



# CHECKS & BALANCES



Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller's Office Newsletter

June 2025



**In this issue:**

- State Funding and Local Impacts
- Employment Milestones
- Community Outreach
- 2025 Hurricane Season—Let's Prepare Together
- Inspector General (IG) News
- Have a great 4th of July!
- **Attached** - IG Newsletter, Lunch & Learn Form, CCDS Calendar, Tales from the Clink Flier 2025

## Clerk's Message

Although it isn't unusual this time of year for us to discuss our state and local funding issues and legislative impacts, I'd like to keep employees in the loop and especially aware of potential changes related to this approaching fiscal year. As states and counties nationwide analyze budgets even more closely, now with "DOGE" in mind, here is what I can share at this point in the process:

The Florida Legislature passed a \$115.1 billion budget for Fiscal Year 25/26. Thirty-seven (37) new judges are funded statewide (one, possibly two, of those for Clay County). An additional judge or two here means

continuing discussions between myself, the judiciary, and the executive team on how to support the one or two judges and what additional resources may be necessary.

As I mentioned in our most recent all-staff meeting, certain state House and Senate bills are on our radar, too. This includes House bills related to electronic transmittal of court records (HB 513), vexatious litigants (HB 1559), and tampering with / harassing court officials (HB 1049). In the Senate, SB 268 updates public records exemptions.

As always, I work closely with state and local partners in an effort to secure adequate funding to achieve our personnel goals, cover mandated services, and properly fund the staff and services that our community has come to expect and appreciate. Please continue doing your very best, even in an era of changes, to be the trustworthy, efficient, accountable, and helpful public servants I know you are. I am so grateful for each of you and will keep you updated as the next fiscal year approaches in October.

Thank you.

## Hurricane Season 2025 is Here



Annually, hurricane season begins nationally on June 1st. We Floridians know we have to keep an eye out for serious storms and potential hurricane-level weather year-round. That's why our colleagues at the county's Emergency Management Office keep their sites updated and create new ways to alert us when there is a weather threat. Please be sure this hurricane season to review the preparedness steps

below and to sign up for direct alerts on your phone/email delivered by our county leaders during emergencies. Here are two to consider using:

[claycountygov.com/community/clay-connected](https://claycountygov.com/community/clay-connected)

[claycountygov.com/community/emergency-management](https://claycountygov.com/community/emergency-management)



### HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS



MAKE A PLAN



SECURE DOCUMENTS



STAY INFORMED



BUILD A KIT



FILL UP YOUR CAR



PREPARE GROCERIES



CHARGE DEVICES



SEEK SAFE SHELTER

Join Us!



FRIDAY, JULY 11, 12-1PM,  
ALL-PURPOSE ROOM  
BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH (BYOL)

We’ve all wondered at least once, “What’s an Inspector General and what do they do?” The “IG” role remains somewhat new to our office (established just 5 years ago), and, especially for new employees, may be a new concept.

Never fear, there’s a **Lunch & Learn** scheduled to discuss this topic. See the attached flier for details. Attend to be eligible to win door prizes, too.

No RSVP required—just join us!

Employment Milestones — Congrats!

We love to celebrate employment milestones and to share a glimpse of everyone’s career progress. Our colleagues with twenty (20) or more total years of service are highlighted each quarter. Here’s to many more successful milestones and to everyone’s future accomplishments!

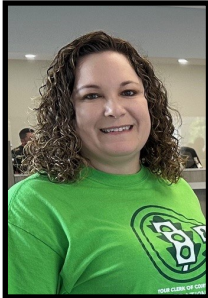
Employee	Milestone Month	Years/Tenure
Kim Kemp	April	2
Nicole Barrie	April	2
Amber Leininger	April	5
Robert Mikeska	April	12
<b>Aundrea Gelsey</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>24</b>
Cara McCoy	April	3
Jennifer Brosky	April	3
Frances Gray	May	8
<b>Holly Ricks</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>LaShonda Hampshire-Baskin</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>26</b>
Beth-Ann Were	May	2
Brian Byrd	May	2
<b>Stacie Towns</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Wendy Rodriguez</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>20</b>
Eddy Richard	June	19
Nikki Phillips	June	1
Jonathan Lopez	June	1
Victoria-Ann Marquart	June	15
<b>Michelle Thrasher</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>26</b>
Leah McDonald	June	2
Justin Horan	June	11

Outreach with Chamber of Commerce

Clerk/Comptroller Green is enthusiastic about our partnership with the Chamber of Commerce whose leaders engage community and government leaders at many levels. We hosted two dozen Chamber members recently who are part of the Leadership Clay program, a course of educational tours/meetings that Clerk Green completed previously, too. As Chamber members through the office, we can all take advantage of Chamber programs. Just contact PIO Justino for info if interested in finding out more about opportunities to get involved.



