

CLAY COUNTY

CLERK OF COURT AND
COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE

TARA S. GREEN

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2022/2023



**TOP
WORK
PLACES
2024**

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A MESSAGE FROM CLERK GREEN

Thank you for your interest in the people, services, achievements, finances, and overall operations of the Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office. As my third term in office comes to a close, it remains my heartfelt honor to lead this outstanding group of one hundred professionals located in four locations. You'll learn much more about these amazing public servants in the pages ahead.

Just prior to the release of this annual report, our office received news of our first Top Workplace designation. While any workplace recognition is welcome, this regional award represents above-average positive feedback provided directly and anonymously by our employees to the Florida Times Union and their partners at Energage, the organization who conducts the survey and analyzes results. While this designation signals to me that we are certainly "on the right track", there is always room for improvement and innovation as we continue to strive to be the best Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office in the state.



I encourage you to not only review this annual report but to also visit clayclerk.com to dive even deeper into information about the many services our employees provide to our community. We are here to help you.

I am extremely grateful for the hard work of all our employees and appreciate the many citizens and fellow government leaders who partner with us regularly to make Clay County a great place to live and work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara St. John".

Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller



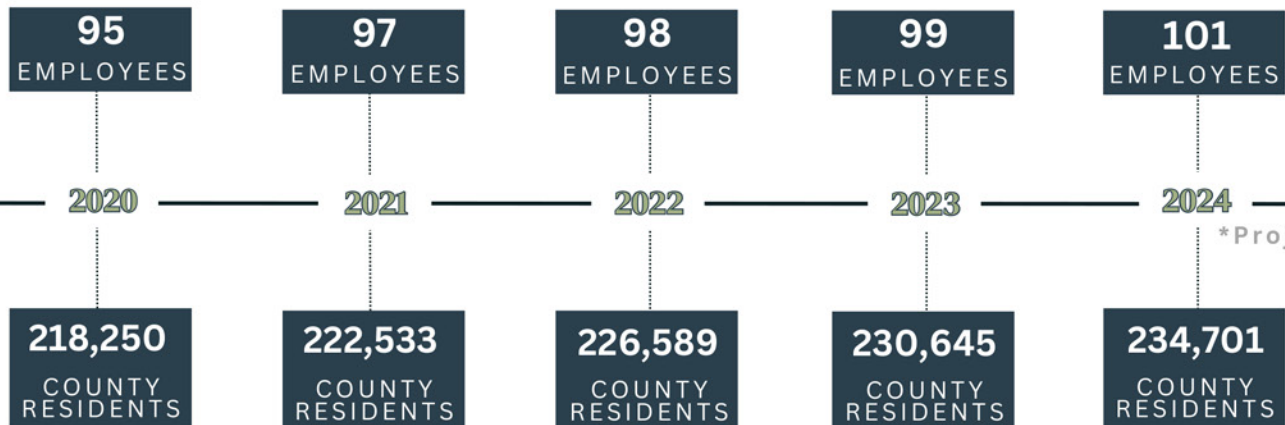
GROWTH



It was in 2023 that our organization reached the milestone of employing one-hundred personnel. Growth from a human resources standpoint is indicative of the growth happening all around us in Clay County. It reflects the growth in population to be served and growth in services we are either

legislatively mandated to provide or those we develop proactively to benefit our community. Attracting quality candidates for open positions with our office is an ongoing effort and, although challenging, results in the hiring of excellent employees who have both expertise as well as a heart for our community.

When you visit the Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office you'll likely first encounter members of our Administration team as they are the friendly faces that first greet you. They are also our office business experts who make sure citizens connect with the correct personnel, have access to accurate information, can schedule meetings, can submit employment applications, can share comments about our services, and much more. These talented employees work behind the scenes to provide professional services to fellow employees and community partners. This includes the planning of morale boosting events, facilitating award presentations, special projects, making travel and training arrangements, submitting requisitions for important purchases and officewide data and business analytics.



