

Letter from the Director

On October 24, 2011, my tenure as President of the Georgia Council of Court Administrators came to an end. I bring this to your attention, not because I am glad to shed the responsibilities or felt the job of president to be onerous, but because I now have some time to reflect on the purpose and importance of having such a council in our state.

You may not know it, but Georgia is the only state that has such an organization created by statute. As it has been my privilege and pleasure to attend court administration programs around the country, I have come to realize how important and special that distinction is.

About fifteen years ago, a core group consisting of court administrators and managers from state, district, and trial courts came together to create an association based on the model of the National Association for Court Management (NACM) – and the Georgia Association of Court Management (GACM) was formed. GACM immediately became a forum for bringing court administration principles and training to our membership and a place to exchange experiences and mentor each other. Funding came from dues, conference fees, and an SJI grant, which allowed us to put together the first programs.

In 1997 when the duties and responsibilities of the group were codified in O.C.G.A. § 15-5-100, GACM became the Georgia Council of Court Administrators (GCCA). As defined there, the duties and purpose are “...to further the improvement of the courts and the administration of justice, to assist the court administrators and managers throughout the state in the execution of their duties, and to promote and assist in the training of court administrators, managers, and support personnel.”

Fifteen years later, GCCA is thriving. Its membership has grown steadily and convenes twice yearly. Today, the group has a diverse membership of 145, including but not limited to: state, district, and trial court administrators, clerks, ADR coordinators, and other treatment court coordinators.

When I came to Georgia to work at the Administrative Office of the Courts, there were very few people, me included, who had heard of or recognized court administration as a career opportunity. Even today there are limited opportunities for specific education in court administration.

The National Center for State Courts has been and remains



a premier source for education with its Institute for Court Management Fellows and Managers programs. NACM with its core competencies, annual and mid-year seminars, and webinars is also a great source for training. Unfortunately, most of the people in court administrator and manager positions do

not have the time or resources to attend these national programs.

GCCA is able to fill that need. Members and participants have the opportunity to attend quality education offerings that meet GCCA's certificate program specifications as well as the stringent requirements of our educational partner Michigan State University.

Why do I feel it is important to tell you about GCCA and what it does? Because I, and a number of us who have worked to make this Council a success, believe that our courts deserve to have the best trained staff support. When challenges with funding or other issues arise, the courts benefit from having staff who understand the principles and strategies of court management.

As Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, I am proud of this office's participation in GCCA. I am also glad to know that when we post positions there are qualified candidates who have had the opportunity to learn about and understand court administration within our courts. I encourage all of you who have opportunities to hire court system employees to give priority to those who have taken the time to learn this field. I believe you will find qualified, talented people who can hit the ground running and start contributing with a minimum learning curve.

GCCA Spring Conference

March 25-28, 2012

The Lodge and Spa of Callaway Gardens
Pine Mountain, Georgia

[Conference Registration Form](#)
[GCCA Program Fact Sheet and Membership Form](#)



Georgia's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Report

The Georgia Commission on Family (GCFV) was created in 1992 by the state legislature to develop a comprehensive state plan for ending family violence in Georgia. One of the ways GCFV works towards this goal is by partnering with the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV) on the Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Project, which is funded by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council through Violence Against Women Act funds.

Together, staff from GCFV and GCADV works with Family Violence Task Forces and Fatality Review Teams from across Georgia to coordinate detailed reviews of domestic violence fatalities and near-fatalities. Through this process, community members are able to identify gaps in system responses and critical points of intervention and prevention in the lives of victims, survivors, and perpetrators of domestic violence.

The *Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Report* is a compilation of critical findings from reviews that includes recommendations for systematic change. The *Report* also contains stories from the lives of domestic violence fatality victims and near-fatality survivors as well as resources for various entities involved in ending family violence. Whether frontline responders, justice system personnel, advocates, or family and friends of those affected by domestic violence, the *Report* seeks to provide useful information that might be used to prevent future domestic violence incidents.

