



Holiday Season in the Capitol



Pictured left to right, back row: Skyler Dowling, Jill McClanahan, Nancy Pahl, Jamie Robertson, John Kayser front row: Janet Borchard, Danette Zickrick, Aneliese Hight, Darla Livermont

SCAO Celebrates 2 Years Since the Odyssey Pilot

It has been two years since the UJS piloted Odyssey in the 3rd Circuit. With the implementation in the 4th and 7th Circuits in June 2013, the first phase is complete. IT staffers have now had a chance to reflect on lessons they learned from the Go Live and feel they may be useful to others in the UJS. *Lessons can be found on page 4.*

Submitted by IT Staff Members

Inside this issue:

Chief Justice Memo, SCA Message	2
Courthouse Postcard Collection, Rural Attorney Update	3
IT Lessons Learned, Employee Updates	4, 5-8
Gov. Speaks at Northern Hills Drug Court	9-10
Conference/Training Highlights	11
Building Pos. Momentum, Christine's Column, All Rise!	12,13,14
Remembering Judge Mildred Ramynke	15

Welcome to the twentieth issue of the UJS Newsletter!

Articles, information and feedback are welcome. Articles and information will be printed as space allows. Please email your information to Alison Goetz.

Chief Justice's Memo

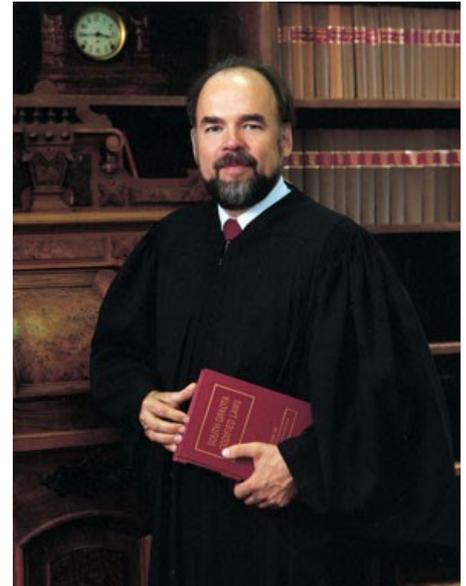
The seasons are changing once again. Fall has given way to Winter and we all know what comes after that - 20 below.

Likewise things are changing within the UJS as it moves forward to provide better judicial services to the citizens of South Dakota. Odyssey is now operational in all seven Circuits. Change is never easy and I know it has required many of you to adapt to something you were not used to. However in the end it will hopefully provide improvements for those who use our services and for those who work within our system. As we move on, the Seventh Circuit is on the point of experimenting with electronic filing in certain cases. In the not-too-distant future all those boxes of files and documents will hopefully

become a distant memory.

We also move forward with implementation of Senate Bill 70 which is the alternative sentencing bill. We are going to move into more communities in this State with programs like alcohol and drug courts, Veterans courts and HOPE and expand several existing programs. All with the goal of ending the current problem of seeing 53% of those sent to the penitentiary returning into our system within five years because of their continuing addiction to alcohol and/or drugs.

We are also seeking to locate up to 16 new attorneys in rural areas which now suffer from a lack of local access to legal services.



Chief Justice David Gilbertson

As I was writing this at home, I had the radio on and the song, "These are Better Days" by Bruce Springsteen came on. I hope it fits.



State Court Administrator's Message



Greg Sattizahn, State Court Administrator

Busy, busy, busy. That is how I would sum up the first few months in my new role as State

Court Administrator in three words or less. The holiday season is quickly approaching and as a father of three young children I know it is a busy time of year for everyone. It is a constant challenge to balance the demands of work, family, community commitments and still have time to relax and enjoy those fun things that recharge us for the time ahead. I suspect I am not the only one. You may never feel totally comfortable that you have struck the right balance. Perhaps that is how it is supposed to be. On one hand I want to spend as much time as I can with my children, but I also want to show them that it is important to be involved in our community, work

hard, build good relationships and make time for things that we enjoy in life. Think of how important it is to your child to see you read a book, laugh with a friend or run the concession stand at one of her events. As the Chief Justice notes above, change is constant and it is an exciting and challenging time to work for the UJS. Remember to take time to reflect this holiday season on what is important to you as we all work to reach that balance in these changing times. Thank you for all the hard work that you do each day.

