

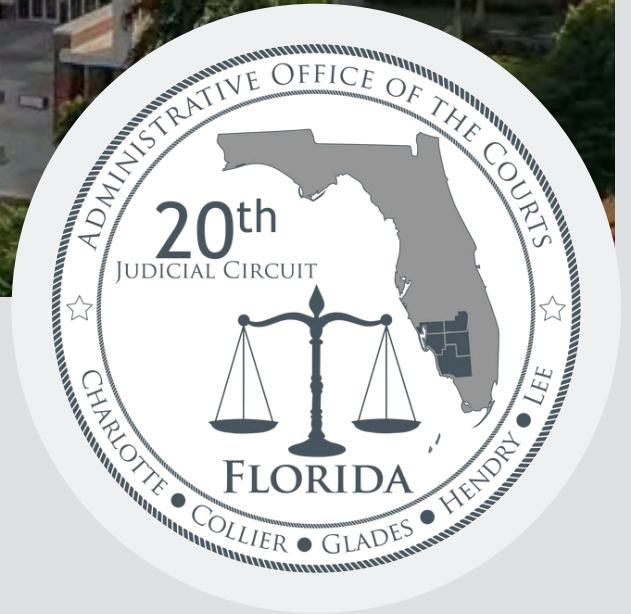
2024

Circuit Times

Newsletter

Vol. 2

Newsletter of the
20th Judicial Circuit



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Investiture for Judge Kimberly Davis Bocelli
- Celebrating Treatment Court Month
- Statewide Trauma Workshop overview
- Photos from around the courts and out in the community
- 2024 Hurricane Outlook

...and much more!



INVESTITURE OF LEE COUNTY JUDGE KIMBERLY DAVIS BOCELLI

Lee County Judge Kimberly Davis Bocelli was officially sworn in during her investiture ceremony on Friday, April 5th at the Lee County Justice Center in Fort Myers. In front of a packed courtroom of over 100 attendees, Judge Bocelli, appointed by Gov. Ron DeSantis last November, graciously acknowledged the support she has received from family, friends, and legal colleagues throughout her life. She also outlined her plans for her time on the bench.

"I will work hard, I will follow the law, and will serve this community with unbiased patience and dignity and respect so that I may continue to earn the trust that you all have placed in me," said Judge Bocelli.

The event included a special presentation by Florida Supreme Court Justice John D. Couriel, welcoming her to the bench.

"Many of us also drift on this big ocean and if you feel like these waters are too rough, look around because there are many of us who stand ready to help when you feel that way," said Justice Couriel, offering words of encouragement.

Circuit Judge John Carlin administered the oath, chosen by Judge Bocelli for his unwavering support since her early days as a student lawyer, through her career as an attorney, and now as a judge.



Judge John Carlin swears in Judge Bocelli

The ceremony was presided over by Chief Judge J. Frank Porter and featured touching speeches by her father, Ronald Davis, and her friend and attorney, Lori L. Moore, who praised her character and dedication.

"She is determined, the most hardworking, sincere, and honest in the most intentional way possible," said Attorney Moore.

Judge Bocelli is honored to serve the community where she was born and raised. Her commitment extends beyond the courtroom, as she is actively involved in various committees dedicated to judicial education and participates in local nonprofit organizations, including the Rotary Club of Fort Myers-Downtown and the Fort Myers Track Club.



Justice Couriel speaks at Judge Bocelli's Investiture



Judge Bocelli and her Judicial Assistant, Adela

RYAN LEAF INSPIRES DURING TREATMENT COURT MONTH



Lee County Treatment Courts Team with Ryan Leaf

In honor of National Treatment Court Month, we are thrilled to recognize the incredible work of our treatment courts here in the 20th Judicial Circuit of Florida. Recently, we had the privilege of hosting Ryan Leaf, a former NFL player turned mental health advocate, at our Lee County Drug Court, Mental Health Court, and Veterans Treatment Court.

