

SIDNEY DAILY NEWS PROGRESS REPORT
SHELBY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT

January, 2019

The year 2018 was very busy for the Common Pleas Court. In the criminal docket there were almost 400 indictments filed, which is a significant increase over the number typically filed during a year. In 2017, for example, there were 312 new felony filings. As usual, many of the cases were drug related.

Of concerns to courts across Ohio in 2018 was the constitutional ballot Issue 1, which failed at the November election. Although well intentioned, Issue 1 would have severely restricted the court's ability to address the drug issue. Courts have a number of tools to try to help individuals who have drug addictions. This court uses local drug treatment programs, half way houses and lock down drug treatment facilities to try to help individuals overcome their addictions.

One of the tools used by this court is the Justice Reinvestment Incentive Grant. The sum of \$226,858 was awarded to Common Pleas Court, Adult Probation Department. Through these funds, probation officers' hours were expanded and one additional intensive supervision officer was hired. The overall goal of the grant is to reduce offenders being sent to prison. Offenders are offered mental health, drug and alcohol counseling in the hope of not re-offending. Carey guides were implemented in 2018, which is a one-on-one interaction with offenders and assists in accomplishing a clear objective on improving behavior.

Yes, incarceration including prison is also used. As psychologists tell us, often a person will not change their behavior until they hit rock bottom, which may mean imprisonment. Whatever tool used, our goal is for the individual to become a sober, productive member of the community. But, in every case, ultimately it is the responsibility of the individual to use the tools given to accomplish that goal.

The civil docket is also busy with 238 new filings in 2018. Foreclosures still occupy a significant portion of the caseload with 88, or 37 percent of the caseload, being foreclosures. The domestic relations court also saw a 10 percent increase in new filings with 224. There were 64 domestic cases re-opened for changes in custody or support. The domestic relations court conducted 374 hearings and 171 people attended parenting classes.

Courthouse security is always of importance. The courthouse is a busy place. In 2018 there were 61,760 people screened for admittance into the courthouse. That is about 250 persons per business day. Security confiscated 398 knives, 71 mace/pepper spray devices and 4 stun guns in those screenings. The courthouse security committee has been working with the court the last few months to update security protocols. Included in upgrades to security are 46 cameras to be installed in 2019, both inside and outside the courthouse, to monitor and record activity.

This court's judicial officers also work to help improve the legal and justice system in the State. Domestic relations magistrate Gary Carter recently completed 12 years on the Ohio Family Law Specialty Board where he helped write examination questions for the testing of attorneys to become family law specialists in Ohio. Judge Stevenson, who was elected to another term of office at the November ballot, serves on the Ohio Judicial Conference committees on Court Technology, Civil Law and Procedure, Jury Service (co-chair) and the OJC Executive Committee. He is also the vice chair on the Supreme Court's Commission on Technology and the Courts.

Overall, 2018 was a productive year for the court and we look forward to the upcoming year serving the citizens of Shelby County.