CLAY COUNTY

CLERK OF COURT AND COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Tara S. Green

Clay County
Clerk of Court
and Comptroller

Administrative Services

Rick Dingle
Chief Administrative Officer

- **Clerk Finance**
Accounting and Finance
Accounts Payable
Accounts Receivable
Payroll
- **Clerk to the Board**
Value Adjustment Board
- **Comptroller**
Financial Accounting
Accounts Payable
Payroll
Accounts Receivable

Communications and Community Outreach

Mary Justino
Public Information Officer

- **Archives**
- **Facilities Support/ Events**
- **Communications**
Public Relations
Media Requests

Human Resources

Deena Faulkner
Chief Human Resources Officer

- Recruiting
- Compensation and Benefits
- Employee Relations
- Performance Management
- Training and Development

Information Services

Justin Horan
Chief Technology Officer

- Application Support
- Network Security
- Security Administration





Victoria Marquart
Executive Assistant
to the Clerk

• **Administrative Professional Services**

Business Analytics

**Division of
Inspector General**

Olga Rabel
Inspector General

- Audit
- Guardianship
- Waste, Fraud & Abuse Management

Legal

Brian Byrd
General Counsel

- Record Management
- Tax Deeds
- Bonds
- Contracts
- Public Record Requests

Operations

Tracie McRae
Chief Operations
Officer

- **OP Branch**
- **Recording**
- **Traffic**
- **Teen Court**
- **Special Projects**
- **Civil**
 - Child Support
 - Circuit
 - County
 - Dependency
 - Family
 - Probate
- **Criminal**
 - Criminal Compliance
 - Criminal Traffic
 - Felony
 - Jury Management
 - Juvenile Delinquency
 - Misdemeanor
 - Probation Services
 - Specialty Courts
 - Veteran's Court
 - Drug Court





MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

Mission

We are the guardians of Clay County’s records and trustworthy fiscal stewards; we proudly support the judiciary, facilitating justice system access for our community through efficient service; we are accountable custodians of all county funds and financial reports, Clerk to the Board, and leaders in fraud and waste prevention; we leverage our expertise to provide reliable, helpful services to citizens.

Vision

To be the most trustworthy, efficient, accountable and helpful Clerk of Court and Comptroller’s Office in the State of Florida.

Core Values

TRUSTWORTHY

Citizens can trust us to take our duties seriously, performing them ethically and with integrity.

ACCOUNTABLE

We ensure the accuracy of financial reports, monitor budgets, implement financial controls, and publish results.

EFFICIENT

We improve, streamline processes, innovate, and expand knowledge through training. We increase efficiency through technology while protecting the public trust.

HELPFUL

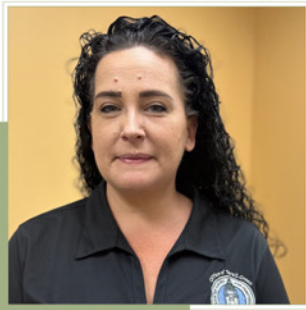
We serve others in a professional, empathetic, and courteous manner. We apply our expertise and interact with care for the sake of our colleagues, judicial partners, and customers.



WE
ARE

OUR ALL-STARS

2023 was a year filled with great work and employee achievements. We proudly recognized these all-stars who by definition exemplify the very best of our organization. Congratulations to them and to their “teams” for jobs well done!



Tiffany Mays

Recording Department Clerk

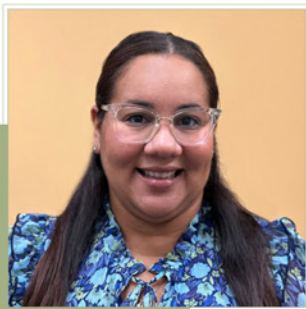
Tiffany is recognized as a very helpful employee who serves others in a professional, empathetic, and courteous manner. Described by her colleagues as “a ray of sunshine who is always calm no matter the circumstance”, she goes above and beyond when assisting customers and coworkers.



Kim Rodgers

Criminal Department Clerk

Kim is a veteran employee who exudes cheerfulness and a work ethic that makes her stand out from the crowd. Her selfless service to citizens and to her colleagues always shines through. The picture of resilience, reliability, and accountability, Kim hasn’t missed a beat since being hired in 2006 despite many obstacles. The epitome of an “unsung hero”, her dedication to our office is not overlooked.



