

# Best Practice Court Matters

*An update on the latest events of Best Practice Courts of Virginia*

Volume 4, Issue 1

Court Improvement Program  
Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia

Fall 2006

## Local Initiatives Launched in 2006!

*Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Creative collaborative events in communities across the Commonwealth are designed by twenty Best Practice Court teams to energize fulfilling mutual responsibilities for vulnerable children and families before the courts. Read the details below.*

### Local Initiatives Funded with Court Improvement Program Mini-Grants

**Winchester/Frederick/Warren - February 9, 2006.** These two teams kicked off the year's local events for the Best Practice Court program by focusing upon improved practice by GALs for children. Members of the bar and community representatives joined the court at the Winchester/Frederick County Joint Judicial Center to view the video "Who Speaks for the Child." This video provides a taped discussion of the *Standards to Govern the Performance of Guardians Ad Litem for Children* as prepared by the Virginia Bar Association and supported by the Court Improvement Program. Following the tape, Lead Best Practice Court Judges William Sharp and Elizabeth Kellas along with Beau Bassler, a local guardian ad litem, led a panel which discussed the implications of these standards for their communities.

**Bedford/Campbell-February 20, 2006.** "Babes in Law Land-Meeting the Needs of Young Children in Our Courts" was the theme of Bedford and Campbell's Best Practice Court Event. This daylong program in Lynchburg was open to the courts, the bar and agencies of the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

Speakers included, Victoria Youcha, Ed.D., Project Director, Zero to Three, National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families; Dr. Robert Marvin of the Child Parent



Philip Stahl, Judge Philip Wallace, Judge Ellen White, Professor Richard Balnave and Dr. Robert Marvin all presented at "Babes in Lawland".



Susan Badeau led a panel of young people in foster care at the Wise/Tazewell Best Practice Court Event.

Attachment Clinic, Department of Psychiatric Medicine at the University of Virginia; Lead Best Practice Court Judge Ellen White; local mediator Carolyn Pritchard, M.S., and her colleague Norma White, M.Ed.; Lelia Hopper, Director of CIP; David Shreve, Esq., Legal Counsel for the Campbell Department of Social Services; Professor Richard D. Balnave, University of Virginia Law School and member of the State CIP Advisory Committee; Frank W. Morrison, Esq. and Lisa L. Schenkel, Esq.; and Dr. Philip Stahl, a California licensed clinical psychologist, who is on the faculty of the National Judicial College and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

### Wise/Norton and Tazewell - April 11, 2006.

This collaborative full day event was entitled: "Children, Families and the Courts in Southwest Virginia: Meeting the Needs of Our Own." Susan Badeau, Child

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### State Conference November 28-29, 2006 Williamsburg, Virginia

Twenty-four Best Practice Court teams from around Virginia will convene in Williamsburg for the Fourth Statewide Best Practice Courts Conference on November 28-29, 2006. They will be joined by new court teams that will form the Class of 2006. For the first time this year, a representative from the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program will be included on each of the local teams. The Crowne Plaza at Fort Magruder will host this gathering, which will showcase local initiatives of the Best Practice Court teams.

James W. Payne, Director of the Indiana Department of Child Services and a former Juvenile Court Judge in Marion County, Indiana, will provide the keynote address and attend the conference as a resource to the participants. Judge Payne speaks frequently around the country on issues of delinquency, abuse and neglect, case management, and juvenile justice practice and policy.

Susan Badeau, Child Welfare Policy Consultant, National Resource Center on Permanency Planning and Foster Care, will speak on serving teens and moderate a panel of young people from foster care.

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Welfare Policy Consultant, from the National Resource Center on Permanency Planning and Foster Care in Philadelphia, PA presented on facilitating permanency for older adolescents. This lecture was followed by the highlight of the day, a panel of four local teenagers in foster care. The panel was moderated by Ms. Badeau and focused on the children's experiences with the courts and the foster care system in a session entitled "Permanency for Teens in Southwest Virginia."

In the afternoon, Judge Stephen Rideout, Judicial Consultant with the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, spoke about understanding the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

Dr. Joseph Smiddy, Internal Medicine Specialist from Kingsport, Tennessee, presented on issues of foster care obesity.

Lead Judge, Elizabeth Wills addressed the conference attendees on effective courtroom protocols for social workers, and Lead Judge Henry Barringer discussed court expectations for GALs.

**Albemarle/Charlottesville, Culpeper, and Louisa - April 26, 2006.** "Children and Parents in Crisis: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" was the title of the Best Practice Court event held in Mineral, Virginia. Dr. Robert Murphy, Executive Director, Center for Child and Family Health, Duke University, discussed children who are exposed to domestic violence. Dr. Dewey Cornell, University of Virginia, Curry School of Education, spoke about school violence.

Lelia Hopper, Director of the Court Improvement Program and Jo Ann Simmons, Regional Foster Care Specialist from the Virginia Department of Social Services, addressed the status of Virginia's compliance with its Program Improvement Plan from the 2003 Child

and Family Services Review and the upcoming Title IV-E Review.

