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2020 - 2021

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IN BRIEF

FEDERAL JUDICIAL ASSISTANTS ASSOCIATION

Letter from the President

Judith Stoyko

Dear FJAA Members:

Have you ever wondered how the FJAA uses your annual dues? Let me summarize. We currently have 183 members (not counting retirees). At \$40 each, that's dues income of \$7,320.

FJAA dues entitle members to the quarterly newsletter and access to the members-only section of the FJAA website. They cover routine operating expenses such as officer and director liability insurance, annual tax preparation, maintaining the website, infrequent travel expenses (e.g., when the president travels to a conference location to vet hotels), postage, drawing prizes, annual scholarships, etc.

On the other hand, the annual conference is self-sustaining. The FJAA contributes \$5,000 from its general account to a conference account. That way, the conference planners have money for deposits on things like buses to take us from the hotel to the courthouse and/or any special events, venues for special events outside of the hotel, and the like. All conference expenses – those mentioned plus food at the hotel, audio-visual for our meetings, the event liability insurance, etc. – are meticulously calculated and analyzed to arrive at a per-person cost for holding the conference. The calculation is based on an anticipated attendance number (such as 100 or 125, depending on the city). The per-person cost becomes the registration fee paid by attendees. After the event, ideally there is enough in the conference account to “repay” the \$5,000 seed money to the general account, and anything above that is profit for the association (rarely do we sustain a loss on a conference).

The FJAA Treasurer usually makes an annual report at our conference. Because we did not have a 2020 conference, the Treasurer's report is included in this issue of *In Brief*. I draw your attention to the last item under expenses, which may raise eyebrows: \$22,251.06 paid to Loews Tucson for canceling the 2020 conference. It is customary – and in our contract – for hotels to charge a fee when a large conference is canceled. However, the payment to Loews Tucson is only a “temporary expense” to the FJAA; we will recoup the entire fee when the hotel applies it to our final bill for the 2022 Tucson conference.

If you have questions about FJAA finances, please feel free to get in touch with either me or our Treasurer, Yvette Garcia. The two of us – as well as the other board members and the circuit representatives – are always happy to hear from you!

Judy Stoyko, FJAA President



I HIT MY WEIGHT GOAL IN 2020, BUT...

By Bernita V Henley

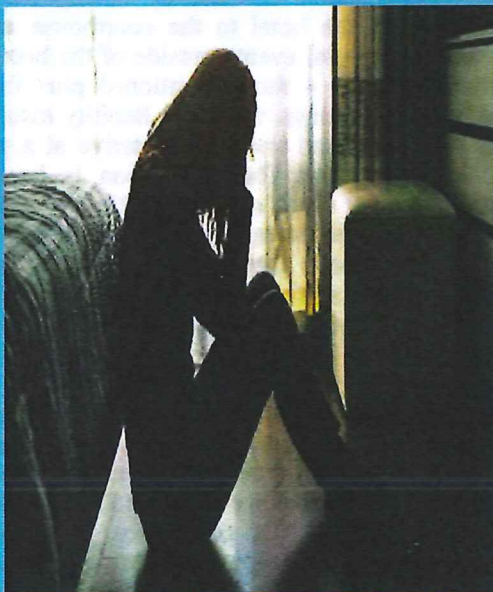
FJAA Vice President and Membership Chair

Paralegal for the Honorable Charmiane G Claxton – WDTN

At the beginning of 2020, I had several trips planned: my birthday celebration in Miami in March; a cruise in May; my sorority's Boule (two-year) meeting in July; a class reunion in August; and a FJAA Conference in September. Well, as we all know, plans changed when the COVID pandemic hit.



My last day at the office was March 22, 2020, and that's when my world changed forever. At first, it was a much-needed rest for me because BEFORE, I was ALWAYS on the go and available when EVERYONE needed me. My take on the situation was: this is a way the Lord is telling me, "Rest my child." I mean, I got plenty of rest and I SAVED so much money during this time. However, as the months went by, I began to miss the "human touch" and that saddened me.