Lillian Robles-Rodriguez

Comptroller Department Clerk

Lillian is helpful in an increasingly important way – crossing the language barrier. While there is a phone line system for translation, she allows our office to present an even more personal approach when responding to requests from citizens and other departments. She always arrives with a great attitude which makes her whole department a better place to work. She does an awesome job in any language!



LaShonda Hampshire-Baskin

Civil Department Clerk

LaShonda’s dedication to her position allows her to resolve customers’ issues and address their immediate needs. She has great working relationships with judicial staff and provides support to coworkers and child support system partners alike. She skillfully reassures customers, defusing tense situations, earning her the moniker, “the heart and soul of CGD”. Her expertise is invaluable to all who trust her to handle any situation. She has trained many clerks on the processes of the Depository, openly sharing her institutional know-how with others.

EXECUTIVE TEAM



Our Executive Team helps Clerk of Court and Comptroller Green oversee a staff of more than one hundred employees, their hundreds of functions, and the many partnerships that keep our justice system and county responsibilities operating smoothly. They love leading this “Top Workplace”.

Key leaders include Chief Operations Officer Tracie McRae (COO) and Chief Administrative Officer Rick Dingle (CAO), who oversee major components of our organization and the bulk of personnel. With decades of corporate and governmental experience, McRae and Dingle lead awesome managerial teams who help accomplish our goals each year. CAO Dingle also oversees the operation of the Clerk to the Board and Value Adjustment Board (VAB) personnel.

Chief Technology Officer Justin Horan advises Clerk Green and her personnel on matters related to our computer systems, databases, cybersecurity, and all forms of technology impacting our workflow and services.



Clerk Green is also assisted by Chief Human Resources Officer Deena Faulkner who works directly with chief officers and managers. Faulkner and her HR specialist conduct recruiting efforts, review applications, help conduct interviews with prospective employees, and support current employees with benefit awareness and policy matters. Facilitating online training and succession planning are also high priorities.

An integral part of our team is General Counsel Brian Byrd, who advises Clerk Green, the executive team, and managers on legal and legislative matters impacting all areas of our operation and our customers. Byrd represents us in the legal community as well as a member of the Clay Bar and is leading the relaunch of our Low Bono program.

Clerk Green’s team also includes Public Information Officer (PIO) Mary Justino. She oversees Historical Archives Division staff, is our media liaison, crafts internal and external communication, and promotes positive public relations. This is done through educational events, courthouse tours, charitable campaigns, and regular public presentations. PIO Justino maintains our social media presence, creates content for our public website, and publishes our newsletter and annual report.



CRIMINAL DEPARTMENT

The Criminal Department is our largest both in the number of employees and also in the scope of their duties. A glimpse into the personnel changes over the past year provides a snapshot of both.

Criminal Department Manager Stephanie Wright welcomed new employees Kelsey Bogash and Jennifer South to her department in late 2022. Soon after, South took on the responsibilities of Jury Clerk. Faith Hawkins joined the department in 2023 and quickly transitioned from Probation Court Liaison to Juvenile Court Clerk, and now Felony Chair 2. Aundrea Gelsey took on the duties of Drug Court and Veteran's Court clerk in late 2022. Jessica Olson joined this group in 2023 and she recently took on the duties of Mental Health Court clerk, too.

With the retirement of the Honorable Don Lester in 2023, Criminal Department Supervisor Holly Casterline transitioned to full-time supervisor duties and Christina Diaz transitioned to Felony Chair 1. Diaz is clerking for our newest circuit judge, the Honorable James E. Kallaher. Supervisor Holly Casterline and Compliance/Probation Supervisor Tessa Pena are proud to assist in the oversight of these and many more valued employees.



