

SIDNEY PROGRESS EDITION
JANUARY 2017
SHELBY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT
Judge James Stevenson

Over the last several years, this court, with the assistance of Michele Mumford, Shelby County's Clerk of Courts, has been moving in to the digital age. It started several years ago with providing access to most court records including images of court documents on line. Attorneys and parties could view those court records from the convenience of their offices or homes 24/7. The last piece is now in place with the implementation of electronic filing. E-filing was started on a voluntary basis in the fall of 2016 and became mandatory effective January 1, 2017 for civil cases including domestic. Some criminal filings are now being accepted on a voluntary basis and we expect that will become mandatory some time in 2017.

Just as putting images of court records on line permitted access to those records 24/7 e-filing now permits attorneys and parties to file pleadings electronically from anywhere with internet access at any time of the day or night. For individuals who do not have internet access the clerk hopes to have a workstation in the clerk's office available during business hours. Although the work station is not currently available we hope to have it in place within the next few months.

The court and the clerk are still developing e-filing procedures and we have had some glitches as can be expected with any new process, but we believe that in the end digital records and e-filing will better serve the attorneys and public in accessing and using the court.

2016 was another busy year for both the general and the domestic relations division. In the general division, 285 cases were pending at the beginning of 2016. 613 new cases were added during the year and 637 cases were resolved. We had 265 cases still pending at the end of 2016. Although we did have a number of foreclosures filed during the year there has been a significant drop since the years immediately following the Great Recession.

There were 310 new criminal cases filed in 2016. Unfortunately, the trend continues that most criminal cases are related in some manner to drugs. Either the criminal offense is a drug possession or trafficking case or the criminal conduct results from drug abuse. Many theft related offenses result from the efforts of drug abuser to obtain funds to purchase drugs. Crimes of violence are often associated with drug abuse. This court is constantly looking for means to combat the drug problem whether it be through intensive drug programs or half way houses. Unfortunately, there comes a time when the court runs out of alternatives and the only recourse available to the court is some form of incarceration.

In the domestic relations division there were 287 new or re-opened cases during the year. There were 82 cases pending at the end of 2016. Magistrate Gary Carter 371 hearings during the year and 129 people attended the required parenting program for those involved in custody proceedings.

As we enter this new year the court will continue to look for ways to improve our services to the citizens of this community. We look forward to another busy year serving the justice needs of the county.