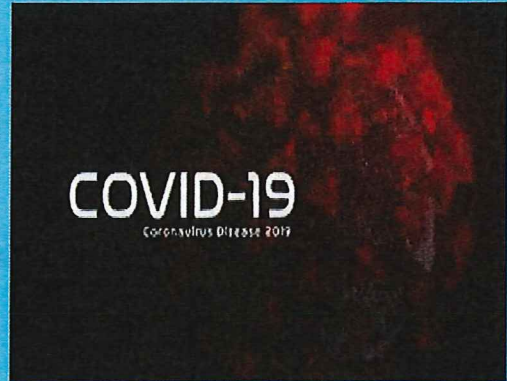


By the summer, the toll of social distancing struck me like a Mack truck. I couldn't understand why I was sleeping so much. I lost my appetite. I was probably eating once a day. That didn't worry me because I really needed to lose the weight. However, I started noticing small things, like my legs were looking thin; clothes were falling off of me, and my face was narrowing. At first, I was like *Yes! I am losing weight.* Then I stepped on the scale. I had lost 20 pounds since March 22 and it was only the end of April. Even though I had had a negative COVID test, I began to worry about the weight loss. *What is wrong with me? Why am I losing weight like this?* I soon figured out what it was, and it's called DEPRESSION. I felt like this once before and it was when my mother died.

The difference that time was I gained weight. Go figure...

WHY?

All honesty, it was several things that had me up in arms. As I was trying to telework, I also became an instant teacher to a 2nd, a 4th and a 5th grader. I have been out of school for 35 years now, and the way the kids are being taught today is MIND-BOGGLING! My daughters were having financial difficulties due to COVID and, as a mother, you just can't let them fail. My father was in a nursing home and the only way I could see him was through Facebook Messenger; the nursing home was closed to the public. That crushed my soul, because I couldn't touch him, and I knew he was really missing his children. He would always ask, "When are you coming to see me?" Dad died on November 20, 2020. My oldest granddaughter's father was murdered on Christmas Eve which devastated her. How do you tell an 11-year-old that she won't see her father any more? All of this, and EVERY TIME I went out, I had to cough. LORD, you should have seen how people were looking at me! GEESH, I don't have COVID, it's my allergies (ROLLS EYES)!!



THE LESSON LEARNED



It wasn't until January 20, 2021 when my oldest sister was killed by a drunk driver (this makes 3 loses in 3 months), I "shook myself loose" of all the hurt, shame and guilt. I realized that I couldn't be afraid to LIVE anymore. COVID had already claimed many lives – physically and mentally – and I wasn't going to give it mine. I told myself, "You are STILL here – MAKE the most of it!!"

This past year has shown me how to appreciate the "little things" in life – like spending time with your loved ones as much as you can; walking in a building without a mask on; and letting go of things you have NO CONTROL over.

The weight of DEPRESSION has lifted from me because I choose to LIVE! I am a SURVIVOR – WE ALL ARE!!!!

Peace and Love to you all...

FJAA MEMBERS

**We are seeking Circuit Representatives
for the 8th, 11th, and Federal/DC Circuits.**

**Become a fierce and devoted leader
for your circuit.**

**We know that you are dedicated and
ready to move the Association forward in
2021 and beyond!**

We appreciate YOU!!!

Become a Circuit Representative

Contact: Judy Stoyko, President or Bernita Henley, Vice-President



Membership News

Early-Bird Drawing Winner

\$100 Cash Prize

**Mary Quinlivan, JA for the Honorable
Harry F. Leinenweber of Northern
District of Illinois
(Seventh Circuit)**

Congrats Mary!!

Mary's name was drawn from among those FJAA members who paid their 2021 dues by March 31.