"90 percent of what success would be is just showing up," said Ryan Leaf. "That last 10 percent is what you do when you are there."

Ryan shared his inspiring journey and valuable insights with our participants in Courtroom 1A at the Lee County Justice Center. As the CEO of RAM Consultant, Inc. and a football analyst for Westwood One Sports, Ryan brings a unique perspective to the conversation around mental health and substance use. His impactful story, featured in the podcast "BUST: The Ryan Leaf Story," bravely confronts stigma and promotes understanding.

"It doesn't matter if you are a starting NFL quarterback or if you are graduating drug court today, we are all the same. We don't get viewed the same a lot of the time and that's because of the perspective someone brings to the table," said Leaf.

Ryan Leaf was drafted as the second overall pick in the 1998 NFL Draft and was seen as a promising star. However, his career took a different turn, leading to an early exit from the NFL.



Mr. Leaf speaks to participants

After leaving football, Ryan struggled with an addiction to prescription painkillers. This led to an arrest for burglary and drug possession in 2012, which culminated in a 32-month prison sentence. In prison, Ryan began to rebuild his life. His experience with addiction and recovery has equipped him with an understanding of the challenges individuals face in overcoming substance use disorders.

"You see once you do the work, you see the self-help from it and you understand and develop the skills that you can get through anything if you want to," said Leaf. "90 percent of it is showing up. You show up you do the work. If you fail, you get back up and you do it again."

Ryan's visit to our treatment courts was a powerful reminder of the importance of support and understanding in the journey to recovery. We are grateful for Ryan's visit and his contribution to raising awareness about mental health and substance use issues.



Mr. Leaf with Judge Mirra and Judge Gagliardi

NATIONAL TREATMENT COURT MONTH



Lee County celebrated several graduations from its Mental Health Court during #MentalHealthAwareness Month. This innovative program offers a voluntary alternative to the traditional court system for individuals with severe and persistent mental illnesses, particularly when their offenses are linked to their diagnoses.

Participants in the Mental Health Court receive coordinated assistance and treatment throughout the program. Their progress is closely monitored as they work toward their recovery goals. This supportive approach not only addresses the root causes of their behaviors but also promotes rehabilitation and reintegration into society.



Graduates of the program will be connected with mental health service providers, ensuring they have ongoing support for their future well-being. This milestone underscores the effectiveness of the Mental Health Court in promoting rehabilitation and long-term stability for individuals with mental health challenges.

We celebrated Treatment Court Month with a special visit from Premier Mobile Health Services!

The Lee County Treatment Courts Team hosted their Mobile Health Services bus, offering free preventative health services to participants and the community. From education to outreach and comprehensive care, the service brings wellness to underserved areas.



The City of Naples along with Collier County proclaimed May as National Drug Court Month!

Each year, the treatment court community comes together to celebrate National Treatment Court Month. This is our annual opportunity to share our success, educate the public, and engage elected officials. Judge Janeice Martin was joined by public officials, the treatment court team, and participants.





COURT PANEL TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS WITH AN EMPHASIS ON MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE DISORDERS

Written by: [The Florida Bar News](#)

The Supreme Court has charged the Steering Committee on Problem-Solving Courts with the ongoing responsibility of addressing the needs of individuals engaged with the court system due to mental illness and substance use disorders.

This mandate spans the next two years and emphasizes the application of differentiated case management principles alongside other evidence-based and emerging best practices.

The court has tasked the committee with:

- Recommending revisions to Supreme Court-approved best practice standards or guidelines, as needed, to ensure best practices remain current and consistent with new research and guidance.
- Continuing to provide guidance to the Office of the State Courts Administrator on the development of statewide problem-solving court training initiatives on best practices.
- Continuing to provide guidance to the Problem-Solving Court Advisory Group in making funding recommendations to the Trial Court Budget Commission, as needed, based on regular updates provided by the advisory group.
- Overseeing and providing guidance and direction for implementation of the Problem-Solving Court Certification Program and submitting a report to the court on the outcomes of the pilot program no later than June 30, 2025.