Mr. Sattizahn was appointed State Court Administrator by the South Dakota Supreme Court on September 9, 2013

Courthouse Postcard Collection Displayed

A collection unique to South Dakota is now available for public viewing. The South Dakota courthouse postcard collection, gifted to the UJS by retired Circuit Judge Bill Srstka, is displayed outside of the Supreme Court Chambers. The postcards are dated from the early 1900's through the 1950's.



Meade County Courthouse Postcard



South Dakota courthouse collection on display outside the Supreme Court Chambers

Douglas County First in State to Participate in Rural Attorney Recruitment Program

Douglas County, located in the southeast corner of South Dakota, is the first in the state to participate in the recruitment assistance pilot program.

Eligible rural counties in South Dakota must have a population of 10,000 or less and agree to pay 35% of the total

amount of the incentive payment. The program provides qualifying attorneys the incentive payment in return for five continuous years of practice in an eligible rural county. Jake Fischer, of Swier Law Firm in Corsica, SD, is the participating attorney.

More information about the program can be found on the UJS website.

“There’s No Place Like Home” and Other Lessons Learned by IT Staffers, *cont. from the front page*

- The Watertown DOT shop is open 24/7. There are no gas stations in Beemis or Goodwin.
- You are lucky you really do like your co-workers, because you have celebrated your birthday, anniversary, and Valentine’s Day with them while on the road.
- It helps to know people who know people when you need a root canal in Sisseton.
- Be sure to pack your Yuma, AZ High School Criminals t-shirt to wear just in case you are interviewed by TV news stations.
- Don’t forget to send postcards to fellow employees while you are on the road.
- Pack plenty of caffeine and snacks. You will not have time for lunch, and dinner may not be until after 10:00 p.m.
- Yes, you can still function on three hours of sleep or less, day after day.
- If you hit a deer on your way back to Pierre on Friday night, no problem! Fleet & Travel will give you the keys to another car that same night so you can head out again on Sunday.
- You can easily identify team members by their “Go Live Eyes,” which are puffy little slits with bags under them.
- Texans have a poor sense of direction and can somehow miss the exit for Fargo while driving north from Sisseton on I-29.
- Dorothy was right. There is no place like home.



*Happy Holidays to
you and yours!*

The UJS Christmas Tree is on display in the Capitol Building. Thanks to everyone who helped decorate and a special thank you to Gloria Guericke for coming out of retirement and coordinating the effort.

Best Wishes to Pat Duggan

A reception was held honoring Pat Duggan for her 13 years of service with the Unified Judicial System and 24-year career in court administration on Monday, August 26th. Always a promoter of professional development for UJS employees, it is fitting that Pat is venturing off to Williamsburg, VA to be the Director of the Institute of Court Management National Programs with the National Center for State Courts.

Pat was appointed State Court Administrator in 2008. Before assuming this role, she served

as the Circuit Administrator in the Third Judicial Circuit. Prior to moving to South Dakota, Pat worked in court administration in Minnesota and New Mexico.

At the reception, Chief Justice David Gilbertson read a joint proclamation signed by him and Governor Dennis Daugaard highlighting some of the accomplishments achieved by Pat during her tenure with the UJS.



Pat Duggan at her reception in the Capitol Café

Judge John Bastian Retires

The 4th Circuit celebrated the retirement of Circuit Judge John W. Bastian at the Belle Fourche Country Club on Friday, July 26. Over 100 people attended the celebration, including UJS employees, Butte County employees, members of the Butte County and State Bar, friends, family, and Judge Bastian's lovely wife Jana.

The celebration marked the culmination of nearly 30 years of service to the State of South Dakota, including his appointment as Circuit Court Judge in 1993.

During his tenure Judge Bastian served as a member of the Visitation Grant Advisory Group and was awarded the 2012 South Dakota Trial Lawyers Association's "Fred J. Nichols Award for Outstanding Jurist."

At the ceremony Judge Bastian was presented with a plaque from the UJS by fellow 4th Circuit Court Judge Randall L. Macy, as well as several gifts of appreciation from well-wishers. Refreshments were provided by the Butte County Bar Association and 4th Circuit Administrator Mike Pisciotta.



Impossible

...much which seems impossible is possible...and most of the things worth doing in the world have been declared to be impossible, before they were done.

Brandeis, Louis D., in Mason, Alpheus Thomas, *Brandeis: A Free Man's Life*, New York: The Viking Press, 1946, p. 309.

