps the first time, many case managers, judges, and other stakeholders were learning the rate at which children in their community were removed from their home and placed in state custody, and how they compared to other communities. As more summits were held, J4C continued to research data visualization techniques to ensure the trainings were as meaningful as possible for the attendees.

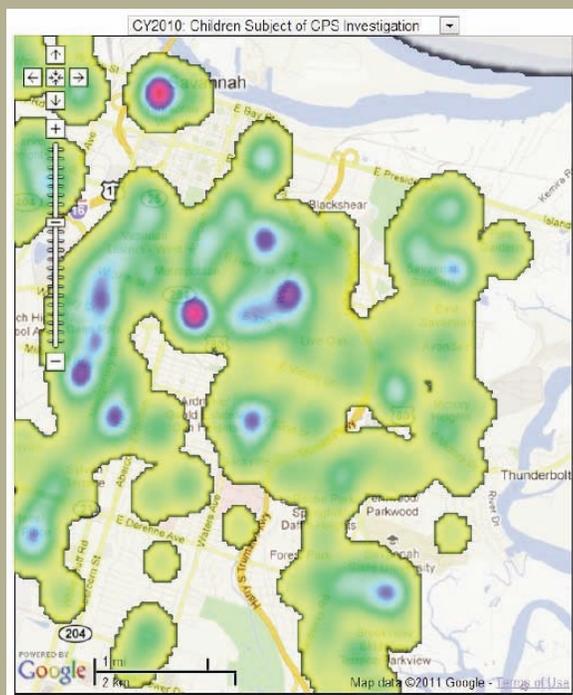
One lesson learned early on is that the more local the data, the more meaningful the review. That is, a case manager in Warner Robins, GA, is going to be more interested in Houston County trends, for which Warner Robins is the county seat, than statewide trends. Bearing that in mind, Fostering Court Improvement developed what has been dubbed the Child Welfare Doppler Radar (CWDR). The CWDR,

continued next page

¹In 1993, the United States Congress created the State Court Improvement Program. Under the program, all eligible jurisdictions (50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico) receive annual grants to improve civil child abuse and neglect proceedings. Funds are awarded to the highest state appellate court to be administered in accordance with grant terms, and the Supreme Court of Georgia created the Committee on Justice for Children to administer these funds.

²Fostering Court Improvement publishes reports publicly at www.fosteringcourtimprovement.org/ga

Justice for Children Summits cont.



CWDR image of Chatham County.

like its namesake in weather, displays the intensity of some activity in an area. In the case of the CWDR, that activity is primarily the administration of child protective services (CPS). The street addresses of families receiving services are geocoded and processed into intensity maps using binned kernel density estimation. The density estimates are displayed as a transparent pseudocolor overlay layer on Google maps for interactive viewing in any web browser. The processed data are latitude and longitude points, so the maps display concentrated sources of activity at the precision of a single home on satellite view.

The CWDR image, at left, displays investigations of allegations of child abuse and neglect in Chatham

County. There is concentration in the top-left hand corner of the map, hovering over the historic Yamacraw Village in the northwest corner of downtown Savannah. In the heart of Yamacraw Village is a public housing complex providing housing for low-income families and others in need. The largest concentration of CPS investigations in Chatham County hovers right over one of Savannah's eight public housing apartment complexes.

The connection between child welfare and public housing is not unique to Chatham County. CWDR maps of Fulton County demonstrate much of the same patterns and concentrations. And lest you think this a problem reserved for urban settings, a CWDR of Berrien or Decatur County will show you otherwise. While our office is still learning the full extent of how the CWDR maps inform our work, at least one finding is clear: Families served by state and local governments do not exist in silos. J4C, despite its limiting federal statutory mission of improving the process of civil child abuse and neglect proceedings, cannot operate in a child welfare silo and expect systemic improvement. Families involved in these proceedings have broad needs, and touch many systems of government. It is our shared responsibility to ensure state and local government agencies do not work against each other when serving these families. We must continue to do right by Georgia's families in need. In that regard, as is often the case, the data once again have told us not only where we have been, but also where we are going.

Basto Completes Executive Development Leadership Program

Submitted by Jorge Basto



Jorge Basto

On August 17, 2011, Jorge Basto, AOC Chief Information Officer, became the first Judicial Branch representative to graduate from the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP). ELDP, sponsored by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the

University of Georgia, is designed to develop talent and potential leaders at the highest levels of Georgia's state government. The program is invitation-only; participants must be sponsored by their employer.

The focus of the program is for the participants to develop a "challenge" designed to significantly and positively affect the State of Georgia. The challenge chosen by the participant was required to be defined around numerous, specific criteria; class sessions were designed to help develop the participant's abilities in areas such as:

- 1) Focus on the specific SMART Goals and not simply tasks,
- 2) Clarity in communicating the challenge to stakeholders and implementers,
- 3) Perseverance in ensure progress, buy in and involvement,
- 4) And, taking a "balcony view" of a project for leadership and direction.

Mr. Basto's challenge focused on one of the largest areas within the judiciary that could make positive use of automation: "The development, publication and use of standardized municipal citation codes and transmission specifications throughout law enforcement, the courts and Corrections for the purpose of reducing implementation and requirements costs associated with new and existing technology efforts." His project EXPRESS (Electronic eXchange, Processing and Reporting Enterprise Solutions Suite)

encompasses standardizing codes, processes, requirements, and documentation so that judicial stakeholders can benefit from reusability and scalability when implementing future IT systems.