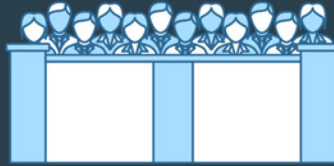


6,933

**TOTAL
CRIMINAL CASES**

23

JURY TRIALS



19,491

**TOTAL CRIMINAL
DOCUMENTS E-FILED**



19,513

**TOTAL
JURORS SUMMONED**

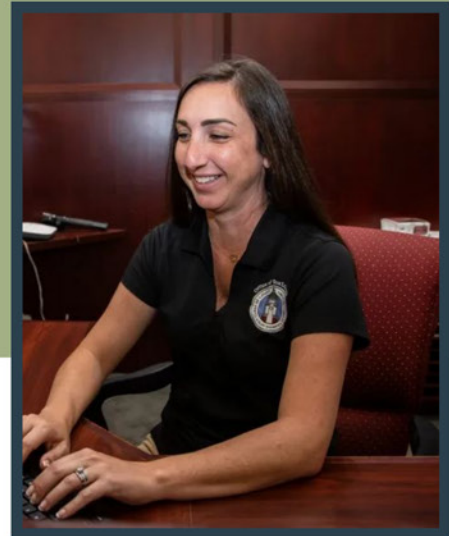
**CRIMINAL CASES REFERRED TO
DIVERSION PROGRAM**

**DRUG
COURT**

25

**VETERAN'S
COURT**

30



The Circuit Court has jurisdiction over all defendants accused of committing crimes designated by the legislature as felonies. The County Court has jurisdiction over defendants accused of committing crimes designated as misdemeanors. County Court also has jurisdiction over criminal traffic cases. Criminal Traffic laws are defined as a violation that may subject a defendant to incarceration upon conviction.

Manager Wright and her team of employees are not only responsible for criminal court services but also for compliance and payment plan programs, misdemeanor probation services, and for our jury duty process. Each of these functions independently are major undertakings and require the utmost accountability. Thousands of Clay County citizens are issued jury duty summons annually. Our staff assists citizens in person regarding jury duty, but we also have a new online jury management system that is benefiting all involved parties.

CIVIL DEPARTMENT

Civil law encompasses many types of cases and filings from small claims to evictions, from family law to guardianship, from foreclosure sales to mental health, probate, child support and more.

The Circuit Civil Division handles civil actions in which the damage being sought or the matter in controversy exceeds \$50,000. Once the case is filed, it must be served by either the Sheriff's Office or, with the appropriate order of the court, by a private process server.

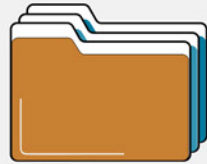
The County Civil Division handles civil actions in which the damages being sought or the matter in controversy exceeds \$8,000 but is less than \$50,000. Matters in controversy \$8,000 and under are handled in Small Claims Court.





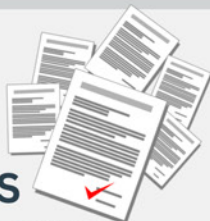
When discussing the events of FY 22/23 with Civil Department Manager Amie Herrera she mentioned a goal she and her staff reached. They streamlined the e-service of injunctions to all Sheriff's Offices. They now have a complete and accurate listing of all direct contacts needed at each sheriff's offices statewide. This change ensures faster service to protect domestic violence victims. This goes hand-in-hand also with the Civil Department's commitment to assist Quigley House, Clay's comprehensive Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center. Their personnel provide crucial crisis intervention, temporary shelter, protection, and counseling.

10,943
CIVIL CASES
FILED



Civil Department supervisors, Becky Crews and Holly Ricks, are part of a team preparing to relaunch our Low Bono Program. Although this low-cost attorney initiative was paused during the pandemic, our staff looks forward to providing it again to citizens in 2024.