Getting to Know Magistrate Judge Carmen Means

In what field is your undergraduate degree?

Economics.

What motivated you to study law?

I was unsure about becoming a lawyer, but college was ending and I took the LSAT to see how it would go and I scored well. Honestly, that is what motivated me to go to law school.

If you weren't a lawyer or a judge, what would you like to do?

I would most likely be a teacher if I were not involved in the law.

What do you enjoy most about being a judge or the greatest reward of your job?

I enjoy being a part of the law and the criminal justice system without the stress and anxiety that I often felt being a practicing attorney.

What are your outside interests?

I like to watch cooking shows on TV and then to try out new recipes on my family. I also have an unusual hobby. I like to throw darts. I regularly throw league darts in Huron and have competed successfully in the Huron city tournament and the South Dakota State Tournament.

Who are your role models?

My mother was my greatest role model. I try unsuccessfully to match her kindness and unselfishness every day. She lived every day with a smile on her face, and I know that is how her friends and family remember her. She left a true legacy.

What is the best advice you have ever received and from whom?

My sister told me when I was applying to be a Magistrate that if it was meant to be it would happen. She kept me calm and focused during the application and hiring process.

What is one thing most people don't know about you?

I have all three original Star Wars movies practically committed to memory. I would challenge almost anyone to a game of Star Wars Trivial Pursuit.

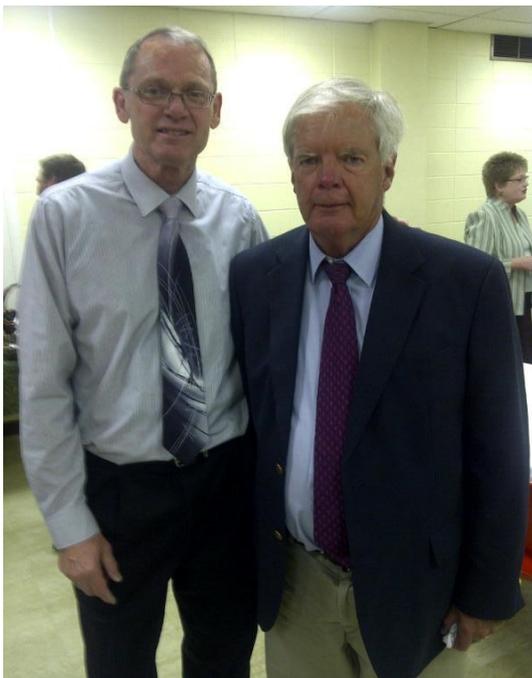
Words to live by or favorite quote?

I like using just the right word in just the right situation. When I do, I think of Emily Dickinson, who said, "Now there is a word you can tip your hat to."



Judge Carmen Means was sworn in as magistrate judge in the Third Judicial Circuit on April 19, 2013

4th Circuit Court Reporter Ken Howell Retires



Court Reporter Ken Howell and Presiding Judge Johnson at the retirement reception

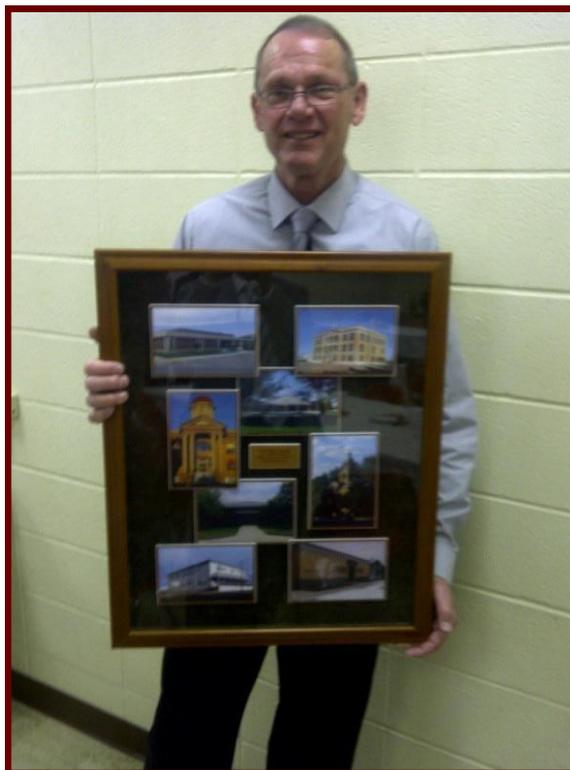
Fourth Circuit Court Reporter, Ken Howell, was honored at a retirement reception in Sturgis on Tuesday, October 8, 2013. Ken began working with the Unified Judicial System in 1975 and served the UJS for 38 years.