The Steering Committee, chaired by **Collier County Judge Janeice Martin**, is authorized to propose rule changes that are necessary to fulfill the charges set forth in Administrative Order No. AOSC24-50.

“The Steering Committee is also authorized, in accordance with the applicable state court system protocols, to propose for the Court’s consideration statutory changes that are necessary to fulfill the charges in this administrative order and to address statutory changes previously proposed by the Steering Committee and approved by the Court but that have not yet been enacted,” according to the July 19 order.

Those appointed or reappointed to serve on the Steering Committee for a term that expires on June 30, 2026, include:

- Judge Hope Tieman Bristol, 17th Judicial Circuit
- Melanie Brown-Woofter, president/CEO, Florida Behavioral Health Association
- Chief Judge Shawn Crane, Sixth Judicial Circuit
- Judge David Denkin, Sarasota County
- **Judge Josephine Gagliardi, Lee County**
- Patty Harris, Trial Court Administrator, 19th Judicial Circuit
- Gina Justice, Trial Court Administrator, 13th Judicial Circuit
- Judge Alicia Latimore, Ninth Judicial Circuit
- Judge Steven Leifman, Miami-Dade County
- Judge Steven Levin, 19th Judicial Circuit
- Magistrate Shannon Lord, 14th Judicial Circuit
- Judge Melanie May, Fourth District Court of Appeal
- Desiree Meaton-Francisco, director, Medication-Assisted Treatment Program DACCO Behavioral Health
- Ita Neymotin, Regional Counsel, Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, Second District
- Dr. Roger Peters, professor emeritus, University of South Florida
- Kelly Steele, director of case management, Ninth Judicial Circuit
- Alina Stoothoff, court operations consultant, Fifth Judicial Circuit
- Magistrate Donna Vincent, Fourth Judicial Circuit

The court said the success of Florida’s problem-solving courts depends upon effective communication among all stakeholders, and the following representatives, or their designees, shall also serve as members of the Steering Committee:

President, Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association
President, Florida Public Defender Association
Secretary, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
Secretary, Florida Department of Children and Families

FAMILY LAW SECTION PARTNERS WITH OSCA FOR NEW STATEWIDE TRAUMA WORKSHOP SERIES

A Trauma Informed Court(s) workshop was held on Friday, June 7th, 2024 at the Lee County Administration Building East. The Office of the State Courts Administrator (OSCA) and the family law section of the Florida Bar facilitated eleven of these workshops around the State of Florida through June 2024.

The goal of the workshop was to provide education in an effort to cultivate trauma-informed and trauma-responsive domestic relations courts around the state.

"This is an unprecedented alliance that was formed for one, critical purpose – to educate attorneys, legal professionals, and members of the judiciary on the importance of understanding how trauma affects so many family law-related cases," said Sarah E. Kay, chair of the Family Law Section. "We must do better to understand how actions and decisions we make affect these families, and we are incredibly grateful to Rose Patterson at OSCA and Judge Jack Helinger of the Sixth Circuit Court for working with us to develop this important series."

The goal is to better serve Florida's families by cultivating trauma-informed and trauma-responsive domestic relations courts.

The day-long, interactive workshops addressed the impact of toxic stress, adverse childhood experiences, resiliency, self-care technology, and guiding principles for family courts.



Judges Carolyn Swift, Mary Evans, Janeice Martin, Gilberto Perez, Lee Schreiber, and Kimberly Davis Bocelli



Judge Elisabeth Adams addressing the group during the workshop



Some of the therapy dogs stopped by during a break to interact with participants

CONGRATULATIONS TO...