Afternoon topics focused on Independent Living, Substance Abuse and Family Treatment Courts, CHINS Cases and the role of the GAL.

**Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro - April 28, 2006.**

"Challenges and Opportunities for our Communities in Serving Families and Children" was sponsored by the Valley Best Practice Court teams. The morning session focused upon the use of methamphetamines in the Shenandoah Valley and its impact on foster care. Presentations by Kathleen Jenkins from the 25<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Services Unit and Investigator Chris Kincheloe of the Staunton Police Department graphically illustrated the challenges for child welfare workers in investigations of related cases of child abuse and neglect and for the courts and attorneys in addressing the drug addiction of parents in resolving these cases. Roy Evans, Lead Patient Coordinator for the Valley Commu-



Judge Frank Somerville, Judge Susan Whitlock and Dr. Robert Murphy presented at the Best Practice Courts Event in Mineral, Virginia.



Judge Victor Ludwig, Judge Anita Filson and Judge Charles Ricketts all supported the Best Practice Court Event in Staunton, Virginia.

nity Services Board, addressed available treatment options for parents and children involved with methamphetamine abuse. James Glick, Counsel for the Shenandoah Valley Department of Social Services, discussed the applicable law and the challenges of prosecuting and

achieving permanency for children in these cases.

The afternoon session focused on community initiatives for children sponsored by the Best Practice Courts in the area and the participating community agencies. Best Practice Court team members presented on psychological evaluations, communications with the foster parents committee, supervised visitation program, parent mentoring and the new child advocacy center which was scheduled to open July 1, 2006.

**Williamsburg/James City County and Newport News - May 26, 2006.**

Judge Jeff Fairbanks, Lead Judge for the Williamsburg Best Practice Court, welcomed attendees to this event with an engaging PowerPoint mixed with jazz music illustrating the trials and tribulations of parents and children involved in maltreatment, domestic violence and the foster care system. Retired Alexandria Judge Stephen Rideout discussed the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.



Judge Jeff Fairbanks organized the training event for Williamsburg/James City/ Newport News.

Hampton Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judge Jay Dugger and

Wanda Rogers, Deputy Director, Hampton Department of Social Services, presented on Hampton's Best Practice Court initiatives, including Safe Harbor Visitation Center and Pathways to Permanency. Larry Martin and Karen Asaro, trained child dependency mediators, explained to the group how this specialized type of mediation is working in their communities. A role play was used to illustrate



Newport News' Family Treatment Drug Court Team presented on their efforts to get this new program underway.

this process and was supported by social services workers and attorneys who attended the training. The day concluded with a team presentation, moderated by Newport News Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judge Judy Kline, discussing the new Family Treatment Drug Court. All eight members of Judge Kline's drug court team contributed to this collaborative discussion.



Judge Stephen Buis speaks at the Best Practice Court Event hosted by Richmond J&DR District Court

**Richmond - June 2, 2006.** Richmond's Best Practice Court Program, "Fostering Hope: Meeting the Needs of Children in the Richmond J&DR District Court," began with a plenary session by staff from the Center for Children's Law and Policy and Just Children Program representatives from Charlottesville, Virginia. They presented on legal tools available to improve educational opportunities for juveniles in the juvenile justice and foster care systems.

The Richmond Gang Reduction and Intervention Program (GRIP) was explained to make social workers and professionals in the juvenile justice system more aware of the signs of gang membership.

A presentation on the Richmond Juvenile and Family Treatment Drug Courts was given by social workers, CASA staff and juvenile justice personnel involved with these programs.

Breakout sessions were offered in the afternoon on topics including:

- "In School, the Right School, Finish School, Part Two: Practical Strategies"
- "What Women Want: The Need for Gender-Specific Treatment" concerning substance addictions.
- "The Outs and



Participants at Hampton's Best Practice Court Event pose outside of the Hampton Yacht Club

Ins of CHINS: What do CHINS Petitions Mean and What Are Their Teeth?"

- "Teens in Foster Care" – An overview of foster care placements and independent living services was presented.

- "Talk to Me: Attorneys in Foster Care Cases," was a legal ethics presentation by Professor Kelley Bartges, Director, Delinquency Clinic, Children's Law Center, University of Richmond School of Law. This presentation focused on

specific ethical dilemmas attorneys face when navigating through the child dependency system.

- "Truancy Reduction and Prevention Program" described Richmond's new truancy initiative, Richmond Public School's attendance policy and its Assessment Center.

**Hampton - June 9, 2006.**

Lead Judge Jay Dugger welcomed attendees and provided an update on the initiatives that the Hampton Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court has implemented through its Best Practice Court efforts.

The program, "Under Pressure: Substance Abuse Treatment for Parents Seeking Reunification" began with Patty L. Gilbertson, Senior Planning and Clinical Services

Director, Hampton/Newport News Community Services Board, who addressed "Understanding Substance Abuse and Addiction." Patty Hartigan, Program Manager, Project LINK Hampton/Newport News Community Ser-



Judge Denis Soden, Judge Sharon Will and Gretchen Icard coordinated an event for the Henrico Best Practice Court Team.

