

## **Notes from Gerri Rishel on our Minneapolis Conference**

Many thanks to all those who attended the 2016 Federal Judicial Assistants Association educational conference in Minneapolis! Though our numbers were low this year, we believe the conference was a huge success. Our “Back to the Sixties” theme was met with flying colors (literally), as most of our attendees, including the very groovy Judge Frank, wore their tie-died apparel for the opening reception! There were also quite a few pillbox hats and plenty of pearls worn in honor Jackie Kennedy at the closing banquet! Those who attended the Friday night optional events (the Twins game at Target Field and the scavenger hunt at the Mall of America) had a blast!

The conference agenda was full and varied. Our presenters included our very own Chief Judge John R. Tunheim, who spoke to us about his experience serving as chair of the JFK U.S. Assassination Records Review Board, which was a captivating presentation; Chief Judge Timothy Burgess from the District of Alaska spoke to us about iPads for Judges, and no doubt everyone took something back to their chambers from his presentation. We also enjoyed presentations by Wanda Rubianes from the AO, who discussed international travel for our judges and security while traveling abroad. Her presentation was insightful and eye opening to all of us! In conjunction with international travel, our own Senior Judge Paul A. Magnuson talked about his work on rule of law matters in Russia, Mongolia, Albania, and Rwanda. Senior Judge Michael J. Davis spoke about his involvement with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (or some may know it as the Spy Court), and he also touched briefly on his Somali terrorism trials. Laura Simon from the AO spoke to us about OSCAR. The presentation on active shooting training from our U.S. Marshal Sharon Lubinski and Deputy Marshal Matt Palmer was riveting! There were two panel discussions: NextGen and our very successful Pro Se Project with the District of Minnesota and the Minnesota Chapter of the Federal Bar Association. Kathleen McMahon-Walford and Susie Chilton did a fantastic job on their district’s Courtrooms as Classrooms presentation, discussing how they provide civics education programs for citizens. Chris Duncan, a representative from Thomson Reuters, spoke to us about WestCheck, and our district librarian, Andrea Wambach, hosted a fun game involving Groovy Tech Tips! Last, but certainly not least, Lou Gil presented us with valuable tips for working in a multigenerational workplace. All our presenters did a fantastic job, and there was never a dull moment!

During the general membership meeting there was an emotionally charged discussion about the membership survey. Our president, Mary Ellen Druckenbrod, relayed the results of the survey and, shared the various viewpoints. Based on the results, the bylaws committee will begin work this next year with proposed revisions to our bylaws, which should be up for membership vote in June of 2017. Our Treasurer, Judith Stoyko, spoke to us about the financial aspects of hosting a conference. She opened our eyes to what’s involved financially, and how rushing to book a hotel room “just in case” you think you might go to a conference then cancelling at the last minute creates a financial nightmare. This year the FJAA was left to pay for unused hotel rooms at a cost to the association of over \$2,100. Therefore, in the future, our

members must pay their registration fee first, and then be given a code that the hotel will require BEFORE a room can be booked.

In closing, we cannot thank our attendees enough for coming to our beautiful state and participating in a great conference. We look forward to seeing you all next year in San Francisco!!!

(Gerri Rishel is the Judicial Assistant to the Honorable Michael J. Davis)