167,853
DOCUMENTS
E-FILED THROUGH
CIVIL DEPARTMENT



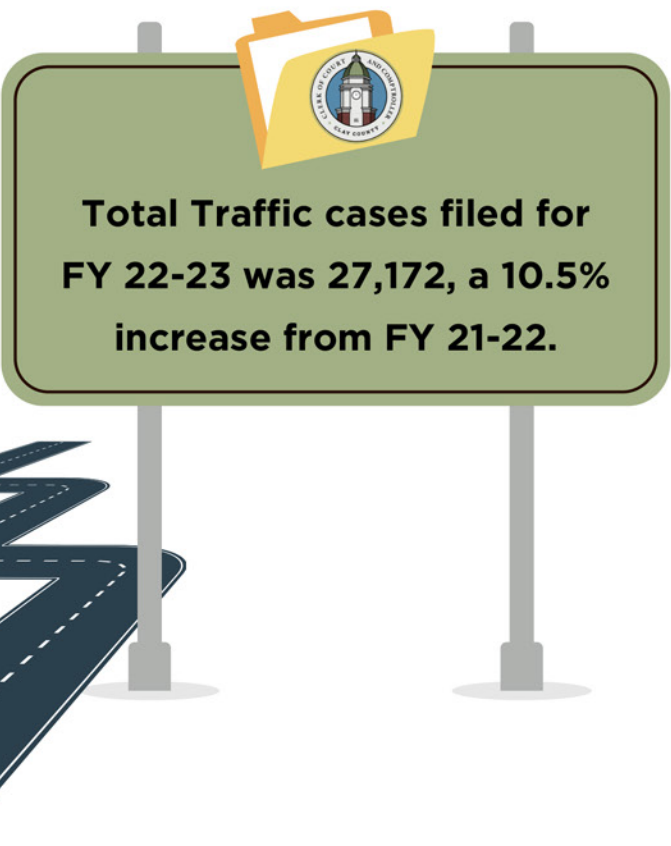
Civil Department clerk LaShonda Hampshire-Baskin is full of knowledge and a solid Child Support expert on staff. She has great working relationships with judicial staff and provides support to coworkers and child support system partners alike. LaShonda's decades of service benefit all involved.



TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT

Our Traffic Department personnel are supervised by Manager Wendy Rodriguez. It is her team that guides citizens through the process of paying for or contesting traffic tickets, and more. Our goal is to make payment as easy as possible, so options include use of our website for online payment, in-person payment in our offices, and even done by mail or by phone.

The staff handles Civil Traffic payment plans to aid citation holders, allowing them additional time to pay while remaining compliant. Traffic clerks also help citizens who opt for Driver Improvement School and those who want to fight the ticket in court. For those citizens, hearing dates are scheduled.



**Total Traffic cases filed for
FY 22-23 was 27,172, a 10.5%
increase from FY 21-22.**

Rodriguez looked back at FY 22/23 and views it as a year full of personnel changes and many improvements. Clerk Sara Stout was promoted to Cashier Specialist. They welcomed Kim Kemp as a Call Center Specialist and Leah McDonald as their court clerk for both Judge Forbes and Judge Mobley. In November of 2023, the Clerk's Office call center was disbanded, and Kim Kemp moved into the Traffic Department as a Cashier Specialist I. Elaine Burgess was promoted to Traffic Department Supervisor in 2023. Congratulations everyone.

RECORDING DEPARTMENT & ORANGE PARK BRANCH

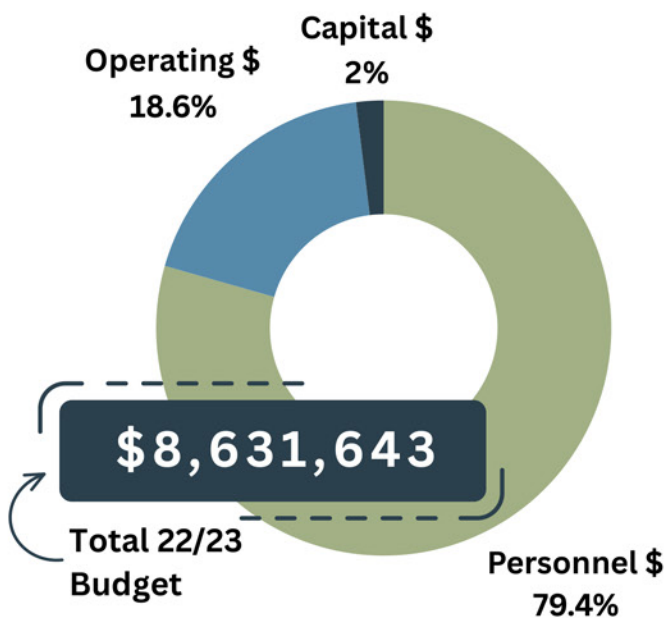
The Recording Department and Orange Park Branch, though located in different buildings and areas of the county, have personnel whose duties and services closely mirror each other. In 2023 both groups implemented QLess, our online appointment system for marriage licenses and passports. This implementation significantly lowered their call volume and drove up use of our public website. There, a wealth of information can be easily accessed by citizens, not only about marriage licenses and passports, but about many additional programs and services the public may not realize the Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office offers.



