



# The Docket

Association of Clerks of the District  
Courts of Virginia

August/September 2021

## Association announces new slate of officers for 2021-2023

### Clerks Association Leadership

#### Officers

President	Laura Griffin
President-Elect	Kimberly McKittrick
Past President	Rick Kahl
Vice President	Laura Hatch
Secretary/Treas.	Amy Burnham

#### Regional Representatives

Region 1	Courtney Payne
Region 2	Kelly Douglas Wiggins
Region 3	Shannon Meadowcroft
Region 4	Julie Dobson
Region 5	Linda Moore
Region 6	Shanna Henry
Region 7	Stephanie Crisman
Region 8	Ginger Webb
Region 9	Nikki King
Region 10	Vacancy

The Annual meeting of the Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia was held June 25, 2021. At that time, the By-laws were amended to reflect our ability to hold an annual meeting virtually. A quorum was present and the new slate of officers were voted in.

Effective July 1, 2021, **Laura Griffin (Chesterfield JDR)** is the Association's President; **Kimberly McKittrick (Montgomery GDC)** is President-Elect; **Rick Kahl (Roanoke GDC)** is Past President; **Laura Hatch (Fredericksburg GDC)** is Vice President; and, **Amy Burnham (Virginia Beach JDR)** is Secretary/Treasurer.

The officers have been busy working with legislative staff to address advocacy methods to increase compensation for district court employees. In conjunction with the Executive Secretary, our goal is continue to increase funding for new positions as well as targeted salary actions for staff.

In reflecting on her goals for the Clerks Association, President Laura Griffin stated, "It is my goal to be a vocal advocate for all issues related to Virginia's district courts. Our profession is far too important to the Commonwealth not to be recognized as essential, worthy, and significant. The first step in recognizing the judicial branch's inherent value is to compensate our staff commensurately, and that is my priority in my role as president."

Vice President, Laura Hatch, stated, "In my new capacity as Vice President, I strive to work hard and contribute to the Association's purpose whose primary goals are to foster a closer relationship among the District Courts of Virginia and improve proficiency and professionalism of court personnel. As I serve my

community and Association, my hope is to inspire others to find creative ways to adapt to the dynamic challenges and solutions for issues courts face today."

While the legislature did approve 120 new positions, which courts have been busy filling, we still have over 150 positions needed. Clerks across the state have reported difficulty filling vacancies, as applicant pools have dwindled to single digits in some cases. The judicial branch struggles as other industries—in both the private and public sectors—offer incentives we cannot provide. With the inability to offer a viable work from home solution for all staff, some employees have left the workforce for employers who can.

In addition, the labor market has pivoted rapidly and wages for entry-level staff in many jobs have increased greatly. Just this week, Chesterfield County announced that they were increasing the starting pay for school bus drivers to over \$20 per hour, with a \$3,000 sign on bonus, in order to attract new drivers. Two years ago, the starting salary for a Chesterfield County school bus driver was only \$14.84 per hour. Moreover, many fast food restaurants are now offering more competitive wages upwards of \$15 per hour.

While pupil transportation and the food industry are important, the work of court administrators is as well. The service courts provide to the public is a singular mission without which would invite anarchy. Working in our field is a noble calling and it is wholly unjust to inadequately compensate those who work for justice. As the Association continues to advocate for increased wages, we invite all to tell your stories. Please reach out to your Region Rep or an Officer with relevant information we can pass along to the legislature as we continue our campaign.

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## Remembering Kathy Vance, Clerk of Court, Russell CMB District Court

**October 25, 1951—July 7, 2021**



The Association is deeply saddened to report the passing of **Kathy Vance**, long-time member of the Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia, and Clerk of Russell Combined District Court. Kathy worked for the Court for 35 years and spent 29 years as the Clerk of Court. Kathy's involvement with the Clerks Association spanned her career and she recently held the role of Region 10 Representative for over a decade. Kathy also completed the Certified Court Manager and Executive programs through the National Center for State Courts, Institute for Court Management, while battling cancer.