Since the inception of the Fatality Review Project in Georgia, some of the **key findings** have been:

- Within five years of the homicide, 32% of victims and 39% of perpetrators had been involved with Superior Court; 30% of victims and 39% of perpetrators had been involved with Magistrate Court; and 23% of victims and 21% of perpetrators had been involved with State Court.
- Probation services were in place in the lives of 9% of victims and 35% of perpetrators within the five years prior to the homicide.
- Fifty-five percent of victims from reviewed cases were killed by gunshot wounds, 26% of victims were killed by stab wounds, and 10% of victims were killed by strangulation.
- Over half (52%) of victims from reviewed cases were between the ages of 16 and 24 when they began their relationship with the partner who eventually killed them.
- Seventy-eight percent of victims and 84% of perpetrators of reviewed cases had been in contact with law enforcement five years before the fatality.

Sneak Peek into the Upcoming 2011 Fatality Review Report

- Perpetrators' Lives in a Downward Spiral. This year,

Project staff reviewed 86 prior fatality reviews, looking for trends in data within the lives of victims and perpetrators. Several areas of loss in the perpetrators' lives were identified including: income and employment, loss of physical health, and steps taken to end the relationship. The *Report* urges readers to incorporate these findings into safety planning discussions and also includes tips on safety planning with victims of domestic violence around technology.

- Roll Call Trainings Connect Law Enforcement with Domestic Violence Advocates. The Georgia Fatality Review Project developed six Roll Call trainings for Family Violence Task Forces to implement with their local law enforcement agencies. Each training section focuses on an area where law enforcement can link victims of domestic violence to life-saving resources and hold batterers accountable for their actions. The trainings give law enforcement the skills to:
 - o Assist victims by connecting them with local domestic violence agencies;
 - o Better identify primary aggressors of domestic violence;
 - o Enforce protective orders and assist victims in obtaining protective orders and warrants;
 - o Assist victims who are being stalked by their intimate partners; and
 - o Assist victims through mandated family violence response protocols.
- Survivors Struggle Financially Through the Healing Process. Through interviews with family members of domestic violence homicide victims and survivors of near-fatalities, staff learned that many survivors of these crimes struggle emotionally and economically for years following the attack. Many survivors are revictimized through mounting debt that they accumulate while receiving the medical attention, counseling services, and funeral services following a traumatic experience. This year's *Report* provides an overview of the importance of Crime Victims Compensation Fund in the lives of survivors of domestic violence-related crimes and explains the process of applying for these funds.

To obtain an electronic copy of this year's Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Report and past reports, please click [here](#).

To learn more about the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, please visit www.gcfv.org. To learn more about the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, please visit www.gcadv.org.



Child Support E-Filing Benefiting Georgia's Children

When the Georgia Judicial Exchange Program (GAJE) began in 2003, it was merely an idea to find more efficient methods of filing child support petitions with the courts. Launched by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Services (DCSS), GAJE is now active in one-third of Georgia's counties. GAJE is an electronic filing application, developed by AOC staff, that transmits information about case participants and all relevant documents from DCSS attorneys to the local clerk's office.

The fifty-three counties that have launched the system are working to help the children in their communities. Implementing this system comes at no cost to the court systems and actually saves money for courts in time and material resources. "While filing paper child support documents can often take two to three weeks from start to finish, this electronic system can have all documents to a clerk's desk within four to five minutes," said Mr. Michael Alexandrou, AOC Application Development Manager.

Previously, the filing processes used by the agency were time consuming and not cost effective. Also, the repeated typing of filings left room for human errors. The implementation of an e-filing process for DCSS has dramatically shortened the amount of time it takes a local office to file pleadings with the court. It has also reduced the number of staff necessary to file the pleadings, making it possible for DCSS and clerks to reallocate staff to other duties.

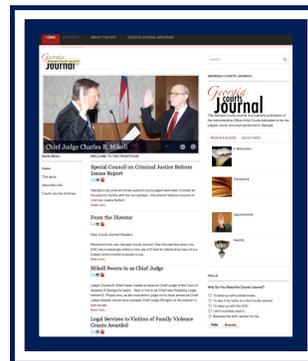
However, even these benefits do not top the list. Mr. Alexandrou shared, "GAJE helps the wheels of justice turn faster and better. It allows children in need to get the proper attention in an expedient manner." When GAJE began, Georgia's Division of Child Support Services became one of the first states to embrace and implement an electronic method for filing civil pleadings to the court. All of these considerations make the entire court filing process more efficient while saving both DCSS and the court money.

How does a court implement e-filing? A superior court merely has to show interest in the e-filing project. Through GAJE's partnership with the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority, the clerks and local DCSS office implement this new system, in connection with the local court's case management vendor. Additionally, courts can contact Mr. Jorge Basto, Chief Information Officer of the AOC, for more information (jorge.basto@gaaoc.us, 404.657.9673).