CLERK FINANCE

This department includes personnel who operate behind the scenes, but without whom our office couldn't function, as the financial figures below demonstrate. These figures are a snapshot of the volume of transactions and fiscal responsibilities they manage week in and week out.

OUR FY 22/23 BUDGET



COURT RELATED STATE BUDGET



COURT COLLECTIONS	\$4,150,084
STATE FUNDING FOR COURTS	\$3,737,553
FEDERAL REIMBURSEMENT	\$281,058
STATE FUNDING FOR JURY COSTS	\$100,702
TOTAL COURT FUNDING FOR FY 22/23	\$4,119,313

COMPTROLLER



Comptroller's Office personnel ensure that all county financial assets are safeguarded against unauthorized use and that all transactions are properly recorded for preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. This office is sometimes also referred to as the County Finance Office. This county finance-oriented group was managed in FY 22/23 by Finance Officer Amy Bramlitt, Finance Director David Caudill, Accounts Payable & Payroll Manager Cindy Atkinson, and Accounts Receivable/ Revenue Manager Kathy Miller. Miller recently retired from two decades of public service and we warmly wish her a very happy retirement.



Oversight of the Clay County government's \$545.5 million budget (excluding reserves)



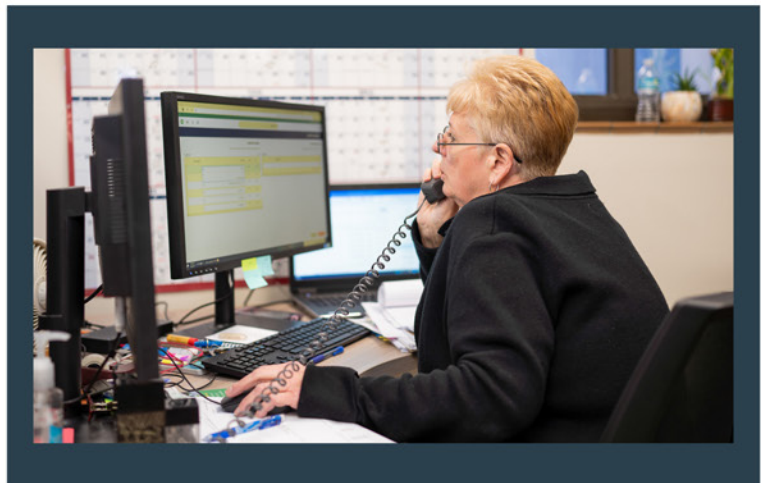
Completion of FY 21/22 Annual Audit with first-year auditors, James Moore & Co. P.L.



Implementation of the Clerk's Finance Department Workday payroll and purchasing system



Assisted with Tyler Technology building department software accounting reports and with credit card merchant account processors for various Board of County Commissioners systems



CLERK TO THE BOARD & VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD

The Florida Constitution establishes the Clerk of Court and Comptroller as an elected public trustee at the county level as part of a system of checks and balances. The functions of the Clerk to the Board and of the staff who facilitate the Value Adjustment Board fall under this area of responsibility. We attend meetings and workshops of the BOCC where we are responsible for keeping the official record. We also provide public access to these records through our public website, which can be found by visiting clayclerk.com.



63

BOCC MEETINGS ATTENDED

4

VAB MEETINGS ATTENDED

2

SPECIAL MEETINGS OR WORKSHOPS

733

VAB PETITIONS PROCESSED

4

VAB HEARINGS

67

BOARD DOCUMENTS PROCESSED

The Value Adjustment Board (VAB), as part of this constitutionally established system, serves as the decision-maker when there is disagreement between a property owner and the Property Appraiser concerning exemptions, valuations, portability decisions, change of ownership/control or classifications. Petition filing and scheduled hearings are handled by the VAB to settle such disputes.



GENERAL COUNSEL

Joining our organization in 2023, General Counsel Brian Byrd advises Clerk of Court and Comptroller Green on various employment and office legal matters and also oversees public records, record requests, and tax deed sales.