Survivors include one daughter, Vickie Colley and husband, Rick; one son, Brandon Vance and fiancée, Dannette; two granddaughters, Haleigh Colley and Morgan Sizemore and husband, Ethan, and one grandson, Ethan Johnson; two great-grandchildren, Cambrie Sizemore and Liam Sizemore; sisters, Charlene Blankenship and Alice Israel; brothers, Larry Israel and wife, Norma, Bill Israel and wife, Judy, and Craig Israel; former spouse/friend, Jerry Vance and Linda; special friend, Lovis Ball; several nieces and nephews also survive.

Her staff writes, "We are heartbroken by the sudden passing of our Clerk Kathy Vance. She was not only our boss, but our close friend, mother figure, advisor and sounding board. She was completely dedicated to her profession and she truly loved her job as Clerk. We miss her years of wisdom and her ability to always diffuse a difficult situation. We miss her daily wit and how she would jokingly threaten us with 'ten lashes from a wet noodle.' She truly believed there was good in everyone and she always believed you should treat others the way you would want to be treated. She is deeply missed and our hearts are forever changed by our time spent with her. We will forever be known as 'her girls'..."

**Russell County Combined Court Clerk's Office: Donna Israel Hale, Patty Davis, Joy Florence, Traci Jessee, Joanna Yates, and Judy Schreiner**

*Judge Martha Ketron writes, "I got to know Kathy as a new attorney learning my way around the courthouse and how to handle cases and apply the law. She was a great person to work with from the start and was always willing to help. She was great to pull new attorneys to the side and offer them advice. She wanted to see them be successful and was always conscious of how their performance was both in court and with colleagues. She became a great friend to me and I knew that as an attorney and, even more so, as a judge, that I could go to her for an honest opinion given in a spirit of genuine concern for me or the situation we were discussing. She had quite the reputation around the courthouse too – she was known for getting stuff done or staying on the right people until it was done or at least addressed. We continue to work toward the renovation and construction of a new court facility and Kathy was instrumental in moving that forward. I think that all of us involved in the process hear her in the back of our mind when we go to meetings about progress in this area.*

*Mentor was a great way to describe her. She took her job seriously and wanted to see the court, her staff and judges succeed. She had a gift for hiring and brought together a great staff who are hard workers and loyal to the court.*

*She was a wonderful woman. She always told us that family comes first and she did so much to build a family in the office. We miss her dearly."*

The Association remembers Kathy Vance as a wonderful servant leader whose contributions to the administration of justice will be forever remembered and greatly missed.



**Arlington JDR** – Clerk **Ronikka Lartey** would like to congratulate **Teresa Lara** on her promotion to supervising deputy clerk. Congratulations, Teresa!

**Bedford JDR** – Clerk **Stacey Arrington** would like to welcome **Alissa Bender** to their court family. Alissa started on July 10, 2021, and is proving to be a great addition to their office. Welcome, Alissa!

**Buena Vista CMB** – Clerk **Ginger Webb** reports the following: “The Buena Vista Municipal Building had a lightening strike that ‘fried’ equipment. Printers and docking stations had to be replaced, which took almost a week. The Clerk had to pull the old printer connection out of the ceiling to get her computer up and running until OES’s IT department could respond. One of the cameras is still down. It has been an ‘enlightening’ experience.” Ginger, be careful out there!

**Chesterfield JDR** – Clerk **Laura Griffin** would like to welcome the following deputy clerks to the Court: **Evin Avery, McKell Burkhardt, Samantha Clements, Kathryn Rowe, and Pamela Stenbridge**. Welcome, ladies! Laura would also like to congratulate the following staff on their promotion to lead deputy clerk: **Cheryl Anderson, Katherine Marasco, Heather Merolla, and Lynley Spruill**. Finally, Laura would like to congratulate supervising deputy clerk, **Carrie Warr**, who is expecting baby girl Warr in December. Congratulations, Carrie!

**Danville JDR** – Clerk **Tammy White** would like to welcome **Kimberly Coleman** to the court as a full-time deputy clerk. Tammy also welcomes **Kimberly Bradley** as a wage employee. Welcome, ladies! Danville also celebrates the following service anniversaries: **Hon. Dale Wiley, 23 years; Tammy White, 15 years; Nancy Hill, 5 years; Christina Davis, 5 years; Dana Page, 4 years; Lisa Richardson, 4 years; and, Ashley Williams, 3 years**. Congratulations!