Long-term goals for the project include implementing child support e-filing in all counties and adding a judge



component to GAJE, wherein judges can see and electronically sign child support orders. Mr. Jorge Basto shared, "Although the GAJE effort started as a simple technology solution to file child support cases, the project has spawned interest, discussions, and development work in many facets of electronic records management throughout Georgia. GAJE has been recognized nationally and used as a model for proving the feasibility of the e-filing concept, as well as implementing ancillary solutions."



Courts Journal Digital Edition

If you did not catch it last month, we do not want to let you miss out on reading the newest *Georgia Courts Journal* in its updated digital format at w2.georgiacourts.gov/journal/.

Much of the content remains the same: articles highlighting the work of the judges, courts, court administrators, clerks, and others in the state; reports on judicial happenings — conferences, commissions, Judicial Council meetings; People and Places; Directory Corrections; etc.

Some new features include submitted articles from judges, Quick Takes (a quick look at events and happenings), and a poll that will change with each issue. Each issue will be archived and can be accessed once a new edition is published under the Archives tab at the top of the site.

There's even a Pop Quiz for those who like a bit of trivia. December's Pop Quiz: Georgia has 49 judicial circuits. The most recent was created in 2002. When were the first circuits created, and what were they called?

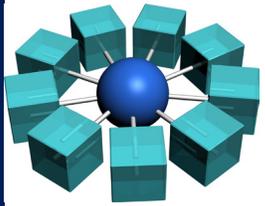
Your feedback is vital to the success of the *Georgia Courts Journal*. Call 404-656-5171 or e-mail publications@gaaoc.us to let us know what you think about our new *Courts Journal* or to submit ideas for inclusion in a future issue.

Making Connections

The AOC's Governmental and Trial Court Liaison Section

In an effort to improve service delivery and eliminate fragmentation among courts in Georgia, the Governmental and Trial Court Liaison section of the AOC was molded from several departments in 2010. The Governmental and Trial Court Liaison section communicates and collaborates with other judicial agencies and branches of government to further the goals of the Judicial Council and the statutory mission of the AOC. It also provides policy and technical support to the Judicial Council and trial court councils, as well as comprehensive administrative services to the Council of Probate Court Judges, Council of Municipal Court Judges, and the Probate, Magistrate, and Municipal Judges Training Councils.

The roles of the section are many, as it serves as a hub for many of the AOC's stakeholders. From writing meeting minutes to traversing the halls of the Gold Dome, the staff wears many hats. Mr. Mike Cuccaro leads the section. He aids the AOC Director by managing diverse projects; leading enterprise technology programs in concert with the AOC's Chief Information Officer; and connecting judges across



Georgia with legislators and legislative staff. Mr. Cuccaro shared, "While most people think of our legislative work under the auspices of the Judicial Council and its Committee on Policy and Legislation, the Liaison staff also

maintains day-to-day relationships with the executive branch, vendors, and other groups involved in projects affecting the Judiciary."

Mr. Christopher Causey and his annual spring team of undergraduate interns are most often seen at House and Senate judicial committee meetings, or they are in the office producing minute-by-minute updates that keep the entire Georgia judiciary in the loop. Mr. Causey recently spearheaded the effort to redesign the AOC's Legislative Website (www.legislation.georgiacourts.gov). "The new website is streamlined and more user-friendly," said Mr. Causey. "Judges or judicial personnel can search bills by their class of court or by subject matter." The website also offers links to the daily and weekly legislative reports. Interns joining the section this year are: Ms. Louisa De Pinto, Emory University; Mr. Timothy Halinski, Emory University; Ms. Brittany Howse, Kennesaw State University; and Ms. Rachel Shuffield, Georgia State University.

Away from the Capitol, Ms. LaShawn Murphy serves as staff to the Council of Probate Court Judges, Council of Municipal Court Judges, and the Probate, Municipal, and Magistrate Judges Training Councils. In this role, Ms. Murphy provides secretariat services, budget maintenance of

state appropriated funds, maintains magistrate and municipal judges' certification, administers listservs and websites, helps create council newsletters, manages municipal court chief clerks' certification, and plans meetings for the groups. She also serves as liaison to the Georgia Municipal Court Clerks' Council and the Magistrate Court Clerks' and Secretaries' Council.

