

COUNTY OF KANE
STATE OF ILLINOIS



SIXTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Not pictured: Honorable Eun Yoon



Office of the Chief Judge
37W777 IL RT 38, Suite 400A
St. Charles, Illinois

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WHO WE ARE

The 16th Judicial Circuit

The State of Illinois is divided into 25 Judicial Circuits (also known as trial courts), 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.



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
- Professional
- Timely
- Effective
- Collaborative
- Innovative
- Accountable

There are six courthouses located in Kane County



Kane County Courthouse



Kane County Branch Court



Kane County Juvenile Justice Center



Aurora Branch Court



Elgin Branch Court



Kane County Judicial Center

CHIEF JUDGE'S WELCOME

Please take a moment to review our annual report to learn about the outstanding work performed by the 16th Judicial Circuit in 2024.



HONORABLE ROBERT VILLA

Chief Judge
16th Judicial Circuit Court

FOCUS ON 2024

Year in Review



JAN

MAY

AUG

Eun K. Yoon is appointed
16th Judicial Circuit
Associate Judge



16th Judicial Circuit hosts
High School Mock Trial
competition



Former Chief Judge
Clint Hull retires
from the bench



FOCUS ON 2024

Year in Review



SEPT

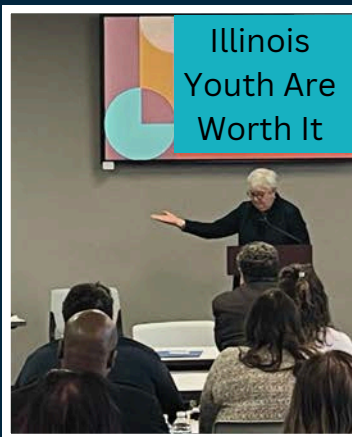
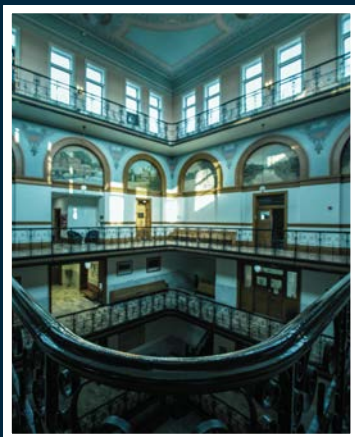
OCT

DEC

Renovation project begins to update 132-year-old Kane County Courthouse

IL Supreme Court Chief Justice Theis at Juvenile Justice Center

16th Judicial Circuit uses modernization allocation to improve juror services



KANE COUNTY JUDGES

In Circuit Courts, there are two types of Judges, Circuit Judges and Associate Judges. The Sixteenth Judicial Circuit has 14 Circuit Judges and 17 Associate Judges.



CHIEF JUDGE

Circuit Judges elect one of their members to serve a three-year term as Chief Judge. The Honorable Robert Villa is the Chief Judge of the 16th Judicial Circuit, serving his term from 12/1/2023 to 11/30/2026.

Circuit 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 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.

Notable in 2024

On January 29, Kane County Assistant Public Defender Eun Yoon was appointed to Judge Marmarie Kostelny's Associate seat as a result of her retirement in December 2023.

On December 2, Associate Judge Sandra Parga was elected to fill Circuit Judge Clint Hull's seat as a result of his retirement on August 16.

KANE COUNTY JUDGES

CIRCUIT JUDGES

Hon. Robert K. Villa
Chief Judge

Hon. John A. Barsanti
Presiding Felony Division

Hon. Susan Clancy Boles
Presiding Civil Division

Hon. Kevin T. Busch

Hon. Bianca Camargo

Hon. René Cruz
Presiding Traffic/Misdemeanor and
DUI Problem-Solving Court

Hon. John G. Dalton

Hon. Kimberly DiGiovanni
Presiding Family Division

Hon. Elizabeth K. Flood

Hon. Joseph M. Grady

Hon. Clint Hull
Retired August 16

Hon. Michael J. Noland

Hon. Sandra T. Parga

Hon. D.J. Tegeler

Hon. Julio César Valdez

NEW ASSOCIATE JUDGE EUN YOON

*Judge Yoon is the first Korean American
judge to serve in Kane County.*

Receiving the most votes cast by the Circuit Judges of the 16th Judicial Circuit, Assistant Public Defender Eun Yoon was selected to fill the vacant position left by the retirement of Judge Marmarie J. Kostelny.

Judge Yoon said of hearing the news she was elected to serve as Associate Judge, "Over my years as an Assistant Public Defender, I have gained profound respect for the 16th Circuit Judiciary. I am deeply grateful to be part of the judges who dedicate themselves to public service. It is a tremendous honor and privilege for the opportunity to serve the community of Kane County."

ASSOCIATE JUDGES

Hon. Reginald N. Campbell

Hon. M. Lark Cowart

Hon. Bradley P. David

Hon. Christine A. Downs

Hon. William G. Engerman

Hon. Keith A. Johnson

Hon. Kathryn D. Karayannis
Presiding Juvenile Division

Hon. David P. Kliment

Hon. Lawrence W. Lobb

Hon. Salvatore LoPiccolo Jr.