**Harrisonburg/Rockingham JDR**— Clerk **Terri Rea** would like to welcome 2 new deputy clerks, **Eric Trzicak** and **Cynthia Morris**, both were hired July 10, 2021 and are great additions to our staff.

**Henrico JDR** – Clerk Shannon Meadowcroft reports, “The management team of Henrico JDR put together an ice cream social for the staff to show appreciation for everyone’s hard work and dedication.”



Pictured above: Henrico JDR District Court’s ice cream social.

**Loudoun GDC** – Clerk **Tammy Dinterman** would like to congratulate **Courtney Brill**, civil division supervisor, for 5 years with the Court in July 2021. Congratulations, Courtney! Tammy also welcomes new employees **Cheryl Wood, Sebla Ronayne, Elizabeth Bacha, and Naiema Riaz**. Welcome! Finally, Tammy would like to congratulate **Nicole Isom**, who welcomed a baby boy two weeks early on June 18, 2021! Congratulations, Nicole!

**Lynchburg GDC** – Clerk **Amy Leftwich** celebrated “Lynchburg General District Court Employee Appreciation Day” on June 30, 2021. A special lunch was given to employees by the Judges, and four employees were recognized for their years of service. **Angelique Langan** and **Vernell Miller** received 5-year service awards; **Karen Taylor** received a 15-year award; and, **Sheila Ogden** received a 20-year award. We congratulate all on their service anniversaries! Finally, Amy would like to welcome **Mary Beth Wood** to the Court. She started April 10, 2021. Welcome, Mary Beth!

**New Kent GDC** – The Association would like to thank **Sirena Kestner** for her service to the Court and wish her well in her new endeavors. Sirena’s last day was Friday, August 20, 2021.

**Norfolk JDR** – Clerk **Joan Butt** would like to announce two retirements. Supervising deputy clerk, **Norma Link**, has retired after 29 years of dedicated service. Not only did Norma hold an incredible amount of institutional knowledge, she consistently went above and beyond the call of duty. She was everyone's go-to person and you would frequently hear people say, "There is nothing that Norma doesn't know." She completed every task and overcame every obstacle with an attitude of gratitude...with a true servant's heart.

Deputy Clerk, **Kathy Walter**, has also retired after 29 years of dedicated service. Kathy held several positions through the years including receptionist, post-court clerk and pre-court clerk. Kathy was well versed in all areas of this office. She was a seasoned clerk who was very dedicated to her duties. Kathy was a true team player and always had a smile on her face making everyone feel welcomed.

Anyone who has had the honor of working with these ladies realizes what a tremendous loss this is to the Norfolk J&DR Court. Although they will both be missed beyond measure, everyone recognizes that both retirements are well deserved. We wish them nothing but health, happiness, relaxation, and some quality time with their families.

Congratulations, Norma and Kathy!

**Patrick JDR** – Clerk **Michele Bryant** celebrated 29 years on August 1, 2021. Deputy clerk, **Renee Collins**, celebrated two years. Congratulations, ladies!

**Petersburg GDC** – Supervising deputy clerk **Stella Seaborne** would like to celebrate the retirement of **Angela Morgan** on February 1, 2021. Stella stated, "We miss her and hope she is enjoying retirement to the fullest." Welcome **Lara Bajsert** to the civil division, **Martha Story** to traffic, and **Amie Thompson** to criminal. Stella went on to state, "I would like to acknowledge the rest of the extraordinary women who make the GDC work: **Connie Heart** (pending retirement); **Renee Talley**, **Kendra Prorise**, **Antionette Price**, and **Sheri Crowder**. These exceptional women have worked hard as a team throughout the pandemic and they stand with each other, beside each other, and for each other. We are more than a team; we are a family. If I could give each of them an award, I

would. I am so glad, grateful and honored to work with the women of Petersburg General District Court."