Employees from the circuit presented a gift to Ken, a framed picture (*shown below*) of the eight County Courthouses of the 4th Circuit he worked in during his years with the UJS.

Thank you for your service, Ken!



Ken Howell and Judge Eckrich at the retirement reception. Ken is holding a recognition plaque from Chief Justice David Gilbertson



Welcome James Valley Drug Court Employees



*Nicki Peterson,
Drug Court Support Specialist*

Nicki Peterson started with the James Valley Drug Court as a Support Specialist on August 26, 2013. She is originally from Mitchell,

and has just returned back to her home town after living in Huron for 10 years. Nicki and her husband, Michael, have three children. The family stays very busy with school and work, but also enjoy eating ice cream while going for pickup rides together. In her spare time, Nicki enjoys scrapbooking and reading.

Tim Moon is a new Court Services Officer in Mitchell who will be working with the Drug Court. Tim started his position on August 26, 2013. He is a Mitchell native, starting his professional career with the



Tim Moon, CSO

SD Department of Corrections as a Juvenile Corrections Agent in 2002. He and his wife, Angie have two daughters. They enjoy being outside, swimming, cooking, spending time with family, and cheering on the Chicago Bears!

The James Valley Drug Court officially started October 1, 2013.

Team members include Magistrate Judge Gordy Swanson, Deputy States Attorney Bob O'Keefe, Defense Attorney Lynn Moran, CSO Tim Moon, Drug Court Support Specialist Nicki Peterson, Detective Dean Knippling, Stephanie Brooks from Stepping Stones Treatment Center, and Christy Schroder from Dakota Counseling Institute. The James Valley Court is located on the second floor of the Davison County Courthouse, Mitchell.

Special Olympics Polar Plunge

The Yankton Court Services Office once again took the plunge in the Special Olympics Polar Plunge last spring. The crew dressed as characters from Gilligan's Island and participated in the "Toss Your Boss" category, where all the coworkers are able to throw or push their boss into the water, a category that the Yankton CSOs enjoy very much! The water temperature was a soothing 43 degrees, the coldest recorded temperature in the 5 years that Yankton has been holding the Polar Plunge. A total of \$33,000 was raised for Special Olympics!



Pictured from left to right, back row: Tyler Kraft, Chele Goeden, Alan Swartz, Jon Vavruska, middle row: Sharon Kraft, Amy Keppen, Brian Rempfer, Janeice Sudbeck, Chuck Frieberg

Gov. Dennis Daugaard Speaks at Northern Hills Drug Court

*Article submitted by Chris Pankratz,
Court Services, 4th Circuit*

It was their last chance to change a path of self destruction and stay out of prison, but for the graduates of Northern Hills Drug Court, participation in the program was much more than that. It was also their last chance to save their own lives.

Governor Dennis Daugaard congratulated the graduates, and told the standing-room-only crowd at the Meade County Courthouse that they have much to celebrate.

"The four of you have proven you have the ability to turn your lives around and stay clean," he said.



Defense Attorney Bruce Hubbard presents Governor Daugaard a plaque in recognition of his leadership

The governor said while Tuesday was a graduation, because they had completed the program, it was also a commencement.

"I think of the word commencement as the beginning," he said. "Even though you've completed the program here, today's a day to celebrate from that perspective.



Judge Percy, Judge Pahlke, Governor Daugaard, and Bruce Hubbard prepare to speak at Northern Hills Drug Court Ceremony

But the term graduation implies that you're one. And of course, probably the hardest part is before you.

"From now on it's up to you. You've demonstrated self-discipline. You are the reason you're graduating today, You made the decisions to stay clean, you did the work to stay clean," said the governor.

He added that while in some ways it would have been easier to go to the penitentiary and surrender and say they couldn't do it, the graduates made the choice to change and to accept personal responsibility and face their demons.

"Hopefully as you invest your time and energy in positive things in your life, you diminish the power your addiction held over you. Today's the day to celebrate what you've accomplished and resolve to continue along this path," said Daugaard.