Hon. Mark A. Pheanis

Hon. Divya K. Sarang

Hon. Todd B. Tarter

Hon. Alice C. Tracy

Hon. Julia A. Yetter

Hon. Eun Yoon



DEDICATED TO SERVICE

Kane County Judges are dedicated to service in their legal and local communities when they are not on the bench. They administer the oaths of office to elected officials, officiate wedding ceremonies, swear in their newly elected or appointed colleagues, teach at judicial conferences, visit school classrooms, serve on Illinois Supreme Court committees, judge Mock Trial competitions, and volunteer for local charities.



JUDGES SERVING IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES FOR ILLINOIS JUDGES ASSOCIATION JUDGES GO TO SCHOOL DAY

Judges Go to School Day is an annual event in Illinois where judges visit classrooms to read to students and discuss legal topics. The Illinois Judges Association organizes the event to encourage children to enjoy reading and learn about the legal system.

Hon. Bradley David



Hon. David Kliment



Hon. Keith Johnson



DEDICATED TO SERVICE



JUDGES AND DIRECTORS SELECTED AS FACULTY FOR JUDICIAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE (EDCON)

Eight Kane County Judges, along with the Director of the Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center, and the Director of the Kane County Diagnostic Center, were selected to present programs at the 2024 Supreme Court of Illinois Judicial College Education Conference held in Lombard, Illinois. The Supreme Court of Illinois requires each active Illinois judge to attain 30 hours of continuing judicial education every two years through attendance at the biennial conference.

EDCON FACULTY JUDGES AND PROGRAMS

Hon. Robert Villa

Building a Courtroom Team and A Collaborative Courtroom

Hon. Keith Johnson

Orders of Protection and Process/Domestic Violence

Hon. Kathryn Karayannis

Temporary Custody to Disposition: Early Stages of a Child Protection Case

Hon. Elizabeth Flood

Child Support and Maintenance

Hon. René Cruz

Child Interviews and Children as Witnesses in Domestic Relations Matters

Dr. Alexandra Tsang

Sexually Violent/Dangerous Persons

Hon. Clint Hull

SAFE-T Act

Hon. Sandra T. Parga

How to Overcome Language Barriers Inside and Outside the Courtroom

Hon. Divya Sarang

Ozawa and Thind: Asian Americans and U.S. Legal History

Hallē Eichert

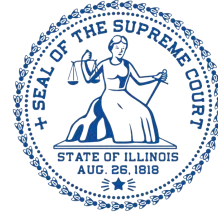
Self-Represented Litigants



Hon. Keith Johnson
EdCon Faculty

FOCUS ON SERVICE

JUDGES SERVE ON SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES, PANELS, BAR ASSOCIATION AND FOUNDATION COMMITTEES



Hon. Julio César Valdez

Gail Borden Library Foundation

Supreme Court of Illinois Committees and Appointments

Hon. Kathryn Karayannis

- Supreme Court Committee on Juvenile Courts
- SAFE-T Act Judicial Subcommittee member
- Juvenile Courts ICWA Workgroup member

Hon. Bradley David

2nd District Chairperson for the Illinois Judges Association's Pro Bono Committee

Hon. Julia Yetter

Judicial Work Group for the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Pretrial Education

Hon. Bianca Camargo

Illinois Judicial Conference Juror Experience Task Force Vice Chair



The Korean American Bar Association of Chicago awarded their 2024 Community Service Award to Hon. Eun Yoon, one of the first Korean female judges in Illinois.



Hon. Kimberly DiGiovanni

American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers Judges' Panel CLE Seminar at Kent Law School

FOCUS ON SERVICE

JUDGES VOLUNTEER FOR MOCK TRIAL COMPETITIONS, CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS, AND SWEARING-IN CEREMONIES



Hon. Todd Tarter



Hon. John Dalton



Hon. Divya Sarang



Hon. Todd Tarter
Northern Illinois
Food Bank
volunteer



Hon. Michael Noland



Hon. René Cruz



Hon. Julia Yetter
Metea Valley High
School Youth &
Government Mock
Trial

Hon. Eun Yoon
Metea Valley
High School
Youth &
Government
Mock Trial



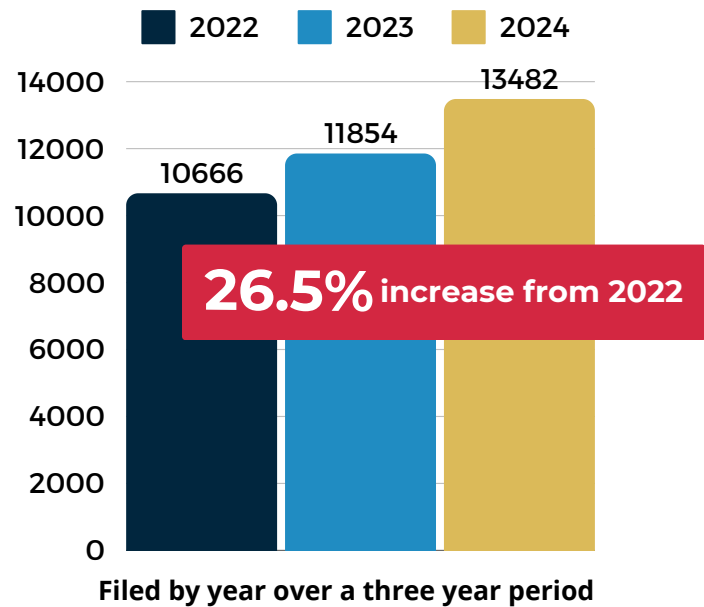
Hon. Mark Pheanis, Hon. Kevin
Busch, & Hon. Kathryn
Karayannis
Kane County Bar Show

CIVIL DIVISION

Report by Hon. Susan Clancy Boles
Presiding Judge Civil Division



CIVIL CASES
Case types: AR, CC, CH, ED, EV, FC, GC, LA, LM, MR, MX, SC, TX



The Civil Division remains busy and is current with no trial backlogs. 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.