The combination of legislative, council administration, and project management has helped contribute to the dynamic nature of this team. All of this section's work is done to support the judiciary and improve service for the judges and judicial personnel of Georgia. Mr. Cuccaro reflected, "Our work has both breadth and depth. We help people leverage their own resources and make connections with stakeholders. We show people the paths for collaboration and then support them as they work to achieve their goals."

This section links local and county officials, state agencies, clerks, the bar, the bench, and other requesting parties to a broad array of court-related resources, expertise, information, statistics, and reports. Currently working on implementing recommendations from the Special Council for Criminal Justice Reform, improving technology for trial courts, disseminating the latest legislation, and sending certification reports to the JQC, the Governmental and Trial Court Liaison section continues to grow as a service center for Georgia's judiciary.

Staff Spotlight

Mike Cuccaro
Assistant Director



Where did you grow up? I was an Army brat. We moved frequently. My fondest memories are living in Berlin, Germany.

Most valuable job skill: Sincerity and persistence. I do consider these skills that can be developed.

Favorite hobby: Working on my old house, swimming, and watching my son play basketball. The days of working on concerts and musical events seem to be a thing of the past.

Favorite part of the job: The opportunity to improve life and justice for Georgians. I'm an admitted "good government geek." We get our guidance from our judges and we support their efforts. While this is the most satisfying part of the job, distilling down all the perspectives among our Judiciary and local elected officials is also probably the most difficult part.

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Staff Spotlight, continued



Christopher Causey
Project Coordinator

Job function: Maintain an up-to-date schedule of all germane legislative or executive branch meetings and ensure that the interested AOC or constituent staff has been notified.

How long have you worked for the AOC? Five years.

Favorite part of the job: The friendly office environment is my favorite.

Where did you grow up? Huntsville, Alabama



LaShawn Murphy
Trial Court Liaison

Favorite hobby: Interior design

What is something that no one would know about you? I spend my weekends redesigning rooms for people and being a personal shopper for furniture. If I could get a spot on HGTV, that would be awesome!

Favorite holiday: My Birthday, it is a national holiday to me. But if I have to choose a specific holiday, it would be Thanksgiving. It's a time when my family gathers from near and far to celebrate each other and the joys of life itself.

Advanced Excel Training for AOC Staff

On December 5, the AOC held an in-house Microsoft Excel workshop for intermediate and advanced users. Twenty-five AOC staff seized the opportunity to brush up on forgotten skills and master new features of Excel.

The exciting, energetic trainer from SkillPath, Andy Gordon, helped AOC staff better utilize Pivot Tables, Charts, Graphs, and Macros while teaching keyboard shortcuts and other time-saving techniques. The response to the training was overwhelmingly positive, and the AOC will look for ways to continue to offer this type of training.

AOC Staff Notes

The AOC congratulates **Ms. Tracy Powell** on her graduation from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University. Ms. Powell obtained her Masters in Public Policy, with a concentration in Social Policy. Ms. Powell serves as the Accountability Courts Project Coordinator. Ms. Powell began with the AOC as a legislative intern in 2003. She started as a fulltime employee with the AOC in 2007.

The AOC thanks **Ms. Patricia Gavel** for her five years of dedicated service to the agency. After a year of part-time work for the AOC, Ms. Gavel became a full time employee in 2006 as the Project Assistant for the Georgia Drug Endangered Children Project. Since that time, Ms. Gavel has become the Accountability Courts Data Coordinator. In this role, she manages accountability court grants, AOC grants, the accountability courts website, eleven listservs, training webinars, and plans meetings and the statewide conference.

The AOC welcomes the following new staff:

Director's Division

Ms. Erin Oakley, formerly Family Violence Intervention Program Compliance Coordinator with the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, is now Assistant to the Director. Ms. Oakley began her new position on December 1, 2011.

Court Services Division

Ms. Jenny Aszman, Fatality Review Coordinator for the Georgia Commission on Family Violence. Ms. Aszman began on January 1, 2012.

Ms. Alice Limehouse, Child Support Project Director for the Children, Family, and the Courts Section. Ms. Limehouse joined the AOC on January 1, 2012.

Ms. Kim Miller, Research and Statistical Analyst for the Research section. Ms. Miller started her new position on December 1, 2011.

