

THE COURT REPORT

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***Court & Community: Working Together Today
For A Better Tomorrow***

The mission of the Ottawa County Probate and Juvenile Court is to provide efficient, fair, and quality services to the people of Ottawa County. We are committed to protect the rights and safety of our citizens, to work cooperatively with all community resources, and to improve the lives of children and families.

Common Pleas Court Juvenile & Probate Divisions

Judge

Kathleen L. Giesler

Court Administrator

Lori Clune

Director of Probation Services

Jay Faris

Probation Officers

Julie Bowman

William Lehr

Mike Reynolds

Stephanie Weeks

Specialized Dockets Coordinator

Cheryl Seigley

Special Projects Coordinator

BJ Surovjak

Diversion Officer

Elizabeth Holland

Chief Deputy Clerk

Robin Wahlers

Deputy Clerk/Intake Officer – Juvenile

Kay Kroeger

Deputy Clerk – Juvenile

Gloria Shenkel

Deputy Clerk – Probate

Linda Chapman

Deputy Clerk – Probate/Juvenile

Sue Jenkins

Deputy Clerk – Probate/Juvenile

Jennifer Simpson

A Message from the Judge...

Welcome to the premier edition of The Court Report! It is the hope of the Probate and Juvenile Courts that you will find useful information regarding our staff accomplishments, trends in probate practice and juvenile justice, and notification of upcoming events.

I want to thank the Strategic Planning Committee and particularly the Special Projects Coordinator, BJ Surovjak, for the time and effort given to the creation of this newsletter. Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for future editions, please get in touch with BJ at surovjak@co.ottawa.oh.us or by phone at (419) 734-7708.

Judge Kathleen L. Giesler is the first woman to be elected to judicial office in Ottawa County. Prior to her election in 2002, Judge Giesler served as Magistrate of the Common Pleas Court, General Division, for twelve years. She has been active in numerous professional and community organizations.



The Student Achievement Program is in its fifth year of operation, enabling students to achieve success in education. Sue Guerra, the classroom supervisor, is in her third year at SAP. Martin Fanning joined the program this fall as a full-time tutor.

The Student Achievement Program has served 99 students since its inception. Of that 99, 37 students were juniors and seniors when they entered SAP and 32 of those students met the course requirements needed to graduate from high school.

Program, Student Recognized

On December 11, 2009, Juvenile Court personnel involved with the Student Achievement Program traveled to Columbus to accept the Ohio Department of Youth Services Director's Award for outstanding program. Alicia Wadsworth, a Port Clinton High School student who attended SAP in 2009, was recognized by DYS as the outstanding student.

SAP is a program of the Ottawa County Juvenile Court in partnership with the Department of Job and Family Services, the Erie-Ottawa Mental Health & Recovery Board, the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department and Northpoint ESC. It provides an educational alternative to the traditional classroom. Students complete all their courses online. They hear a variety of speakers and take numerous field trips. They also participate in physical education, counseling, and life skills development. Personal growth, self-awareness, interpersonal skills and responsibility for one's behavior are stressed throughout the program.

There are currently 15 students in the SAP classroom who range in age from 14 to 18. The classroom is equipped with a kitchen, so students are learning culinary skills along with their academics.



Department of Youth Services award presenters and recipients pictured (left to right) are Director of DYS Thomas Stickrath, Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice chair Tom Mullen, First Lady of Ohio Frances Strickland, Jackson County Juvenile/Probate Court Judge Stephen D. Michael, Ottawa County Juvenile/Probate Judge Kathleen L. Giesler, Ottawa County Juvenile/Probate Court Administrator Lori Clune, coordinator of the Student Achievement Program BJ Surovjak, SAP classroom monitor Sue Guerra, Ottawa County Commissioner James Sass.



DYS Outstanding Student award recipient Alicia Wadsworth with, from left, Judge Kathleen L. Giesler, Alicia with son Jack, parents Jenny and Terence Wadsworth.