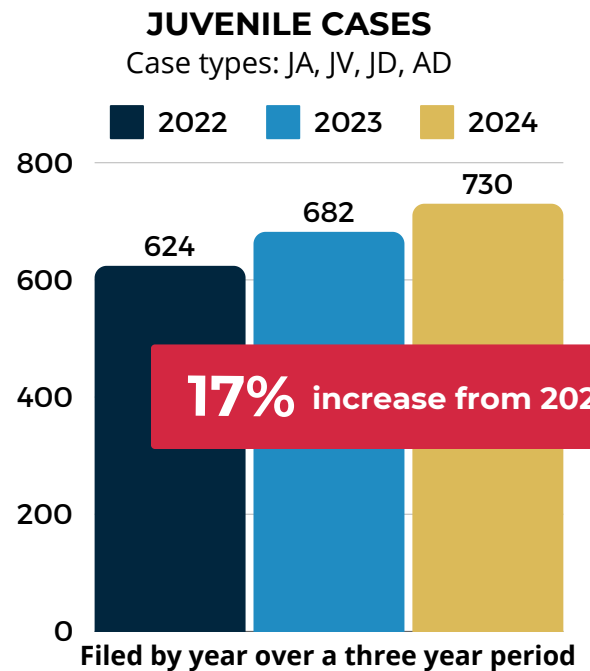
Renovations at the 132-year-old Kane County Courthouse began September 24, 2024, to restore the historic building which has not been renovated since 1975. Chief Judge Villa is overseeing the building project which will create welcoming spaces for visitors and jurors. Six spaces in the courthouse will be transformed into accommodating areas for the public, including Courtroom 150's transition into a new jury lounge.

The Civil Division is also engaged in developing an online eviction 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 resolution. We hope to have some functional data on the success of this pilot program by the end of 2025.

The outlook for 2025 remains strong as we will continue to upgrade and improve our technology and infrastructure to meet the needs of today's court users.

JUVENILE DIVISION

Report by Hon. Kathryn Karayannis
Presiding Judge Juvenile Division



The Juvenile Division remains busy, with each courtroom continuing to efficiently hold in-person, remote, and hybrid proceedings. We find this to be of great benefit to all parties and judicial partners.

In 2024, Juvenile Division case filings continued to increase. Regarding Child Protection (JA) cases, 196 cases were opened, and 220 cases were closed. Closing JA cases equates to children achieving permanency either by returning home or having adoptions or guardianship goals finalized.

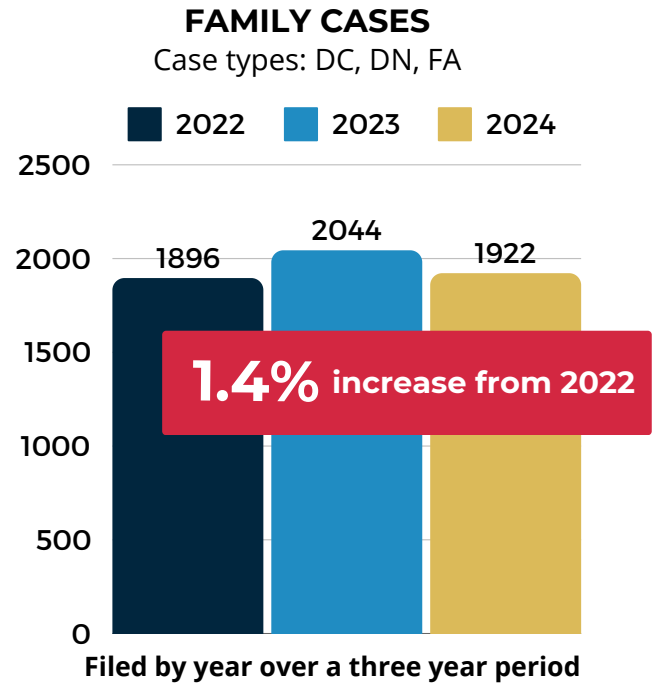
The Juvenile Division also addresses Adoption cases. In 2024, 151 cases were opened, and 146 were closed; many of these originated from JA cases in Kane or surrounding counties. Regardless of the origin of the case, it is always a happy day when smiling faces are seen in the courtrooms as adoption judgments are entered.

In 2024, 383 cases were opened in Juvenile Justice Court, and 668 cases were closed. A marked increase was noted in filings involving more serious offenses like possession of stolen motor vehicles, unlawful possession of firearms, and aggravated battery. At the same time, the mental health needs of the children in Juvenile Justice Court continued to be a prevalent issue. The Juvenile Justice Court works closely in tandem with the mental health team at the Juvenile Justice Center, the Kane County Diagnostic Center, and Juvenile Court Services to identify and provide services to assist families and children with mental health conditions. The entire team works hard to balance consequences and accountability with rehabilitation and services to enable our children to become productive citizens in our communities.

Judges Parga and Karayannis know it is a privilege to serve our youth and their families. The Juvenile Division will continue to work diligently to provide the best results for everyone in our courtrooms.