JUDGE CHRIS BROWN

Judge Christopher Brown was appointed to serve as a judge on the Circuit Court bench. Judge Brown has served as a County Court Judge for Collier County since 2023. Previously, he was a Partner at Brown, Suarez, Rios & Weinberg, P.A. He earned both his bachelor's degree and his juris doctor from the University of Florida. Brown fills the judicial vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Leigh Hayes.

MICHELLE ON YOUR RETIREMENT!

Congratulations on your retirement, Michelle! After an incredible 27 years at the Administrative Office of the Courts as an Administrative Assistant for the Lee County Mediation Department, it's time to enjoy the next chapter. Your dedication and hard work have made a lasting impact. Cheers to new beginnings!



MAGISTRATE JOSEPH BERNARDO

With over three decades of legal experience, Mr. Bernardo has served citizens in Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades, and Hendry counties, specializing in personal injury law.

Mr. Bernardo has been practicing law since 1986, after receiving his Juris Doctorate degree from Florida State University. He was awarded the Alpha Lambda Delta Scholastic Achievement award at FSU and graduated with honors. Prior to his concentration in personal injury, Mr. Bernardo was assistant State Attorney for the 20th Judicial Circuit.

JUDGE DEBORAH CUNNINGHAM

Governor Ron DeSantis has appointed Deborah Cunningham to the Collier County Court bench. Cunningham, who has served as an Assistant State Attorney in the 20th Judicial Circuit since 2000, succeeds Judge Christopher Brown, who was recently elevated to the Circuit bench. Cunningham holds a J.D. from the University of Florida and a bachelor's degree from Brandeis University. Congratulations to Judge Cunningham on this significant advancement in her career!



LEE COUNTY JUDGE KIMBERLY DAVIS BOCELLI ON YOUR AWARD!

Congratulations to Judge Bocelli for being this year's recipient of the Lee County Association of Women Lawyers judicial award! Several of our judges and local attorneys were present to celebrate this honor.

INSPIRING future LEADERS >>>

National "Take our Daughters and Sons to Work" day was celebrated at the Lee County Courthouse.

This opportunity is truly a rewarding experience each year allowing them to learn first-hand the value of an education, the importance of setting goals at a young age and how each person contributes to the essential work we do every day.

The day was filled with tours including the security checkpoint and control areas, courthouse and Juvenile Assessment Center. The kids observed their parent working, observed Drug Court in session and also had the opportunity to meet Lee County Judge Gagliardi and even try on a judge's robe. To finish the day, the kids got to meet the Fort Myers Police Department K-9 and handlers and were given certificates for completion of the day.

The 2024 theme was "Inspire 2 Aspire," instilling a mindset that children can choose their own future.



WHAT AN INCREDIBLE END TO Lee County Teen Court 2023-2024 SESSION!

Lee County's Teen Court's year-end celebration at the Edison Lunch Box at the Lee County Justice Center was a huge success. Thank you for catering and hosting the event! It was wonderful to see all the participants and supporters come together to celebrate their achievements.

Teen Court will resume in the Fall after school starts back up. We can't wait to see everyone again for another impactful year!



COURT STAFF OVERCOME TRAVEL HURDLES TO ATTEND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Attending the National Association of Court Managers (NACM) conference is always a highlight for our court staff. It provides invaluable opportunities for professional development and networking. This year's conference, held in festive New Orleans, promised to be no exception. However, our team faced significant travel disruptions on their day of travel due to a grounding of Delta, United, and American Airlines flights out of Fort Myers.

Despite these challenges, our staff remained determined. Some had to take connecting flights that took them far out of their way, while others booked last-minute tickets with Southwest Airlines, which was unaffected by the outage.



Once in New Orleans, the travel issues were *somewhat* quickly forgotten. Our staff members participated in workshops, panels, and networking events, gathering valuable insights and exchanging best practices with colleagues across the country. The sessions covered a wide range of topics, including court technology, case management, and leadership development. The theme for this year's conference was "Leading Leaders into the New Tomorrow."