**Richmond JDR** – Clerk **Felicia Edmonds-Rustin** would like to welcome the following new deputy clerks to their court family: **Richard Mason, III**; **Melissa Ballweg**; **Contina Dennis**; **Brittani Henry**; **Sade Allen**; **Sasha Marshall**; and, **Safiyah M. Bint Abdul Malik**. Welcome, all! Felicia would also like to congratulate the following staff on their recent promotions: **Amanda Gordon**, pre-court supervisor; **Diamon Jeffers**, lead deputy clerk; **Robin Mercer**, judicial administrative assistant; and, **Michelle Arrington**, customer service representative. Congratulations, ladies!

**Russell CMB** – The staff of Russell CMB wishes to thank the Clerks Association for the treat basket they sent upon the passing of their beloved Clerk, **Kathy Vance**. Please see the memorial tribute to Kathy on page 2.

**Virginia Beach JDR**—Clerk **Amy Burnham** wants to send out a huge thank you to the entire staff at Virginia Beach JDRC! Not only has the pandemic been challenging, but over the last few months we have experienced additional challenges with turnover and staff on medical and family leave. Everyone and every unit stepped up to work together to make it through the summer. I don't say it enough, but I appreciate all of you every day! A special congratulations to **Hannah Henderson** on the birth of Scarlett! Best wishes are sent out to **Jayson Young**, our PC Tech Support, as he joins the Circuit Court in October! Over the last six months, we have onboarded **Pam**, **Julquetta**, **Karen**, **Dawn**, **Demetria**, **Diamon**, **Latoya**, **Skylar**, and **Lisa** – welcome, ladies!

**Williamsburg JDR** – Clerk **Shea Bruno** would like to congratulate **Sandy Vite** for five years of service to the Court. Congratulations, Sandy!

**Wise GDC** – Clerk **Sherry Bishop** would like to welcome **Angela Wallace** to the Wise County General District Court. Welcome, Angela!

## Association acknowledges the Supreme Court for *Pandemic Influenza Bench Book*



ASSOCIATION OF CLERKS OF THE DISTRICT COURTS OF VIRGINIA

August 10, 2021

Dear Chief Justice Lemons,

On behalf of the Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia, “thank you” to those who provided critical information to the courts last year before COVID hit close to home. Upon receipt of the *Pandemic Influenza Bench Book*, court leaders were able to prepare themselves, execute plans, and brief management and staff for what was to come. All the time and effort that went into assembling the bench book content paved the way for assisting courts with establishing a successful, working local action plan. This pandemic was something none of us could have otherwise prepared ourselves for. In hindsight, what was predicted in the bench book did unfold. The solutions suggested were used by the courts and worked (e.g.: purchasing PPE and cleaning supplies in advance; having an alternative vendor pre-selected due to the potential for stockpiling and lack of resources; developing a remote work option and shift schedule; and, video/remote hearings). These are a few examples, but all of them were completely critical to our courts’ successes.

While the content of the bench book was frightening to digest, we appreciated having the resources in advance to mentally prepare before what was to come. Thank you to the Supreme Court of Virginia Pandemic Flu Preparedness Commission, advisors, commission/committee staff, and all those involved with researching, preparing, and distributing this material. You helped prepare us for the unimaginable. In doing so, lives were saved and essential services to our public were preserved. We are not out of the weeds quite yet but thanks to the hard work of so many in preparing the map, we are well on our way. A job well done.

With kind regards,

Laura Griffin,  
President

Kimberly McKittrick,  
President-Elect

Rick Kahl,  
Past President

Laura Hatch,  
Vice President

Amy Burnham,  
Secretary/Treasurer

Terri Rea,  
Assistant to the Sec./Treas.

CC: Karl R. Hade, Executive Secretary

## Getting to know the Association President, Laura Griffin

### What do you like to do for fun?

Who has free time for fun? (kidding) On the weekends, my husband, daughter, and I love taking our dog, Phoebe, to local dog parks. Phoebe is a “pandemic puppy!” We got her to keep my 15-year-old daughter company while we were at work. Phoebe is an 18-month-old boxer and we adore her. She’s a huge stress reliever for me, too.