FAMILY DIVISION

Report by Hon. Kimberly DiGiovanni
Presiding Judge Family Division



The Family Division, in 2024, continued serving the citizens of Kane County by implementing new procedures, utilizing a hybrid of Zoom and in-person court appearances and working on perfecting technology for ease of access to justice. Judge DiGiovanni continued to serve as the presiding judge of the Family Division, with Judges Tracy, David, Johnson, Lobb, and Campbell presiding in their respective courtrooms.

Throughout the year, all of the judges in the Family Division continued to work diligently, as many of the issues affecting families throughout the changing financial landscape made their way to the family courtrooms. In addition to working in their courtrooms, Judge Johnson taught at the Supreme Court Educational Conference in February and April and also at New Judge Orientation in June on the topic of Orders of Protection/Domestic Violence. Judge David continued to serve on the Illinois Judges Association as the 2nd District Chairperson for the Pro Bono Committee. Judge DiGiovanni participated in several Judges' panel seminars related to various financial and child-related issues concerning family law. On Lincoln's birthday, several judges gave their time to travel to several Kane County elementary schools to participate in reading programs. All judges in the division attended a week-long judicial educational session hosted by the Illinois Supreme Court.

The Family Division dealt with issues and concerns involving job losses, mental health, substance abuse, parenting time, relocation, marital and nonmarital funds allocation, orders of protection, pre and post-nuptial agreements, and all other issues affecting families in Kane County.

Continued on page 17

FAMILY DIVISION

Continued from page 16

The Family Division has continued to refine its schedule to promote maximum transparency and access to courtrooms. In 2024, the Family Division implemented a new schedule that allocates every Monday morning to self-represented litigants. This schedule has proven to reduce the time spent in court for both the family law practitioners and the self-represented litigants. The judges in the Family Division continued a partnership with the Kane County Bar Association Family Law Committee to have volunteers in the Kane County Law Library on Monday mornings to assist self-represented litigants.

Although Zoom is available for all status dates, all hearings, trials, motions and pretrials are only conducted in person. Additionally, all divorce courtrooms are now located on the first floor of the Judicial Center to increase ease of access for all people.

The next project for 2025 is to have technology and monitors in every courtroom, allowing attorneys and self-represented litigants to present evidence in a digital format using the monitors and screens at the counsel table.

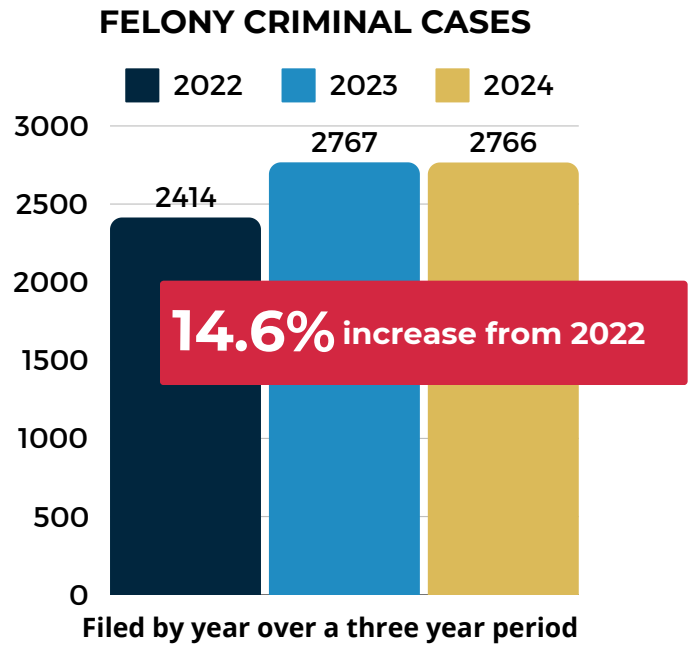
In 2024, the Family Division continued working with and communicating with the Kane County Bar Association's Family Division through town hall and in-person family law meetings and seminars. The Family Division also routinely updates the 16th Judicial Circuit's website with new orders and keeps the Kane County Law Library up-to-date on any changes. This allows the public better access to the courts and the Family Division. In 2024, the Family Division partnered with the Circuit Clerk to update several forms, which have also been updated on the clerk's website.

In 2024, 1,382 divorce actions were open, 540 family cases were open, and 1831 orders of protection opened. Of the divorce cases opened in 2024, almost 50% were concluded within the calendar year, and every order of protection case had a final disposition entered.

The Family Division continues to perform by disposing of cases and setting trials, hearings, and pretrials within a short timeframe. The judges of the Family Division consider it a privilege to serve our community and will continue to work diligently for all people and the 16th Judicial Circuit.

FELONY DIVISION

Report by Hon. John Barsanti
Presiding Judge Felony Division



A new Chief Judge and new responsibilities marked 2024 as a year of change for the felony division. Chief Judge Villa hit the ground running on December 1, 2023, with changes and new ideas that have already borne fruit to enhance the professionalism of the judiciary. With two more years for Judge Villa as Chief, I expect more of the same.

The other significant change for the judiciary and the entire State of Illinois is the continued maturation of the Pre-Trial Fairness Act. I am sure everyone knows that the Pre-Trial Fairness Act abolished cash bail in Illinois. This change has increased the workload for all felony judges, as any decisions to detain any defendant is immediately reviewable by the felony division before any appeal can be taken.