This effort continues, even after his graduation, because the short term gains are apparent and already proving valuable for the state. Efforts involving clerks, vendors and other state agencies

have been launched to facilitate citation management through the judicial process. The progress for this project is being coupled with several ongoing data transmission and sharing efforts throughout the state. As attention, interest and involvement grows in this effort, more stakeholders will begin to utilize these concepts that are so commonly used in the private sector for profitability.

For more information on EXPRESS:

www.georgiacourts.gov/ccs/

For more information on ELDP:

www.cviog.uga.edu/gli/eldp.php



Mr. Basto, center, received his EDLP certificate on August 17.

Research Update: Statewide, Multi-Court Caseload Database

Submitted by Christopher Hansard



Christopher Hansard

The AOC's Office of Research, Planning, and Data Analysis is working on a statewide, multi-court caseload database. Once complete, this database will allow our office to quickly produce detailed reports on court caseload for as far back as 1975. "Before that time, there

was no statewide collection of court data," says Greg Arnold, Assistant Director for Research at the AOC. He says, "To get older data, you would have to go directly to the courthouse."

Currently, caseload data is spread across multiple spreadsheets and old AOC annual reports. Data runs can take several hours to several days to complete because retrieving the data is such a lengthy, inefficient process. By creating one database for all caseload data, the AOC will be able to efficiently retrieve data, allowing staff to spend more time creating detailed analysis. "If someone called today and needed an analysis of multi-court, multi-year caseload, I might spend a quarter to a third of my time just compiling the data," remarks AOC Research Analyst Christopher Hansard. But by building a caseload database, he says, "I will be able to pull the data I need in a matter of seconds and then spend the other 99.9% of my time analyzing."

The data, which will be in the caseload database, is used frequently at the AOC. For example, a department might use it to provide reports to judicial or legislative committees, perform detailed studies of circuits, or to fulfill requests by individual courts. "Having the data is critical," Christopher says, "to inform legislative research and Judicial Council reports, just to name a few items. The application is very broad."

The caseload database will be merged into the AOC Portal, which is what court clerks currently use to report their annual data to the AOC. By using the Portal infrastructure, the AOC will be able to significantly reduce staff time needed for data entry. "Like many business and government offices focused on streamlining costs and processes, the AOC strives for an internal paperless, all-digital workflow," says Molly Perry, Court Services Director. Storing all data, past and present, in the Portal allows for faster verification by clerks and on-demand analysis by staff. Perry commends her staff's hard work and sees the database as an opportunity to enhance what AOC Research can do. "Our goal is to redirect staff from totaling data contained in various printed materials and electronic spreadsheets when requested to analyze the data in meaningful ways to benefit the entire judiciary."

The caseload database project is still in the early stages, but the process will speed up in the late summer and fall. Hansard comments, "We are going deliberately slow at first because over the 38 year history of the AOC, case counting has changed. We are working to ensure we account for those changes in the database, which can unfortunately be a slow, tedious process." Hansard also notes that, "There is a lot of data when you add up all the court levels and counties. So synthesizing it in preparation to go into the database takes time. Also, some data was not in electronic format; converting it took a significant amount of time." This project is a collaborative effort between Research and IT; both departments are excited about the opportunity to increase the AOC's ability to serve the state.

AOC Human Resources and ePerformance

Submitted by Stephanie Hines



Stephanie Hines

The AOC Human Resources Department has recently launched a new and innovative employee performance evaluation system, ePerformance. When Director Marla Moore hired Stephanie Hines as the HR Manager eighteen months ago, both expressed their desire

to institute a uniform performance evaluation tool that would allow AOC employees to measure their overall job performance and competency levels.

Stephanie took the lead on this project immediately by exploring various job performance measurement tools. After consultation with the senior management team, the group decided to utilize the web-based ePerformance application developed by the Georgia State Personnel Administration – this program is currently used by many executive branch agencies. Some unique features of ePerformance that resonated with the team and differed from others are that ePerformance allows managers and employees to collaborate on performance measures and assists

managers in evaluating performance objectively.

To prepare for the implementation process, the HR Staff, which was comprised of Stephanie Hines, Jacqueline Booker and a former exchange intern, Adeildo deBarros visiting from Brazil, began in August 2010 by requesting updated job descriptions for every person on staff. By June 2011, Stephanie and Jacqueline had received training on ePerformance and held four ePerformance training sessions for AOC staff and managers. The trainings covered the five statewide core competencies measured in ePerformance: Customer Service, Teamwork and Cooperation, Results Orientation, Accountability, and Judgment and Decision Making; the training also elaborated on the technical aspects of the system.

July 2011 marked the formal rollout period of ePerformance at the AOC. The evaluation process is expected to conclude by the end of September. Once completed, staff and managers will not only be able to assess each employee's strengths and accomplishments as well as the employee needs, professional goals, and areas for growth on an ongoing basis.

Georgia Courts Directory Now Available

The 2011-2012 *Georgia Courts Directory* is now available. To order, visit www.georgiacourts.gov.

Did we get something wrong with your entry? If there is an error in your information, we encourage you to use the AOC Portal. Visit <https://myaocportal.georgiacourts.gov>. Once you have registered, log in with your username and password. Click the "profile" button. Please update both your Personal Information and Contact Information.

Under the "Personal Info" tab, click the "Edit" button to make changes. Verify your name is displayed correctly and, optionally, indicate your gender and race. Click "Save." This information is strictly for research purposes and will not be available in any public format.

Under the "Contact Info" tab, click the "Edit" button. Make any necessary changes. If no changes are needed, check the box: "No Changes Needed." Click "Save."

Georgia
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