FIRST CIRCUIT— CHRISTIE PICHE

First Circuit New Members:

Heidi Pantoja, Judicial Assistant

– Magistrate Judge Giselle Lopez-Soler, Puerto Rico

Lynne Pipech – Assistant Secretary to Senior Circuit Judge Bruce M. Selya

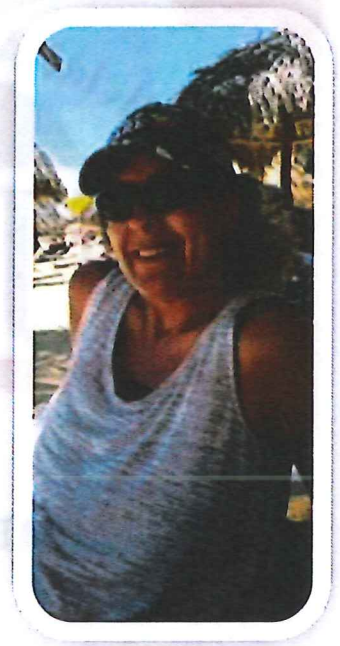
– First Circuit Court of Appeals

District of Maine Promotions:

Jenifer Bennett was promoted to Budget Analyst. Jen began her career with the District Court in 2016, serving as a case manager, and procurement specialist. Jen’s experience working with the Court, combined with her prior experience working with the President of the University of Southern Maine, has paved the way for her to serve as the District’s budget analyst.

Jenny Wood – Executive Assistant in our Administrative Office has chosen to combine her existing duties with the procurement position after Jen Bennet was promoted. Jenny’s duties will now include executive support, procurement, eVoucher, ceremonies, conferences, and law clerk orientation.

Melody Dalphonse – was selected to serve as the Deputy-in-Charge of our case management operations in Portland. Melody has served the Court for more than twenty years working for most of the judges in this District. She has been responsible for training new case managers. Melody is a natural leader whose work ethic and hard work will serve our Court and the Portland Operations Team well in her new role. Melody will also continue to handle Judge Nancy Torresen’s workload as well.



Show off Your Pet Month - March

The Maine District Court designated the month of **March** as **Show Off Your Pet Month**. March is such a long month that we decided we needed to start each work day off with something that would really put a smile on all of our faces, and what could be a better idea than seeing our coworkers’ pets (dogs, cats, fish, goats, etc.) to brighten our day.

We asked those that were interested to submit pictures of their pets with a description or background information and we received a great response. We have enough submissions to easily go into April.

FIRST CIRCUIT— CHRISTIE PICHE CONTINUED...



Penny the Golden Retriever

Penny just turned 12 and still enjoys her favorite pastime -- chasing seagulls at the beach.

Through the Eyes of 2020 in Maine –

Our Court has not yet begun in-court proceedings and we are hoping to begin them in the next couple of months. Some of our chambers' staff has returned to working in our courthouses but the Clerks' offices are still working mostly remotely.

Our Clerk, Christa Berry, was very active in helping most of us to get our vaccinations. In some locations in our State (northern) it is more difficult to obtain vaccinations but every day we are seeing improvements in the vaccines becoming more available.

The State of Maine overall has relatively low Covid numbers compared to most other States. We, like most, had a surge in numbers during the holidays, but they have slowly started to decrease.

Chief Judge Levy, all of our judges, and our Administration immediately hired a consultant to guide us through this pandemic which has been very helpful and they have done a great job keeping us informed and in contact with us.

We are very thankful to live where we live. We hope everyone else is doing well and getting through this pandemic the best that they can.

SECOND CIRCUIT—SAMANTHA GENCARELLO



Renee Alexander, Judicial Assistant

Senior District Judge Alfred V. Corello, District of CT

Susan Devine, Judicial Assistant

Senior Circuit Judge John Walker, Jr., Second Circuit Court of Appeals

Natalie Stock, Judicial Assistant

Senior Circuit Judge Guido Calabrese, Second Circuit Court of Appeals



Michele Czarnecki March 15

Ann Pisacano April 26

Renee Alexander April 28

Happy Spring Everyone!!