Byrd, Tax Deed Clerk Christina Spadea, and Recording Department Manager Jewel Baskin, oversaw a major project. They sought out individuals entitled to tax deed surplus funds. Their tools were as varied as they were effective, including a review of obituaries, voter registration data, property appraiser websites, and online public records. Social media also played a role in their success. Ironically, their calls were often met with disbelief and a prompt hang-up. They fine-tuned their approach to convey their legitimacy, eventually leading to the successful allocation of nearly \$1 million in surplus funds.

Byrd also laid the groundwork for an extensive record retention/destruction project which was furthered by Chief Administrative Officer Rick Dingle. More than 500 boxes of documents that had exceeded their retention period were identified for destruction, following the Florida Department of State Retention Schedules. This project enhances the accessibility of old documents and reclaims square footage within the Clay County Courthouse.



28,229
case files were
scanned by clerks
during the project.

There has been a resounding call to revive our office’s popular Low Bono Program, a cornerstone service suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Clerk Green appointed Byrd and PIO Justino to spearhead this program’s revival. For the upcoming reintroduction of Low Bono, we are considering virtual appointments, cost-effectiveness, and a potential expansion to include probate attorneys. Above all else, our goal is to be as helpful and truly responsive to the public as possible.

DIVISION OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Lead by Inspector General Olga Rabel, the mission of the Division of Inspector General (IG) is to promote accountability and integrity. The IG's duties encompass prevention and detection of fraud, waste, and abuse. Their efforts promote efficient use of public resources and preserve the public's trust in Clay County government operations.



IG investigations develop internal controls and awareness of the potential for fraud, waste and abuse. The Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller serves as the ex-officio county auditor. The IG fulfills audit and investigative responsibilities, functions that serve as a check and balance. The Inspector General reports to the Clerk of Court and Comptroller who is independent of the Board of County Commissioners and County Manager.



BUSINESS ANALYTICS

Manager Emily Horan leads this unit which was created in 2023. Their goal is to maintain and analyze the accuracy of data. This includes data for the Comprehensive Case Information System (CCIS), Offender Based Tracking System



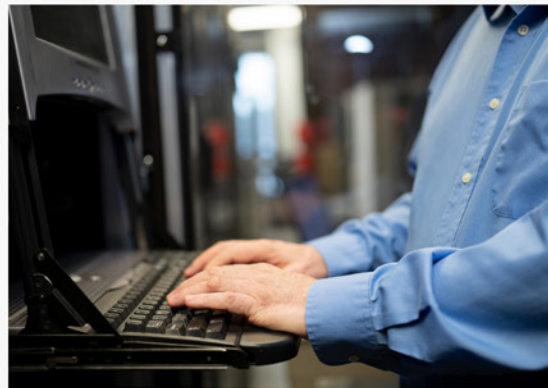
(OBTS), Supervisor of Elections, Office of State Court Administrators (OSCA), the Florida Supreme Court, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). Our Business Analysts also help guide the office on ways to improve processes and on the use of case management systems. This work is evident in new best practices and in the standard operating procedures that are established. These Business Analysts also play a role in the maintenance, tracking, and auditing of evidence received from trials and court hearings.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Justin Horan brings his legal background and expertise in technology management to the task of overseeing this group of experts in their field. Every function our office has and every service we provide is, in one way or another, impacted by technology and the related databases, equipment, and connections involved. Their areas of responsibility include Application Support and Network Security & Administration. This team keeps an office of one hundred colleagues up and running, plus they keep us connected to many partner agencies and county partners, too.



Over the last year this team accomplished many of their anticipated goals, but also addressed challenges that arose.



Deployed next generation firewalls to enhance security of electronic data.

Deployed new phone system throughout all office locations, totaling 225 phones.

Deployed Help Desk ticket system.