Information Technology Division

Ms. Tawanna Conley, Project Analyst for the Information Technology Division. Ms. Conley started on December 16, 2011.

The AOC Gives Back

In December 2011, the AOC donated 28 boxes to the University of Georgia's Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies. Culled from materials across the office during the yearlong cleaning and scanning efforts, these archival materials will join other collections focusing on politics, policy, and culture. The majority of the materials were manuals, guidebooks, reports, and training curriculums from the past forty years.

"Justice, judicial and legal issues, and policymaking are important subject areas that we document in the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies," said Director of the Russell Library, Ms. Sheryl B. Vogt. "To date, we have the papers and records of twelve judges at the federal, state, and local levels; the ACLU Chapter of Georgia; and a number of law offices as well as files related to specific cases. Adding records from the Administrative Office of the Courts of Georgia strengthens the materials we have by providing a context for understanding Georgia's modern judicial system, reviewing the conduct and interests of the courts over time, and analyzing the intersection of the judicial and legislative branches in Georgia. This addition is a boon not only for our patrons but also our staff in the process of working with judicial and legal materials and improving reference services in this area of study."

The information came from various sources including: the Judicial Council of Georgia, the Supreme Court of Georgia, the State Justice Institute, the National Center for State Courts, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Judicial College, and the National Association of Court Managers.

The AOC is proud to leave these archival materials to the Russell library, where all can access them. For more information about the Richard B. Russell Library, please click [here](#).



During the month of November, AOC employees showed their giving spirit during several charity events. On November 17, a joint book sale and bake sale was held. Judicial branch employees perused and purchased books donated by AOC employees. Additionally, everyone enjoyed the sweet treats baked by AOC employees. A Silent Auction was held on November 29, which stirred up some healthy competition as bidders vied for spa sets, wine paraphernalia, Bob Bray's famous

Muscadine jellies, framed art, and more!

Through the auctions and sales, the AOC contributed \$882.00 to charities across the state. Additionally, staff brought in canned goods for the Atlanta Community Food Bank and made personal contributions through the State Charitable Contributions Campaign. Even though budgets are tight, the AOC showed its generosity for those in need.

Supreme Court of Georgia Honors Jill Radwin

On January 10, 2012, the Supreme Court of Georgia honored the life and work of Ms. Jill Radwin. For the full text of the Resolution, please click [here](#).



(Left to right) Rusty Radwin, brother; Marion Radwin, mother; Myron Radwin, father; Gary White, husband; Holly Mazer, sister.



End of the Year Staff Meeting

On December 15, 2011, the Administrative Office of the Courts met for its last staff meeting of an eventful year. Judge John J. Ellington, Court of Appeals of Georgia, was the invited guest speaker. Judge Ellington was introduced by AOC Director Marla Moore as the only person who could be said to be a former and future Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals (Judge Ellington stepped down for two months to allow Judge Charles B. Mikell the opportunity to be Chief Judge). Presiding Judge Herbert E. Phipps also spoke briefly.

Judge Ellington, “The judge from Soperton, Georgia,” spoke to AOC staff about the important work being done by the agency. Having served on many trial benches prior to his appointment to the Court of Appeals, Ellington noted that he had seen and been involved with the work that the AOC performs for all classes of court in the state.

Reports were given from the Financial, IT, and Court Services Divisions as well as the Governmental and Trial Court Liaison, Legal, Communications, and Human Resources sections. The AOC conducts all-staff meetings monthly to keep all members of the staff informed about important matters affecting the agency and the judiciary.

Conference Rooms

The AOC has recently renamed its conference and training rooms to be more easily identified and honor former AOC directors. Because the office space for the AOC spans one floor of two buildings, conference rooms were known for their building numbers.

“No longer will you be asked to a meeting in the 244 Conference Room,” said Ms. Marla Moore, AOC Director. “Now you will be attending a meeting in the Doss Conference Room.” The Doss Conference Room is named after Mr. Robert L. Doss Jr., who served as the agency’s longest-serving director. The 254 Conference Room has been designated the Lange (pronounced LAHNG-uh) Conference Room, named after Mr. George Lange, Director from 1998-2000. The Training Room is now the Ratley Training Room, remembering former director Mr. David L. Ratley, who was responsible for the acquisition of the 3rd floor of the 254 Building.

ON BALANCE Contributors

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