The conference also offered moments of camaraderie and team building. Despite the travel interruptions, our staff enjoyed exploring the rich cultural heritage of New Orleans and bonded over their shared experiences.

LEE COUNTY CRIMINAL DIVISION ATTENDS FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS CONFERENCE



The Lee County Criminal Division recently attended the Florida Association of Community Corrections (FACC) conference, held in conjunction with the Florida Police Accreditation Coalition (FLA-PAC). The conference, which occurs three times a year, provided an opportunity for agencies to undergo accreditation or reaccreditation reviews after completing self-assessment and formal assessment phases. Throughout the week, attendees participated in training sessions across all four disciplines of community corrections, ensuring they stay updated on best practices and industry standards.

AROUND THE COURTS



Celebrating a special day in Collier County as Circuit Judge Chris Brown presided over a heartwarming adoption! Congratulations to the new family, and thank you, Judge Brown, for making this moment unforgettable.



This July we celebrated the annual Pretrial and Probation Week in the Lee County Criminal Division. This week recognizes the incredible work done by community corrections professionals to restore trust and create hope and keep our communities safe. Mr. Stu Gooden, a representative from American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) also stopped by to thank the staff for the work that they do!



Our Judges had an amazing luncheon with the Lee County Bar Association at the annual Burritos with the Bench event. This gathering allowed attorneys to meet and connect with our judges in a relaxed and friendly setting at the Courthouse.



This past Administrative Professionals Day, we took the opportunity to celebrate and honor the unsung heroes of our office. Departments celebrated with special luncheons, personalized thank-you notes, and small tokens of appreciation to show how much we value their dedication. Thank you once again to our amazing administrative professionals for all you do!

IN THE COMMUNITY

JUDGES AND STAFF OUTSIDE OF THE COURTROOM



Lee County's Problem-Solving Court team recently toured Nan's Ranch, thanks to the Lee County Sheriff's Office. Designed by Sheriff Carmine Marceno, this facility helps inmates learn valuable skills, patience, and compassion while working with animals. Launched in May 2022, the project is largely funded by Inmate Welfare Funds from fees on inmate phone calls, messages, and commissary orders. This program benefits both the inmates and our community!

The Benchwarmers are back! We were delighted to see some of our Judges (both current and former!) participating in the Lee County Bar Association Foundation's annual charity golf tournament held in Fort Myers this past weekend. It was a wonderful day of golf and camaraderie, all for a good cause!



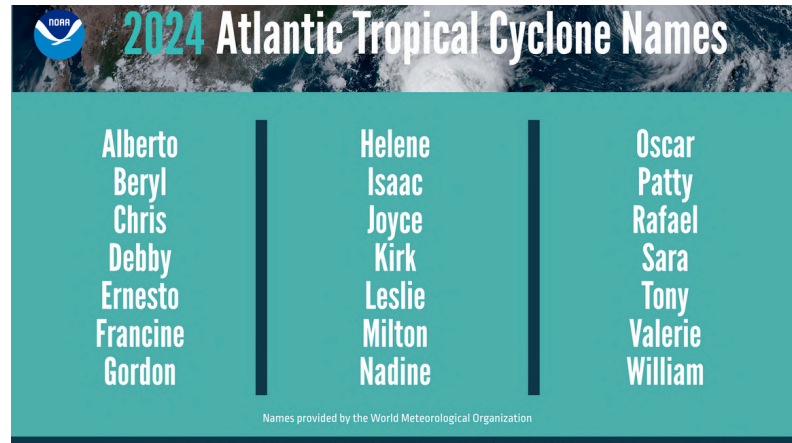
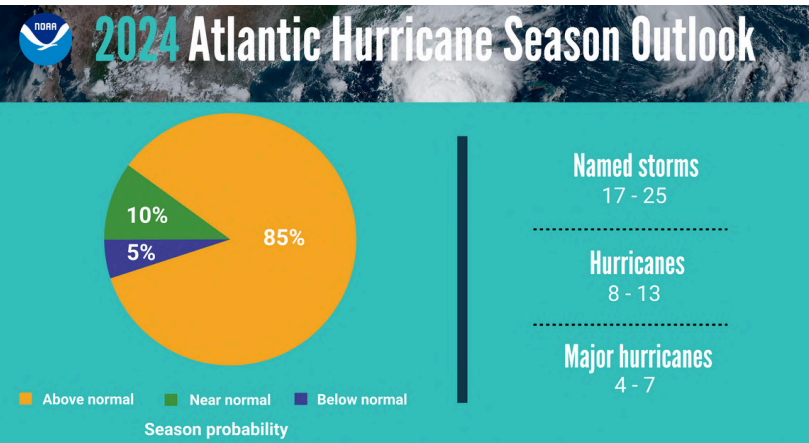
What a strike of success! Collier County and Circuit Judges Blake Adams, Tamara Nicola, Joseph Foster, Russell Kirshy, Chris Brown, and joined by John Nicola, formed a team for the Collier County Bar Association Young Lawyers Section Bowling Tournament. The team's name was Split Decision. Judge Adams was voted by his fellow teammates to be the Most Valuable Player and received the MVP Bowling Pin. Congratulations to the Young Lawyers on a successful event!