LORI CLUNE CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE ADMINISTRATOR

Lori Clune, Ottawa County Probate and Juvenile Court Administrator, has completed the certification process to become a Professional Juvenile Justice Administrator (PJJA).

The certification process teaches critical skills and knowledge for effective administrative performance within the juvenile justice system. Emphasis is placed on the development of management and leadership competencies regardless of one's area of specialization within the system. The Professional Juvenile Justice Administrator distinguishes these administrators as persons who have reached the highest levels of achievement in terms of knowledge and skills related to core competencies.

In addition, Clune was one of thirty-seven Ohio court professionals who graduated from a three-year course that updates their skills and helps them perform their jobs better. Offered through a partnership between the Supreme Court of Ohio's Judicial College and the National Center for State Courts Institute for Court Management since 1992, the Court Management Program addresses specific training needs of court leaders. Several states, including Ohio, bring this training program to court professionals so they don't have to travel to various national locations to complete the coursework.

Clune has been with the Ottawa County Probate and Juvenile Court for five years. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Michigan State University and her Master of Arts degree in rehabilitation counseling from Bowling Green State University. She is a graduate of the inaugural class of Leadership Ottawa County and served as president of the Ohio Association for Court Administration.

Until 1899, juveniles were tried in the same courts as adults. Youth 14 years of age and older could be sent to adult prisons. Social reformers were concerned about these children who were accused of crimes and fought for a separate juvenile court system. The first Juvenile Court for youth charged with committing criminal acts was established in 1899 in Illinois. By 1925, 46 states had created juvenile courts to act as wise and loving parents would: to treat, protect and reform these youth.

PROBATE COURT

Probate Court of Ottawa County accepts filings for decedent's estates, minor and incompetent guardianships, conservatorships, testamentary trusts, adoptions, mental illness, minor settlement claims, and wrongful death actions. Probate Court also issues marriage licenses, delayed registration and correction of births, and legal name changes.

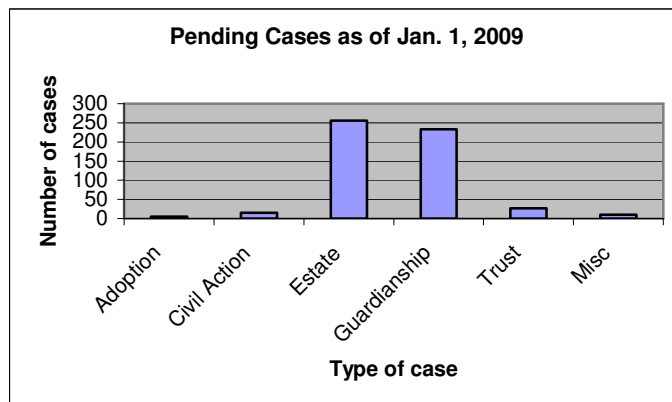
Kathleen L. Giesler, Ottawa County Probate Court Judge, appoints members to the Board of Developmental Disabilities, the county park district board, and agents for the Humane Society of Ottawa County. (Ohio Revised Code 2101.24)

In 2009, 406 new cases were filed and 259 marriage licenses were issued for a total of 665 new cases. Of those new cases, 471 were closed.

The following is a breakdown of the 665 new cases filed in Probate Court in 2009:

- Adoption – 12
- Civil Action – 12
- Estate Action – 327
- Guardianship of Incompetent – 17
- Guardianship of Minor – 9
- Guardianship of Conservatorship – 1
- Mental Illness – 4
- Change of Name – 16
- Minor Settlements – 3
- Lottery Prize – 1
- Registration or Change of Birth – 1
- Miscellaneous – 3
- Marriage – 259

As of January 1, 2009, there were 540 cases pending action from the previous year. The oldest case still open, a trust, was first filed in 1964. At the end of 2009, there were still 540 cases pending.



Guardianships fall into three categories: Guardianship of Incompetent (180 cases filed), Guardianship of Minor (51 cases), and Guardianship of Conservatorship (2 cases).