Also, all felony judges are required to review the defendant’s detention at every subsequent court date. While that translates into more work, all the felony judges have rolled up the sleeves of their robes and have taken on these new responsibilities with no decrease in effectiveness.

2024 FELONY JURY TRIALS BY OFFENSE TYPES THAT ARE ≥ 2*

By Offense	Total	By Offense	Total
Aggravated Battery	3	Attempted Murder	2
Aggravated Criminal Assault	4	Manufacturing & Delivery of a	
Aggravated Domestic Battery	2	Controlled Substance	2
Aggravated DUI	2	Resisting Police Officer	3
Armed Habitual Criminal	2	Violation of Order of Protection	2

*A total of 32 Felony Jury Trials were heard in 2024

MISDEMEANOR & TRAFFIC DIVISION

Report by Hon. René Cruz
Presiding Judge Misdemeanor & Traffic Division



In 2024, the Misdemeanor & Traffic Division continued providing remote and in-person access to the highest-volume courtrooms in Kane County. Additionally, the Judges in this Division conduct the highest volume of jury trials.

In August, Judge Engerman began presiding over CR209, Domestic Violence, as Judge Camargo moved to a Felony Courtroom.

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. The DUI Court Sentence Monitoring Program was established in 2023. Through 2024, the CSM program continues to allow first offenders to have their final return date canceled if all terms of their sentence are completed at least 60 days prior to said date, thereby reducing court calls and eliminating the need to take off work to attend a final court date.

The Misdemeanor & Traffic Division shall continue innovating and finding ways to increase justice access for Kane County court users in 2025.

2024 MISDEMEANOR JURY TRIALS BY OFFENSE TYPES THAT ARE $\geq 2^*$

By Offense	Total
Domestic Battery	17
Resisting Police Officer	2
Violating Order of Protection	2

***A total of 28 Misdemeanor Jury Trials were heard in 2024**

PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

Overview by Hon. René Cruz and Hon. Christine Downs



In 2024, Kane County operated four Problem-Solving Courts. During the year, Judge Cruz and Judge Downs worked with the program coordinators to promote consistency between the courts. Each court saw growth in applications. The judges worked together to raise awareness in the problem-solving courts by meeting with police agencies and other community groups. Judges and administrators from other jurisdictions came to Kane County to observe and learn from the 16th Judicial Circuit. Both judges shared ideas with their counterparts in Illinois and across the country.

The Specialty Courts Foundation has continued to be an important partner for all four Problem-Solving Courts. The Foundation assists participants with unique needs. They continued to supply incentives for those who achieved milestones in their recovery and provided financial support for pro-social activities. The individuals who serve on the Foundation attended graduations, holiday parties, court hearings, and other activities to encourage and congratulate the participants. The Specialty Courts Foundation was also the beneficiary of a fundraiser by Sheriff Ron Hain. This dinner event at the Sheriff's Office was well received and attended and provided funds for the Foundation to continue to do its important work.

One of the year's highlights came in September of 2024 when three of the Problem-Solving Courts paired with the Judiciary's Family Division staff, Elizabeth Williamson, Cassandra Gasca, and Mikaela Thorne, to provide a pro-social activity for the participants. A series of collaborative events with a meal and "pour painting" resulted in artwork for the Judicial Center and participants created artwork they could keep. The staff demonstrated the technique and taught the participants how to create paintings using this method, which requires no brushes or tools other than paint and canvases. Everyone had a great time, and similar events are on the horizon.

For the first half of the year, the Problem-Solving Courts were blessed to have DuoDog Forrest spend time with the participants. Sadly, Forrest became ill, retired in June, and passed away in July. He was an important part of our teams and is sorely missed.

DUI TREATMENT COURT

Report by Hon. René Cruz
Presiding Judge DUI Treatment Court



The DUI Treatment Court was commenced in June of 2023. This problem-solving 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, Veterans Court, and Treatment Alternative 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 program was estimated to have an initial capacity of 20 participants in the first year.

In 2024, the DUI Treatment Court Team attended both National and State-wide training for continuing education in the latest national treatment court standards. As a result, new assessment tools have been introduced to the program, and the team was expanded by adding two new probation officers as capacity far exceeded initial estimates. The team currently has seven members, including the Judge, Coordinator, Assistant State's Attorney, Public Defender, treatment provider, and two probation officers. The program has 43 participants and held its first Holiday Party for participants in December.

Moving into 2025, the training for team members will continue, as well as planning for anticipated continued growth.



DUI Treatment Court Team

DRUG REHABILITATION COURT

Report by Hon. Christine Downs



Drug Rehabilitation Court Team

The Kane County Drug Rehabilitation Court (DRC) 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.

Every three years, Illinois problem-solving courts must be recertified. 2024 saw the recertification of the Kane County Drug Court. This is a rigorous process with the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts. The AOIC review team commended the 16th Judicial Circuit for its thoughtful planning and carrying out of the onboarding of Judge Downs. The AOIC also found “[t]he [Kane County DRC] team is exemplary.”

As substance use disorder is often a disease of isolation, and learning to be social again is an important part of recovery, providing pro-social activities is essential for participant success. One of the highlights of the year was the DRC night out at a Kane County Cougars game. Judge Downs was invited to throw out the first pitch and enjoyed the tradition of taking the participants’ children to the ice cream stand. DRC hosted a lively book club for its participants in the Kane County Law Library. The art show was a huge success, with the participants participating as exhibitors and spectators. A picnic for all participants and alumni was held at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Participants joined in a collaborative event with the 16th Judicial Circuit’s Family Division staff for dinner and producing “pour paintings.” 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 unique gifts.