# Leadership Development



Kudos to Orange Park Branch Manager Tawyna Disparti who completed a Leadership Development Training course this spring through Flagler College and recognized by the Florida Clerks of Court and Comptrollers association (FCCC). Providing opportunities for professional development is a priority for Clerk/Comptroller Green and her Executive Team members who oversee all facets of our office. The Branch is a great example of a department that operates already as a well-oiled machine while handling a wide array of services, but always looking for ways to improve.

Tawyna is the fourth manager to complete this training in the last five years. She joins Michelle Taylor (when managing Teen Court), Wendy Rodriguez (Traffic), and Victoria Marquart (Sr. Executive/Administration) who also completed the training and obtained the certification. Class sizes are limited to just thirty people in order to have really good interactions and our participants have provided excellent feedback from their experiences.

### FUNDAMENTALS OF LEADERSHIP

Certification Program

To provide supervisors within public organizations with professional development on the fundamentals of leadership and supervision. The information provided is based on empirical and scholarly research coupled with practical experience and knowledge on the topics of leadership and supervision.

## Did You Know...

Clay County Habitat for Humanity is staffed by real go-getters! They put community leaders to work side-by-side with Habitat homeowners who themselves are contributing the “sweat equity” required to qualify for a H4H home. Perfect example—the recent *Women Build* workday. Clerk Green and the other ladies had very cool pink shirts and hard hats, yes, but they also did some serious construction work. They installed vinyl siding, painted, cleared site debris, and more. Clerk Green was proud to join a team of hard-working CCSO leaders and many others earlier in May at a site in Green Cove Springs. Kudos, Habitat Executive Director Carolina Morrow, for recognizing that Clay County women can build! Info at [clayhabitat.org](http://clayhabitat.org) .



## Achievements Abound

In recent years, Archives staff have set the pace in history education and in their own educational achievements. Recently, amazing research on the Clay County travels of John and William Bartram conducted by Supervisor Vishi Garig became a 26-foot-long mobile display now viewed by thousands of visitors at the Fair, courthouse, Thrasher-Horne Center, and (soon) at least two local schools. Garig and her research are key to an ongoing effort by Clay County Tourism staff and regional Bartram experts to place new historic site markers along our waterways. Alongside Garig is Specialist Amelia Dixon whose knowledge in this field is essential to our strategic plans to better inventory, scan, and index for public use all archival materials. These Archives efforts resulted in Reinhold Foundation recognition in May. Our Teen Court program — entering its 30th year in 2026 — was also lauded there, receiving a Celebrate Clay award for outstanding service to youth. Great job, all!



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# Out and About

Your Clerk's Office family has been very busy representing our office. From the Clay Bar to high schools, from Tally to pickleball courts, from the Fair to Chamber of Commerce meetings, from the BCC floor to our own front yard. We are proud to join a community of people working to make things better for everyone.



## Sometimes, It's the Small Things



Everyone knows our employees aren't afraid to tackle major projects or solve big problems when needed. But, sometimes, it's the small things that count, too. For example, Facilities Support Specialist Tim Bell recently made sure a small WWII memorial block was moved safely from the old CHS site to a place of honor at the Historic Triangle. Vishi Garig and CCSO Deputy Zarrah helped as well. The block, created in 1946, displays names of Clay High graduates who died in combat during WWII.





# Leading the Way in Guardianship



Under Clerk/Comptroller Green's bold leadership, Clay County has emerged as a beacon of guardianship compliance excellence in Florida. Recognizing that guardianship represents a critical intersection of vulnerability and protection, Green directed her office to develop unparalleled standards for oversight and accountability. Her involvement in departmental decisions ensures that guardianship compliance remains a top priority, not merely a statutory obligation. Our goal is for other Florida jurisdictions to adopt our office's methodologies once we achieve maximum efficiency and expertise.

The excellence of Clay County's guardianship program stems from a dedicated team. For example, Civil Department Manager Amie Herrera oversees daily operations with vital support from Chief Technology Officer Justin Horan and General Counsel Brian Byrd. The program's foundation rests on the exceptional work of Guardianship Compliance Auditors Alison Martin and Hannah Trowell, who meticulously review filings, conduct audits, and verify guardian accountability. This collaborative approach ensures that vulnerable wards receive comprehensive protection from exploitation, fraud, and neglect through active monitoring and timely enforcement actions when necessary.