The governor said the successful

completion of drug court put the graduates in a unique position to help others and to set an example. "Your story can be a lifeline to those who are drowning in their addictions still. You have the potential to spread hope to them. Not only can you help yourselves and your families but you can help people who need your example. It's possible you can show them, it's possible you can take control and take charge and to find redemption."



The Northern Hills Drug Court began in 2007 and after demonstrating extremely positive outcomes, the court expanded to include Rapid City in October of 2010. To date the program has served 101 clients, and currently has an active population

Article continues on page 10

Gov. Dennis Daugaard Speaks at Northern Hills Drug Court

Continued from page 9

of 41 clients. The program serves individuals residing in Butte, Lawrence, Meade and Pennington counties.

Largely due to the overwhelming support of the Governor and his office, the State of South Dakota currently has six operational specialty courts, with four additional courts currently being implemented. These courts include five drug courts, 4 DUI courts and one veterans court.



Judge Percy (left) and Judge Pahlke (above) speak to a standing room only crowd, during commencement activities

UJS Lending Library

A background image of a library bookshelf filled with books of various colors and sizes. The shelves are made of wood and are arranged in a grid pattern.

New Resources Available

21 Days to Self-Discovery, Career Track, Audio
Fundamentals of Project Management, James P. Lewis, book
Hide Your Goat, Steve Gilliland, book
Life By Design, Career Track, audio
Moneyball, Michael Lewis, book
Provide and Protect, A. Charles Schultz, book
Simple Scripts for Problems at Work, Career Track, audio
The Big Book of Attitude, Sam Glenn, book
The Richest Man in Town, V.J. Smith, book
The Thin Book of Soar (Building Strengths-Based Strategies), Jaqueline M. Stavros, book
The Thin Book of Trust, Charles Feltman, book
Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough, Mark Friedman, book

**Email Christine Christopherson for more information or to check out an item

Conference and Training Highlights

The 2013 Children's Justice Conference was held September 17 & 19, in Rapid City and Sioux Falls.

Photo right: Judge Scott Myren introduces Margaret Burt, consultant with the American Bar Association's Center on Children and the Law. Ms. Burt presented on representing a child client.



Photo left: Craig Zablocki presented on best practice techniques and creative methods working with children and adults.

Photo right: The South Dakota delegation at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) Conference held in Washington, DC in July.



Judge Mark Anderson (5th Circuit Sobriety Court), Brad Erhardt (5th Circuit Sobriety Court), Alan Swartz (1st Circuit Drug Court), Dennis Richey (6th Circuit DUI Court), Captain Greg Vandekamp (Sioux Falls Police Dept.), Michelle Boyd (Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office), Tara Huebner (CSO, 6th Circuit DUI Court), Kristin Meyers (6th Circuit DUI Court), Sharon Kraft (1st Circuit DC Specialist), Sally Swanson (5th Circuit DUI Court Specialist), Judge Pat Riepel (Minnehaha Co. Drug Court), Judge Robin Houwman (2nd Circuit DUI Court), Noreen Plumage (State Drug Court Liaison)

Building Positive Momentum



In switching gears from change, change, change, we wanted to focus this year on identifying the strengths that currently exist within the UJS and open the floor for our employees to share with us and everyone what we all do that is appreciated on a daily basis. Along those same lines, we also wanted to highlight people that others identify as being an asset to our judicial system. At every training event this year employees will be encouraged to share with us their feedback. This section of the newsletter will be used to share what others are saying. Remember there are MANY and we are sharing a few. Enjoy!

Starting to go paperless!!

Communication in the 3rd Circuit between Support Staff & Chief is commendable.

Alan Swartz, 1st Circuit, Best addition to our office-Positive-Knowledgeable-Cares!!

Snacks!

Judd Thompson!! Best CCSO ever.

Keeping each other in “check” with constructive feedback and family oriented.

Employee recognition and years of service.

Keeping up with changing technology and tech support.

Nancy Pahl, she has a positive attitude and doesn't gripe when people ask for help.

Job worth, not mid-point.

UJS employees

Deanna in Aberdeen is very helpful and always willing to assist in any way she can.

Excellent motivational speakers!

Renee Plumb is very welcoming to people and helpful.

Caring Staff-Customer Service

3rd Circuit works well as a team

Dedicated, loyal employees

UJS does a great job of promoting from within

2nd Circuit Chad Clark and Jamie Gravett are a great team!