- 649 TICKETS ENTERED
- 601 TICKETS RESOLVED

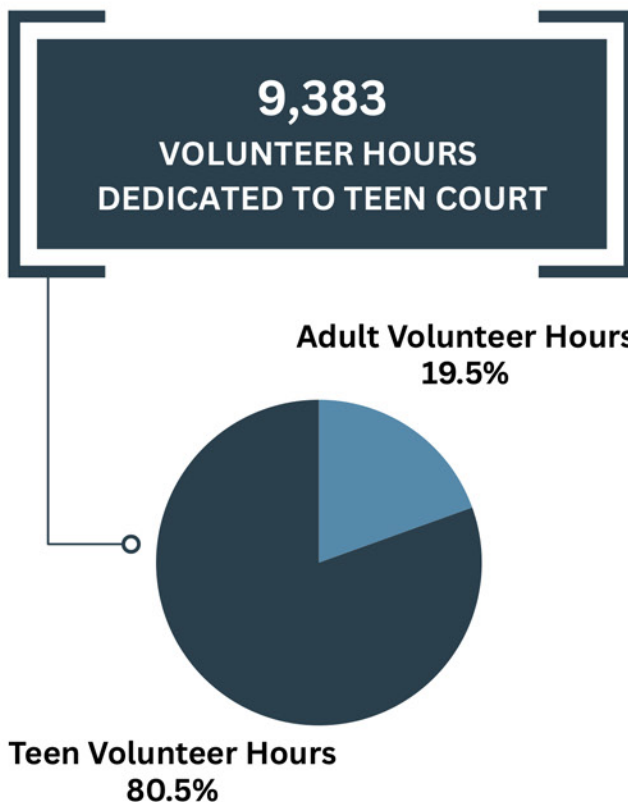
Deployed new network throughout courthouse and branch locations.

93%
SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION RATE



TEEN COURT

Through the Teen Court program, teens become the solution, not the problem. Teen Court is a nationally acclaimed diversion program designed to divert qualified juvenile offenders from formal Juvenile Court proceedings. Although figures from FY 22/23 showed more than a 42% increase in civil citations (353) over those received by this program in FY 21/22, the increase is due to the State Attorney's Office (SAO) allowing law enforcement to write civil citations for youth for certain offenses. Though not new, the top three offenses were simple battery, petit theft, and possession of drug paraphernalia. The increase of possession of drug paraphernalia cases quickly rose to the top, replacing domestic battery.



Teen Court was successful thanks in part to their most loyal volunteer, Jim Thies, who serves as a hearing officer on a biweekly basis and is an integral part of the Teen Court Program. Teen Court youth and leadership were able to take part in two mock trial events in 2023. Teen Court is thankful for existing partnerships with AMI Kids, PACE Center for Girls Clay, Florida Youth Challenge Academy, Clay Behavioral Health Center, the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, Hanley Foundation, Fresh Ministries, Clay Action Coalition, and Tobacco Free Clay.

ARCHIVES

A visit to the Clay County Archives is always eye-opening for those interested in Clay County history and commemoration of the people, places, and events that shaped us. Records dating back to the 1850s, physical artifacts, founding family memorabilia, important court case files, military service records and significant photos are all maintained with expert care and shared regularly with the public. Fun events like Tales from the Clink, Back-to-School Teacher Training Day, and our educational tour program bring the community to this one-of-a-kind site. Outreach includes monthly newspaper articles in three local publications.



With the help of Archives Supervisor Vishi Garig and Specialist Amelia Dixon, visitors verify family stories handed down through generations. We challenge ourselves each year to broaden our community outreach efforts so more citizens, especially youth, gain a greater appreciation for Clay County. Archives even shared Clay History with employees during our first Lunch & Learn event.

In 2023, Archives staff focused on an important special project – a full inventory of all archival materials. This project spanned months and encompassed everything found inside the Archives Center and Archives Storage Building (6,000 square feet of storage space). Prompted by a visit from the UNF Head of Special Collections and University Archives Susan Swiatosz, time was spent analyzing future facilities planning and evaluating the preservation needs of our collection. Swiatosz described our Archives operation as an important resource for the entire area, packed with valuable references for genealogists, educators, and historians. The overall effort resulted in a 50-page report that now serves as the launching pad from which a Clay County Historical Archives Database will be created and shared with current and future generations.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Clay County Fair Display

One of our major goals every year is to reach out to the community to raise awareness about our services and to get involved with community events. We welcome these partnerships, and our employees enjoy any opportunity to help their fellow citizens.



Operation Green Light Event



Chamber of Commerce



Breast Cancer Awareness



Guardian Ad Litem Christmas Gift Drive



TARA S. GREEN

CLERK OF COURT AND COMPTROLLER

CLAY COUNTY



825 NORTH ORANGE AVENUE / P.O. BOX 698
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