Guardianship in Florida represents a vital judicial safety mechanism designed to protect those who cannot protect themselves, implemented only when less restrictive alternatives like powers of attorney or healthcare surrogates prove insufficient. Clay County manages various guardianship types, including comprehensive plenary guardianships and specialized guardian advocate arrangements for individuals with developmental disabilities. The process involves multiple stakeholders: petitioners initiating proceedings, vulnerable wards, court-appointed guardians, clerk staff handling administrative and compliance functions, and judges making ultimate determinations. Through rigorous monitoring practices (initial checklists, mandatory education verification, inventory reviews, annual plan assessments) our program strikes the essential balance between necessary protection and individual autonomy, embodying Clerk Green's commitment to serving the community's most vulnerable members with dignity and respect. *(Pictured above, Clerk/Comptroller Green presents guardianship information to Clay Bar members.)*



## Art in the Courthouse Welcomes Students



The 4th Floor of the main courthouse is the site of hearings, trials, and meetings with judges. Add to that now a new exhibit in the Art in the Courthouse hallway. Displayed in collage style are the winners of the 2025 Clay County District Schools (CCDS) Student Art Show. An annual partnership, recognition of these amazing young artists comes straight from the show at the Thrasher-Horne Center to us. We are grateful for this partnership with CCDS staff (Chris Gugel and Chastity Lee) and students. Check it out through early July!



# That’s a Wrap! Teen Court Celebrates Another Successful Year



Congratulations to our Teen Court program for another successful year. As always, students, their families, and our staff closed out the year in style with a banquet and award ceremony. Next year, Clay County Teen Court will celebrate an incredible milestone — 30 years of empowering youth, promoting accountability, and transforming futures.

Teen Court Manager Stacey Smith reflected on what that means to everyone involved. “As we honor the legacy of the past three decades, we’re also asking: *What will the next 30 years look like?* We imagine a future where even more young people find their voice through advocacy, where restorative justice is the norm, and where Teen Court continues to grow as a space for learning, leadership, and lasting impact. With bold ideas and brave teens leading the way, we know the best is yet to come,” Smith added.



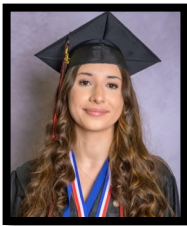
## We Appreciate Our Teen Court Seniors

They walked in with quiet voices and uncertain steps — and walked out as confident, courageous advocates for justice. This year’s graduating Teen Court volunteers are more than just students; they are proof of what happens when young people dare to step out of their comfort zones. The Class of 2025 showed up week after week, transforming fear into purpose and hesitation into powerful advocacy. As they close this chapter, we honor their growth, their grit, and the great legacy they leave behind in our courtroom and our community.

**Thank you, Seniors!**



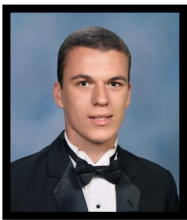
**Luke Cooper** (home-schooled); Attending UF; plans to major in Economics/History.



**Emma Eichholz** (Clay Virtual); Pursuing A.S. degree in Paralegal Studies then Pre-Law and Law.



**Tyler Collins** (Clay High); Attending Abraham Baldwin Agri. College; plans to major in History/Govt; Law.



**Tyler Mess** (Fleming Island High); Joined U.S. Coast Guard; plans to be aviation maintenance tech.



**Vrinda Rajesh** (Nease High); attending UCF, plans to major in Business Management.



**Sebastian Lopez** (OP High); attending Rollins College; plans to attend medical school (radiology).



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## Public Service Recognition Week 2025

Clerk/Comptroller Green again thanks everyone for making this year’s Public Service Recognition Week so memorable. It was a fantastic celebration of the creativity, collaboration, and culture that defines our organization. A special shout-out to Victoria Marquart and Angie Haggard for working so hard to organize all the activities. As we look ahead to future events, we want them to reflect what matters most to you. Please share your feedback with Victoria (what you loved, what you'd like to see next time, and any ideas). Thank you again for your participation and enthusiasm throughout the week. Your ingenuity on the posters was remarkable in all departments, and kudos again to the Traffic Department for winning the Teamwork Contest officiated by the Judge Whittington and Judge Wilkinson. Your dedication to public service is what drives our success, and Public Service Recognition Week was once again a wonderful reminder of how lucky we are to work alongside each other.



## Coming Soon...

- ⇒ Clerk’s Office hosts Camp Blanding military members and their families (July)
- ⇒ IG’s Lunch & Learn (July 11th)
- ⇒ Unclaimed Funds List Published (late July)
- ⇒ July 4th Holiday Decorations - Go for it!
- ⇒ Summer vacations - Enjoy!
- ⇒ Back to School (see attached calendar)
- ⇒ 5th Annual *Tales from the Clink* event at the Historic Triangle (Friday, October 10th; see attached flier)