The UJS Helpdesk is always: Very patient, Helpful, Kind, and Understanding

It's a professional group of people.

Julie Jenter has been covering for other offices for months now and is a knowledgeable resource.

Office Ergonomics

CCSO Moen is great with communicating what is going on with all issues.

Nancy Allard: Patient, Understanding, Very Knowledgeable

Training coordinator taking in the idea of others

Good leadership

Encourage personal and professional growth by offering meaningful trainings

Strong support for the IT jobs, makes our jobs much easier and reduces stress

HR-Beth Urban provides answers on questions and situations that are typically murky at best





Christine's Column

Why business writing skills are important

*Christine Christopherson,
Judicial Branch Educator*

Helen Cunningham and Brenda Greene are the authors of *The Business Style Handbook: An A-to-Z Guide for Effective Writing on the Job*, and have recently published an updated second edition. We contacted them to get their best advice for administrative professionals who want to improve their workplace writing skills.

Why do you feel written communication skills are so important in business today?

Technology has made everyone in the workplace a writer, and writing is a highly-visible skill. When you send an email or other written communication, it is out there for people to see. It reflects on you and, if you are an administrative professional, it also reflects on your boss, so it's essential to get it right. Today, your reputation and success in business are increasingly dependent on your ability to communicate well.

What's the most common mistake you see people make when it comes to their written communication at work?

Actually, two mistakes top the list. The first is carelessness, often because of deadlines and tight schedules. In the rush to get out an email, too many people fail to check it for grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as overall content. Is it clear and purposeful? Does it provide the necessary information? Is there an action item, and is it clearly stated along with a deadline? The second error is not considering the audience. Business writers need to think about who will see their communication and then tailor it accordingly. And always remember that email can be forwarded, so you never know who will end up reading it.

What's your top piece of advice to an administrative professional who wants to improve her written communication skills?

Take note of well-written communications and learn from them. If you're unsure about how to write something, don't make a guess and hope for the best. Resolve your questions by using a stylebook or a dictionary, which are available both online and in print. Also remember that communication is part of your personal brand, so you want to be as professional as possible.

More people are communicating via smartphones and tablets. What are your favorite tips for doing that well?

Write a descriptive subject line. Be concise. Cover all the bases. When possible, paste in the contents of attachments so your recipient doesn't have to download material. Don't compromise your writing standards. Mobile devices don't give you license to write sloppy communication.

“All Rise.” Drug/DUI Court Update.

Implementation Training is a prerequisite to the operation of a drug court. In September 2013, this training was provided by the National Drug Court Institute (NDCI) for ten (10) South Dakota Drug, DUI, and Veteran Court Teams in Sioux Falls. Because of federal sequestration in 2013, which decreased NDCI's training budget, the planned expansion of South Dakota specialty courts could have been halted. The support and planning of the Unified Judicial System and the willingness of the individual Circuits to participate, made it possible to bring the training to our State. Several years of planning within a community is a necessary step to begin the drug court process. This planning begins with a request to the Supreme Court by the Presiding Judge of the Circuit to start the process.

The tasks to put together the event itself were monumental! As a way to get all our courts up-to-date with the research on the effective operation of a drug court, the current operational drug/DUI courts were included with the new courts in the training. Following the guidance of the National

Association of Drug Courts, South Dakota will expand specialty courts by adhering to the [Ten Key Components](#). From this foundation, tracks can be developed to address the target populations of the proposed area of expansion.

In 2012, implementation of specialty courts was summarized by Chief Justice Gilbertson, "Drug Courts: A Powerful Step Forward." The next step in the institutionalization of specialty courts in our State, can be summarized by the following, "Drug Courts: Take Ground, Hold Ground" (Maverick and Company). It will be crucial to provide the resources and support necessary for the operation of effective courts, grounded in the Ten Key Components. This includes collecting data necessary for evaluation and adjusting programs to insure they maintain fidelity to the key components.

In 2008, one Drug Court. In 2013, ten Drug Courts. Because of the hard work of the participating teams, South Dakota will continue to expand the courts, which will continue to make a difference in the lives of individuals, families, communities, and the state. Congratulations to the following teams for completing the week-long implementation training!