### What do you listen to in your car?

True crime podcasts. It’s crazy, I know, but I love them. Linda Moore, Clerk of Chesterfield GDC, and I love “Crime Junkie,” and we took our Circuit Court Judicial Administrator, Trish Muller, with us to see them live in Richmond last year.

### Where is your favorite vacation spot?

That’s hard to say – but I love the beach and the mountains equally. Now that fall is approaching, I cannot wait for a weekend at my favorite mountain spot in Carroll County! My family and I love visiting Virginia State Parks, and I think my favorites so far have been Claytor Lake and Hungry Mother. We are so fortunate to have such beautiful places in Virginia.

### How long have you been Clerk in Chesterfield Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court and what is your favorite part of being a court administrator?

I’ve been Clerk in Chesterfield since February 10, 2015. I was Clerk in Richmond JDR from March 2008 to February 2015. I have been with the judicial branch since October 2005. My favorite part of being a court administrator is making all the puzzle pieces fit together: case processing, assisting judges, solving problems, making sure the building is attended to, requesting and monitoring the budget, etc. I love being able to synthesize all of these tasks with the ultimate goal of providing timely access to justice to the public.



### What is one piece of advice you would offer to every new court employee?

Please do not measure your value, or the value of your job to the salary you earn. Your pay will never be commensurate with the important role you perform. Please understand the why behind what we’re all here to do in Virginia’s district courts every day. We provide a service to our community that no one else has the authority or knowledge to fulfill. We are essential to our democratic republic and the rule of law. If you are only doing this to pay your bills, then we are not the right place for you.

### Why would you urge a district court employee to serve in the Association?

We are entirely volunteer-led. If you want to have a voice in your profession, the best place to start is your Association. We exist to make Virginia’s district courts better, and I firmly believe that speaks for itself. If you want to contribute to your profession in a meaningful way, help the public respect courts with the esteem they should, and make your job better and easier to perform, the first step is to assist the Association in even the smallest of ways.

### What do you think is the biggest challenge the courts are facing today?

I think the biggest challenge is attracting and retaining quality staff. With “work from home” perks and signing bonuses, courts cannot compete with private-sector jobs and even remain less competitive with other public sector employers. Compensation goes hand-in-hand with this issue.

### What would you like the Association's legacy to be?

I would like the Association’s legacy to be relevancy, credibility, and reputability. I would like for us to be known for “getting things done at a high level of competence,” plain and simple. Fortunately, we’ve been steered in this direction by great officers who came before me, and I thank them.

# EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



Your Employee's Photo, name, years of service and name of court here!

We know you are doing great work out there and deserve recognition!

Who are your top performers that deserve recognition for going above and beyond?

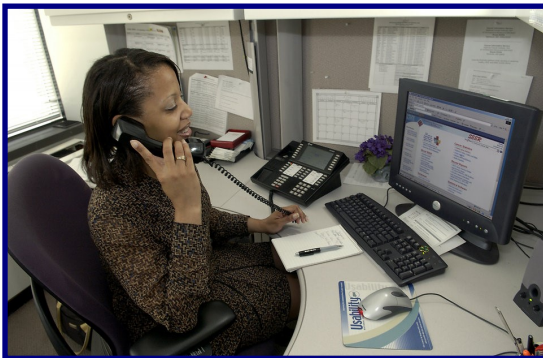
Help us spread the word and showcase you and your staff's accomplishments in our Employee of the Month section of *THE DOCKET*.

We want all the details that made leadership or peers in your court take a moment to say job well done.

Want some ideas on how to get started on an Employee of the month program?

Decide what benefits it will bring to your team. Are you wanting to achieve a higher customer service experience or community outreach? How about bringing up employee morale and engagement? Perhaps you want to improve employee retention? These are all common goals companies use this type of recognition program to improve.

After you have your goal, you will want to decide who selects the top candidates and under what criteria. You can use a peer to peer ballot submission process. You can put a name and reason why they deserve consideration into a box, submit an e-mail or establish a selection committee to choose your top candidate.



Your Employee's Photo, name, years of service and name of court here!



Your Employee's Photo, name, years of service and name of court here!