DRC is looking ahead to changes in its alumni and late-phase participant events for 2025. At the end of 2024, with the input of team members, participants, alumni, and Ellen Schmid of the Kane County Law Library, the old alumni group was revamped. The goal is to provide a solid connection between participants and alumni in a welcoming atmosphere to further reduce return to use and recidivism. The new “DRC Social Club” begins in January 2025.

In 2024, 65 applications were submitted for entry into the program. After a rigorous screening process, 29 individuals were accepted. Twenty-one individuals successfully completed the program’s strict requirements and participated in public graduation ceremonies. The graduation ceremonies were held in person in May and October and were live-streamed on YouTube. At the May Graduation, Judge Marmarie Kostelny (Ret.) was honored for her contribution to the Problem-Solving Courts of Kane County and her continued dedication upon retirement. In October, the Kane County Court Services DRC team members were honored for their commitment to the participants and citizens of Kane County.

TREATMENT ALTERNATIVE COURT

Report by Hon. Christine Downs



Treatment Alternative Court Team

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. In 2024, the Association for Individual Development (AID) provided outpatient mental health services for those living in the county's southern half. Various treatment facilities in the area provide substance use disorder treatment.

TAC must be recertified every three years by the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts. This rigorous process includes providing a great deal of information, interviewing the team members, and observing court hearings and staffing. The representative from the AOIC review team provided positive feedback. "This is a very strong team with commitment and dedication to the participants. The leadership is well-trained and always looking for ways to improve participant outcomes. The knowledge this team holds regarding available resources and treatment options is exceptional." On September 30, 2024, TAC was recertified.

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, the art show, the pour painting luncheon with the Judiciary's Family Division staff, and the 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 2024, 50 applications were reviewed for entry into the program, six were accepted into TAC, and six participants graduated. Each graduate has their own unique graduation ceremony.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Report by Hon. Christine Downs



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, and/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 that requires intensive judicial monitoring. To best meet all the needs of program participants, it brings local service providers together with substance use, mental health, and VA professionals.

One of the VTC team members, Nathaniel Johnson, Assistant Superintendent at the Veterans Assistance Commission of Kane County, effectively represented the Kane County VTC in 2024. His presentation, "Maximizing Resources at the Local, State, and Federal Level for Veterans in the Criminal Justice System and the Impact of Using a VSO on the Treatment Team," at the AllRise National Conference in California was very well received. Using his experience, including his time on our team, he provided practical information based in part on services we are able to provide in the 16th Judicial Circuit.

The VTC team continued to offer two tracks, high risk and low risk, to make the program accessible to more veterans. The number of acceptances doubled from 2023 to 2024. During the year, Coordinator Phil Wessel and Judge Downs tried to bring awareness of VTC to law enforcement by meeting with police agencies. The VTC garnered referrals as a direct result of this outreach and the VTC team giving a presentation at a Kane County Chiefs of Police meeting.

Pro-social events are an important part of recovery and living with mental health challenges. With the support of the Specialty Courts Foundation, several events took place in 2024. The VTC hosted its second Veteran's Day luncheon to honor the participants, alumni, and mentors. There was an engaging, inspirational guest speaker and excellent food. VTC participants were also part of the annual art show, displaying their art, and attending as the audience. The participants also gave back by participating in a service project at Hines VA. Finally, they celebrated the holidays with a luncheon attended by the participants and some of their family members.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

Report by Andrea O'Brien, Court Administrator and
Jason Mathis, Deputy Court Administrator



COURT ADMINISTRATORS

Under the direction of the Chief Judge, the Court Administrators of the 16th Judicial Circuit are responsible for supervising the court's non-judicial staff and managing court operations.

The Court Administrators supervise staff at our two main courthouse locations, the Kane County Courthouse and the Kane County Judicial Center. 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 16th Judicial Circuit's mission and vision, ensuring equal and timely court access while fostering public trust and confidence.

ARBITRATION CENTER

Rhiannon Anderson

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
Director

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 have court business.

The CWR is staffed daily with 2-3 employees. 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 16th Judicial Circuit help promote and encourage the public's confidence and respect for the judicial system through their presence 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 assist accessing Zoom to parties, attorneys, and litigants access remote Zoom court.

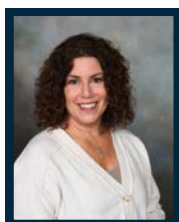
MEDIATION PROGRAMS

Brock Grenn
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 three mediation programs: Civil, Family, and Eviction.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

INTERPRETING SERVICES & LANGUAGE ACCESS



Elizabeth Cull
Interpreter Coordinator

The 16th 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 2024, Kane County's Interpreter Division fulfilled, on average, 5,000 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 Uz-bek, Tagalog, Q'eqchi, and Nahuatl. 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.

JURY COMMISSION

Mari Moore, Stacey Payne, and Jury Commission Clerks

The Office of the Jury Commission is tasked with the preparation of the general jury list, summoning, selecting, 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.

This year, the Jury Commission was instrumental in the implementation of Genesis, a new web-based jury management system. Genesis offers greater flexibility to our jurors by utilizing phone, online portal, or a chat feature for jurors to interact with the system and streamline how information is sent and received for their upcoming jury service. This new system, coupled with the jury payment system that was implemented in 2023, combine to make a smooth and inclusive process for Kane County residents performing this important service.