VICES Board, finished the three-hour presentation by discussing "Substance Affected Families in the Foster Care Setting."

**Stafford and Fredericksburg June 23, 2006.**

The Stafford and Fredericksburg Best Practice Courts teamed up to present their event which was held in the Stafford Courthouse and had two components: a proposed mentoring program and foster care training. The morning session focused on a proposed mentoring program for youth in the community to prevent delinquency and other involvement with the juvenile justice and foster care systems. The afternoon session was devoted to foster care training by staff from the Fredericksburg Department of Social Services and members of the bar. Presenters discussed preventative services and placement options available for children in care; Fredericksburg's newly designed foster care program; and the importance of a timely and effective litigation process for foster care.

**Fairfax - June 28, 2006.**

Judge Gayl Carr, a Lead Judge for this Best Practice Court, began the afternoon training with a welcome to all attendees. William Ling, Ph.D. of

Neuropsychological and Family Therapy Associates in Alexandria, Virginia, served as faculty for this training. Dr. Ling provides consultative services to children, parents, agencies and specializes in clinical neuropsychology. His presentations focused on the development of infants and toddlers including, normal development from birth to 36 months and the causes of developmental and emotional difficulties in infants and toddlers.

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**Henrico - July 27, 2006** The Best Practice Court Team, "Children First of Henrico," sponsored a presentation by

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**BEST PRACTICE COURTS OF VIRGINIA**

Alexandria	Henrico	Staunton/Augusta
Bedford	Louisa	Tazewell
Campbell	Newport News	Virginia Beach
Charlottesville/Albemarle	Prince William	Warren
Culpeper	Pulaski	Waynesboro
Fairfax	Richmond	Williamsburg/James City
Fredericksburg	Roanoke Co./Salem	Winchester/Frederick
Hampton	Stafford	Wise/Norton

**CHILD DEPENDENCY MEDIATION INTEGRATED INTO J&DR COURT PROCESSES**

Fifteen court teams attended a daylong conference in Richmond in March 2006 as the conclusion to a 3-day training seminar for 22 child dependency mediators, competitively selected from across Virginia. Child dependency mediation provides a non-adversarial setting in which a mediator assists the parties in reaching a fully informed and mutually acceptable resolution that focuses on the child's safety and the best interest and safety of all family members. This training for the courts and their community partners was funded by CIP and developed jointly with Geetha Ravindra in Dispute Resolution Services in OES.

Several Best Practice Courts are participating in this program. Hampton, Henrico, James City, Newport News and Richmond have all successfully referred cases and completed mediations. Funding for this program is provided by the Court Improvement Program. ✧

**NEW BEST PRACTICE COURT LEAD JUDGES**

Transitions in the leadership of Best Practice Court teams are ongoing. Appreciation is extended to judges who are moving on to lead other activities in their courts.

Judge Ashley Tunner (pictured left) will replace Judge Stephen Buis as Richmond's Lead Best Practice Court Judge. Judge Tunner joined the Richmond Bench in July 2006.



Judge Judith Kline (pictured above in the Child Abuse and Neglect Institute Article) will replace Judge Ronald Bensten for the Newport News Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court. ✧

**CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT INSTITUTE**

Each year a Best Practice Court Judge is selected to attend the Child Abuse and Neglect Institute in Reno, Nevada. This training is sponsored by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. This year's representative was Judge Judith Kline from Newport News J&DR District Court. After the event, Judge Kline shared the following: "I thoroughly enjoyed the week long Child Abuse and Neglect Institute. Although the participant judges came from different court models and state laws, we are all charged with implementing the same federal legislation, primarily ASFA and ICWA. The participants worked in groups to take a fact scenario through the various hearings in a child dependency case. At each hearing we were charged with applying the Resource Guidelines, developed by NCJFCJ to represent a "best practices" standard. The faculty is excellent; the curriculum is interesting and relevant; and the written materials have been helpful."



Best Practice Court lead judges interested in attending this Institute in June 2007 may call 804-786-5304 or email [jlissenden@courts.state.va.us](mailto:jlissenden@courts.state.va.us) for information. ✧

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Geetha Ravindra-DRS/OES

Sonya Peretti-Hull, M.Ed., LPC, of Peretti-Hull Therapy, Training & Consulting on the topic, "When Nothing Else Works: Working with Severe Behaviors in Children and Families." In attendance were Best Practice Court Judges Sharon Will and Denis Soden and a wide array of community professionals, including CASA Staff and Volunteers and attorneys. ✧

**2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- **October 6—Newport News - "Announcement of the Partners in Permanency Planning Institute"**
- **October 27—Pulaski Best Practice Court Local Training**
- **October 30—Meeting of Class of 2006 Best Practice Court Teams in Richmond**
- **November 4—Bedford's Adoption Day Celebration**
- **November 18, 2006—Adoption Day Celebrations**  
 -Alexandria      -Campbell      -Hampton  
 -Prince William      -Richmond      -Roanoke County/Salem
- **November 28-29—Fourth Statewide Conference of Best Practice Courts of Virginia in Williamsburg**