*Noreen Plumage,
Drug/DUI Court Liaison*

1st Circuit:

Yankton Drug Court, Judge Bern
James Valley Drug Court, Judge Swanson

2nd Circuit:

Minnehaha Co. Drug Court, Judge Riepel
DUI Court, Judge Houwman

3rd Circuit:

Codington Co. Drug Court, Judge Means
Watertown Veterans Court, Judge Timm

4th/7th Circuits:

Northern Hills Drug Court, Judge Percy

5th Circuit:

Brown County DUI Court, Judge Anderson

6th Circuit:

Hughes/Stanley Co. DUI Court, Judge Brown

7th Circuit:

Pennington Co. DUI Court, Judge Linngren

It makes sense to put your job and family before recovery. But if you do, you lose recovery and lose your job and family!" (PO, 2013)



“Sun dogs” captured over the Moody County Courthouse

Photo by: Roger Janssen, Moody County Enterprise

‘Dogs of Winter

Article from the Moody County Enterprise

A batch of frigid air that originated in Siberia a couple of weeks ago made its way across the Arctic and into our area over the past week. Temperatures, which netted a high of only -8 degrees on Friday, settled over the region late last week. The strong Arctic high-pressure system was overhead Saturday morning as the thermometer recorded -25 degrees. This photo was snapped the morning of Thursday, December 5 as conditions were right for some spectacular “sun dogs” visible when cold temperatures and humidity in the atmosphere create the cold weather scene.

Remembering South Dakota's First Female Judge

Schoenbeck, a Watertown lawyer who practiced in front of Ramynke in the 1980s.

Ramynke's daughter Gail Ramynke said her mother was "level-headed," hard-working and fair.

"She would always be getting calls at home from probationers," Gail Ramynke said. "People would sometimes come to the house, and she'd take them to a private spot and counsel with them."

People who knew Ramynke noted her kindness and professionalism.

"She was unfailingly polite," Gilbertson said. "She treated the town drunk with the same courtesy as she'd treat a senior member of the bar. Everybody that knew her, liked her."

Gilbertson noted that in the years since Ramynke first became a judge, women have surged into the legal profession. He called her influence "monumental."

"Her real legacy, besides the individual people's lives she touched ... is the legal system itself, where half the students in law school are women, a third of the state bar are women and a good chunk of the judges are women," Gilbertson said.

"All of them owe a great debt to her, as does everybody in the legal profession in South Dakota, for blazing the trail."

Ramynke didn't only make waves from the bench. During World War II, she joined the military but, as a woman, wasn't allowed to enter combat.

"But she was such a good pilot

that she taught bomber pilots how to fly bombers," Gilbertson said.

"Even though she wasn't allowed to fly them herself into combat, she was training the ones who would fly them into combat."

After the war, while serving as first a lawyer and then a judge, Ramynke continued to help out on the family farm near Peever. She and her husband, Clifford, also reared three daughters.

"I don't think she ever expressed a feeling that she was discriminated against in any way," Gail Ramynke said. "She absolutely loved her work."

In conversations with Gilbertson, Ramynke said she never faced overt prejudice as a woman in a profession dominated by men.

"She said you had to convince them it wasn't a novelty, and that she was equally as competent and serious as any man who was a judge," Gilbertson said. "Once people got comfortable with the concept, everything went well. ... She was so confident and her personality was such that people got comfortable very quickly."

After retiring from the bench in 1986, Ramynke spent much of her time traveling and pursuing continuing education. She took many classes at the local community college, learning about computers and other topics. Gail Ramynke said her mother also volunteered and stayed active in the community. ... Ramynke was survived by three daughters, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Her husband, Clifford, preceded her in death.



Judge Mildred Ramynke, Photo Courtesy of South Dakota Magazine

The first female judge in South Dakota history died [Saturday, Sept. 7] at age 96.

Mildred Ramynke was a "consummate professional" who blazed trails for women in the law, said David Gilbertson, chief justice of the South Dakota Supreme Court and Ramynke's close friend.

Ramynke became a judge in Roberts County in 1958, the first female judge in the state. Two decades later, when South Dakota adopted the Unified Judicial System, Ramynke ran for and won a seat as a circuit judge in the 5th Judicial Circuit, in the northeastern part of the state.

During the two years Ramynke was the presiding judge of the circuit, she filled in on several Supreme Court cases, becoming the first woman to serve on the state's highest court.

"She was just a no-nonsense, well-respected, solid jurist," said Lee

Article by: David Montgomery, Argus Leader, Solid jurist, S.D.'s first female judge, dies