In 2024, a total of 15,450 jurors were summoned for jury duty. There were eight civil jury trials conducted at the Kane County Courthouse and 60 jury trials conducted at the Kane County Judicial Center.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

STAFF ATTORNEYS AND PARALEGAL



Karen Zajick
Senior Staff Attorney

Natalie M. Wenk
Staff Attorney

Samantha J. Sparks
Staff Attorney

Liza Valle
Paralegal and Probate Administrator

Under the direction of the Deputy Court Administrator, the Staff Attorneys assist the judiciary with various projects including legal research and drafting orders. In 2024, the Staff Attorneys completed 165 projects for both civil and criminal judges on a variety of issues including motions to dismiss, motions for summary judgment, motions to reconsider, motions to strike, motions to vacate, post-conviction petitions, venue, orders of protection and administrative matters relating to the judiciary.

Additionally, the Staff Attorneys and Paralegal assist in the courtrooms with self-represented litigants. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, they draft and complete the appropriate order in Laserfiche for self-represented litigants who are seeking orders of protection, stalking no contact orders or civil no contact orders in Courtroom 007 at the Judicial Center.

The Staff Attorneys and Paralegal also assist the self-represented litigants on Friday mornings with adult and minor name changes in Courtroom 250 of the Kane County Courthouse. In order for their cases to be resolved quickly, the Staff Attorneys and Paralegal complete handwritten orders regarding fee waivers, continuances, waiver of publication and orders granting or denying the name change.

In addition to her assistance with the plenary order and name change call, Liza Valle is the Probate Administrator. In this role, she assists self-represented litigants and attorneys with the probate process, providing the court forms that need to be completed and filed and providing resources for additional assistance to complete the probate process. Additionally, Liza drafts orders for cases with no future date or to reschedule matters when the court is unavailable, coordinates emergency motions to be heard, and assists with orders of protection matters with an underlying probate matter. In 2024, a total of 912 probate matters were filed relating to guardianships (estate, minor, or disabled adult) and the administration of a decedent's estate.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

PROTECTIVE ORDERS



Beth Williamson
Coordinator

Mikaela Thorne
Clerk

Cassandra Gasca
Clerk

The 16th Judicial Circuit Court assists self-represented litigants daily at the Kane County Judicial Center regarding protective orders. The Coordinator and Clerks facilitate the completion of petitions for Emergency Orders of Protection, Civil No Contact Orders, Firearms Restraining Orders, and Stalking No Contact Orders. Petitioners can complete requests for protective orders through one of three methods. Most petitioners engage in the process in person, while some submit their petition online and finalize it in person. Additionally, some petitioners seek protective orders via remote hearings after meeting the necessary statutory requirements. Staff attorneys and paralegals assist the judge in preparing orders during the plenary court call. The court intends to provide information and to ensure that the protective order process for self-represented litigants is as seamless as possible. This year, the court developed flyers to guide self-represented litigants in navigating their publications for family law cases.

In June, an overview of the various civil protective orders was presented to a small group of Kane County Bar Association members with the help of a pre-law intern from Eastern Illinois University. In the summer months, the court established a connection with the Fox Valley Therapy Dogs Program. Whenever therapy dogs are present at the judicial center, notifications are made to the public and support agencies, encouraging interaction. In September, coordination with three of the four specialty courts led to the creation of artwork for the recently renovated office space. The objective was to enhance the environment to feel welcoming and safe. By inviting the specialty courts to participate, it was believed that participants in these courts would experience a sense of ownership and progress in their treatment plans.

The court assisted 1,807 petitioners, reflecting a slight increase from the previous year. Notably, the court successfully assisted in approximately 91% of all requested protective orders filed during this fiscal year. Individuals seeking emergency protective orders originated from 26 municipalities within Kane County. The court recorded a modest increase in law enforcement referrals and a 31% rise in self-referrals. Furthermore, there was a 30% increase in petitioners requiring interpreter assistance.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

COURT REPORTING SERVICES



Jill Gasparaitis
Administrator of Court Reporters

Court Reporting Services* (CRS) in 2024 underwent many changes. Four of the 19 full-time Official Court Reporters retired. CRS was successful in hiring two court reporters and the first Court Specialist, a student of an online court reporting program to assist with monitoring/transcript production of the courtrooms with electronic recording.

The State of Illinois is experiencing a shortage of court reporters. Currently, there are 111 vacancies state-wide. Over half of the State's current official court reporters are 50 or older and eligible for retirement. Hiring court specialists/students for court reporting saves a necessary and unique field for our court system that digital recording and AI cannot replace. Official Court Reporters use state-of-the-art steno writers and software to prepare transcripts quickly and efficiently, many with real-time skills to assist the deaf and hard-of-hearing courtroom participants so they can read the proceedings as the case is happening in real-time.

The office continued its efforts to promote the profession this past year, showcasing CRS's role in the courtroom at mock trial competitions and high school career fairs. CRS participated in the county's third annual Spooktacular event and continued the tradition of the 3D snowflake hanging at the historic Kane County Courthouse for the holiday season.