Lee County Probation Officer Team Lead Greg Thomas and Treatment Courts Manager Bridget Washburn had an incredible opportunity to engage with middle and high school students across the Lee County school district at Alico Arena! They were there to shine a light on career paths within the Criminal Justice field!

As part of the Government, Law, & Public Service section, the AOC was joined by an amazing lineup including the Cape Coral Fire Department, Lee County EMS, Lee County Dispatch, FDLE, and the City of Fort Myers!



2024 HURRICANE OUTLOOK



Latest Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook Calls For Even More Storms, CSU Forecasters Say

By Jonathan Erdman via [weather.com](https://www.weather.com)

July 9, 2024

CSU's tropical meteorology project team is forecasting 25 storms, 12 of which will become hurricanes and six of which will reach Category 3 status or stronger, in their latest outlook for 2024 released Tuesday morning.

This is an increase of two named storms, one hurricane and one major hurricane, in addition to an increase by 20 Accumulated Cyclone Energy units, from 210 to 230.

That is well above the 30-year average tally for both hurricanes and storms, and also markedly above the tally of 20 storms, seven hurricanes and three Cat 3-plus hurricanes in 2023.

This outlook includes the first three named storms of this season from June and early July, including Hurricane Beryl.

With Beryl (first hurricane) and Chris (third named storm) already in the record books, we're now weeks ahead of schedule. The average third tropical storm typically forms on August 3, followed by the fourth tropical storm on August 15. The first hurricane typically forms on August 11, followed by the second hurricane on August 26.

The two main drivers of an active season remain the same, both with increasing confidence:

1. The Atlantic's record warmth: Much of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and tropical Atlantic remain much warmer than average as we head through the summer. If other factors are equal, the deeper and warmer ocean water is, the stronger a hurricane can become.

2. La Niña expected by the peak of this season: NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting neutral conditions in the equatorial eastern Pacific to cool and become La Niña by the heart of this hurricane season, with a greater than 70% chance of developing.

This outlook of 25 storms implies we could exhaust the 2024 list of hurricane names.

To assist you in planning and preparing for a storm you may find the following websites helpful. Share these with your friends and family to ensure that they're prepared.

[READY.GOV](https://www.ready.gov)

[NATIONAL HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS](https://www.nhc.noaa.gov)

[FL DEPT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT](https://www.fl.gov)

[AMERICAN RED CROSS](https://www.redcross.org)

[FLORIDA SUPREME COURT EMERGENCY ORDERS](https://www.flcourts.org)

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THE CIRCUIT TIMES

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If you have pictures or a story to share, please email Sara Miles at smiles@ca.cjis20.org



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