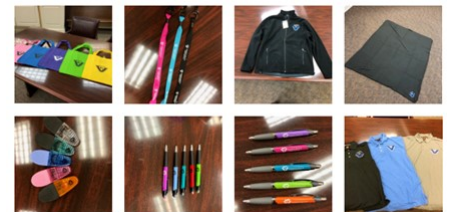
Your Employee's Photo, name, years of service and name of court here!

Please send us your Employee of the month award recipients photo, name and reasons why they deserve recognition for the month. We would love to showcase your court's successes in our next issue!

**Has your office been creative in boosting morale or participated in something fun as a group? Let us know!**

Doesn't have to be elaborate but what ever method you choose, make sure it is fair and that it supports whatever goal you are wanting to achieve and they exhibit the qualities you want to promote to your staff.

Now that you have selected your winner celebrate! Take them to lunch, give a gift certificate, preferred parking, buy them SWAG!! Remember to e-mail the details to us for the next issue!



Visit: [www.vadistrictclerks.com/merchandise1](http://www.vadistrictclerks.com/merchandise1)



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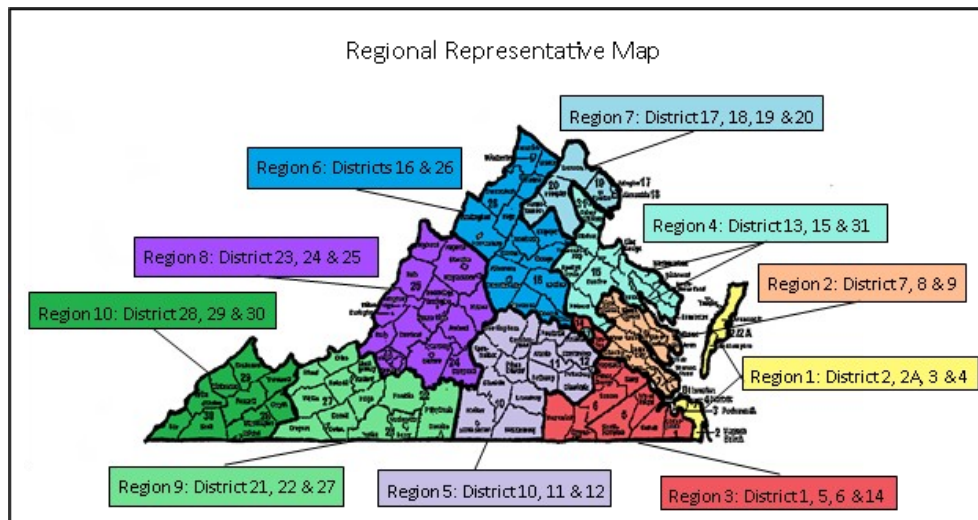
**Committee Chairs**

Budget & Finance	Amy Burnham & Terri Rea
CATS Manual	Stephanie Pearson & Barbara Shaw
Historian	Heather Stevens
Legislative	Pamela Jarvis & Barbara Shaw
Membership	Kimberly McKittrick
Mentorship	Terri Rea
Nominating	Rick Kahl
Parliamentarian	Christina Davis
Programs	Lindsey Short & Lauren Jones
Publications	Laura Griffin & Laura Hatch
Resolutions	Vickie King
Special Issues	Amy Burnham & Terri Rea
Technology	Laura Griffin
Ways & Means	Lauren Jones

***Clerks Association Mission***

- ◆ *To foster a closer relationship among the district courts of Virginia*
- ◆ *To improve proficiency and professionalism of court personnel*
- ◆ *To promote uniformity of procedure*
- ◆ *To recommend improved techniques and procedures to more efficiently perform the duties of the Clerk's Office*
- ◆ *To provide educational and training opportunities for all district court employees*
- ◆ *To foster cooperation and understanding between court personnel, judges, the legal community, and others involved with or interested in courts*

**Please visit our webpage at [www.vadistrictclerks.com](http://www.vadistrictclerks.com)**



For News and Current Events, please see our website. If you have interest in joining any of our committees, please contact your Regional Representative! Our organization is entirely volunteer-led and requires the participation of any district court employee! Please consider lending your time to your Association!