This year, Official Court Reporters underwent a state-wide transcript format revision to meet the Illinois Plain Language Doctrine for ease of reading and uniformity of layout of transcripts. In addition, the State of Illinois is in the process of completing the third phase of adding electronic recording to nine more courtrooms at the Kane County Judicial Center (family, specialty courts, misdemeanor calls); the second phase was completed in 2023, Courtrooms 005 (Pretrial Detention Call) and 007 (Orders of Protection). By early 2025, the Judicial Center will have 11 courtrooms wired with electronic recording. This will be in addition to the five civil division courtrooms at the Kane County Courthouse. Upon completion of the third phase, the staff will monitor/prepare transcript orders and safeguard the storage of the electronic record of 16 courtrooms.

Court Reporting Services is excited once again to provide an official record for the Family Division after the State removed Official Court Reporters from covering these hearings/trials in the late 1990s. These duties will be performed in addition to the daily coverage of courtrooms staffed by "in person" official court reporters capturing the record in felony, Pretrial Fairness Act detention hearings, juvenile, mental health, as well as Grand Jury proceedings heard in the Kane County State's Attorney's Office.

*In the 16th Judicial Circuit, Court Reporting Services employees capture the verbatim record of the courtroom proceedings presented in the Felony, Misdemeanor, Juvenile, Specialty Courts, and Mental Health courtrooms, as well as monitor and prepare the official record from the courtrooms equipped with electronic recording.

COURT ADMINISTRATION

KANE COUNTY LAW LIBRARY & SELF HELP LEGAL CENTER



Hallē Eichert
Director

Ellen Schmid
Law Librarian

Izabella Cyran
Library Assistant

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 learning about how to navigate the legal system effectively and efficiently.

Supporting Our Community

KCLL created and hosts programs such 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 diligently enlists volunteer lawyers and brings them together with those in the community who could most benefit from free legal guidance. In 2024, volunteering lawyers assisted 945 members of the public through these four programs alone.

KCLL also partners with the Kane County Bar Association, acting as the host site for their Drivers' Privilege Clinic. In 2024, the once-a-month clinic assisted 44 people with license issues.

Brunch with the Best

During October's National Pro Bono Week, the KCLL and the Family Division judges hosted Brunch with the Best in the Law Library. This is a yearly thank you to all the lawyers who donate their time to local legal aid agencies and programs throughout the year. Through the efforts of these lawyers, many in the community are able to successfully move through their legal issues.

Access to Justice

KCLL continues to be active in and benefit from the Illinois Supreme Court's push for stronger public access to justice. In 2024, KCLL applied for and was granted \$20,000 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 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 used to translate documents corresponding to these programs and general informational materials into Spanish.

Continued on page 32

COURT ADMINISTRATION

Continued from page 31

KANE COUNTY LAW LIBRARY & SELF HELP LEGAL CENTER

The Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center was asked to host a site visit to the 16th Judicial Circuit by the (Illinois) Court Navigator Network, which included tours and eight speakers from the court system. Additionally, KCLL staff assisted the Kane County Circuit Clerk's Office in a more local partnership with an expungement clinic held at the Gail Borden (Elgin) Public Library.

Employee Recognition

In 2024, Director Hallē Eichert was chosen as one of four facility dog handlers for the 16th Judicial Circuit. She again was 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*. Eichert continues to be an active statewide Court-Library Partnership Steering Committee member. Additionally, she conducted basic legal research seminars at several local libraries and spoke at the *An Insider's Look: Kane County's Judicial System* presentation.

Law Librarian Ellen Schmid continues her work on the Information Technology and Libraries (ITAL) Editorial Board, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Library Association. She also continues her work on the *Kane County Bar Briefs* editorial board. One of her most significant accomplishments is creating the 16th Judicial Circuit's annual report. In 2024, she celebrated a decade as a vital member of the Kane County Law Library & Self Help Legal Center and the 16th Judicial Circuit.

Employee Welcome

In 2024, the KCLL welcomed our new Library Assistant, Izabella Cyran. She is tri-lingual (Polish, English, and Spanish). She puts these and her many other skills to work daily, assisting court-goers in their quest to effectively and efficiently utilize the court system.

Illinois JusticeCorps

In 2024, the Illinois Bar Foundation again awarded the 16th Judicial Circuit a full-time Illinois JusticeCorps Fellow. The Fellow's role is to help ensure positive court experiences for self-represented litigants. To this end, they work out of the KCLL 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 had again the pleasure of participating in the 2024 National Night Out hosted by the Kane County Sheriff's Office. The Librarian and Library Assistant 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 the JJC Book Club and upkeep the JJC Library.

Kane County Drug Rehabilitation Court

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

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

WORRIES OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB PROGRAM



Hon. Keith Johnson



Hon. Lark Cowart

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 students from making a mistake that could impact their lives and others in the future.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS



MOCK TRIALS

The 16th Judicial Circuit, in conjunction with the Kane County Bar Association and St. Charles North High School, annually host a high school Mock Trial competition.

Mock trials allow students the opportunity to present cases in a courtroom and in front of 16th 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 collegiate mock trial tournament hosts roughly two dozen teams from around the country and provides a full weekend of mock trial competitions.

SCHOOL VISITATIONS

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



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking a moment to reflect on our year of accomplishments. We look forward to 2025 and more opportunities to advance the 16th Judicial Circuit.

It will soon be easier than ever to stay up to date with our Circuit when we launch the *Kane County Courts Quarterly Newsletter* in Spring 2025.



CONTACT US

For more information about the 16th Judicial Circuit, please contact the Chief Judge's Office.

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