



County Court Judge John M. Harris

## JUDGE BRAVO GIVES STUDENT HIS DAY IN COURT

**John Thomas IV**, an eighth grader interested in a career on the bench, recently spent the day with **Seminole County Court Judge Carmine Bravo**. It was part of a job-shadowing program designed to give junior high school students a real-world perspective of what they want to do when they join the workforce.

Thomas spent the morning in Seminole County Summary Claims Court. The docket was full of frustrated petitioners and respondents, most with conflicting tales of treachery and deceit. Judge Bravo seated the jurist-in-training in the witness box of Courtroom E, where he had a perfect view of the crossroads where law and human emotion intersect and sometimes collide.

When asked what he thought about his day in court, Thomas replied, "It was pretty interesting. Everyone is friendly and the Judge is much nicer than I thought he would be." And he added, much to Judge Bravo's relief, "He's not like Judge Judy."

## JUDGE HARRIS TAKES THE BENCH

**John M. Harris** recently joined the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit as its youngest sitting judge. **Governor Jeb Bush** appointed the 35-year-old Titusville native to fill the county court vacancy created by **Judge T. Mitchell Barlow's** move to circuit court.

Harris was a partner with the law firm of Stadler & Harris, P.A., since 1993. He also served as the secretary, treasurer and president of the Brevard County Bar Association between 1996 and 2000. He received his undergraduate degree from Oklahoma University in 1988 and his law degree from Florida State University in 1991.

While attending law school at Florida State, Judge Harris met his future wife, classmate **Elizabeth Siano**. The two were married in 1991 and have three children: **John Max**, 6; **Daniel**, 4; and **Victoria**, 3 months.

In order to retain this position Judge Harris must stand for election in November 2004.



Judge Carmine Bravo, father of six, takes time to mentor students



by Chief Judge  
Bruce W. Jacobus

## AT THE HELM

I once heard someone on a radio talk show say that the greeting card industry invented Mother's Day as a ruse to boost sales. The caller didn't actually use the word conspiracy; but he was convinced that the greeting card and FTD lobby held enormous influence in Washington. Due to their unfettered access, these special interests were able to have the second Sunday in

May proclaimed a national holiday and manipulate consumers everywhere to purchase cards and gifts for their Mothers.

I find it hard to believe that Mother's Day is the result of a capitalist plot. Special interest groups do not inspire kids to make cards with crayons and serve their moms burnt toast and soggy cereal in bed. Nor do they cause adults to hop on planes and travel cross-country just to be with Mom on her special day. Loving, nurturing Moms - whether biological, foster, or adoptive - provide all the inspiration we need to celebrate.

Moms don't have to be perfect to deserve our adulation. In fact, I renounced more than one parenting

technique used by my mother, **Mary Catherine "M. C." Jacobus**, as cruel and unusual. I still remember sitting silently at the dining room table while my siblings piled into the family car headed for the Melbourne Elementary School Halloween Carnival. Why was I sitting there, sulking, when I desperately wanted to attend? I had refused to eat my salmon cake and could not leave the table until I did so. I think I sat there all night. I promised myself then that I would never force my children to clean their plate or eat food they claimed to hate, and I never did.

While that particular Halloween may continue to haunt me, I realize now how fortunate I was to grow up in a home where temper tantrums were punished by naps and torture was having to wear a tie to church on Sundays. I never lacked for a hot meal, clean clothes, help with homework, or an encouraging word.

Mothers empower us to face life's challenges and provide the love and comfort that sustains us, even after they are gone. I know memories of my Mother, salmon cakes aside, comfort me still. If my Mom were here, I would gladly spend the time and money to show her I care. It's like the commercial: dinner out, \$75; flowers, \$50; a sentimental card, \$3.95; the unconditional love reflected in a mother's smile – priceless.



by Mark Van Bever  
Court Administrator

## THE BIOLOGY OF LAUGHTER

For decades Reader's Digest has featured a section titled "Laughter, The Best Medicine." Humor has long been regarded as therapeutic to personal health. An old proverb paraphrases the concept this way, "A merry heart does good like a medicine."

A recent study from the College of Medicine at the University of California, Irvine reveals that even expecting a good laugh can have biological benefits. Anticipating humor can reduce stress hormone levels and boost the immune system's responses to disease. A group of researchers, led by Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, Lee Berk, discovered that subjects' moods improved not only during and after viewing a one-hour comical video, but also two days before the video was to be shown.

Professor Berk noted, "This is the first time we've seen that just anticipating such an event can change the body's responses. We believe this 'biology of hope' underlies recovery from many chronic disorders. Treatments that take advantage of the effects of this hope may go a long way to stimulating immune responses and hasten recovery."

Here is a humorous true story from the April 2002 edition of Reader's Digest. "As my five year old son and I were headed to McDonald's one day, we passed a car accident. Usually when we see something terrible like that we say a prayer for whoever might be hurt, so I pointed and said to my son, 'we should pray'. From the back seat I heard his earnest voice: 'Dear God, please don't let those cars block the entrance to McDonald's.'" Feel better yet?

Need a break from the rigors of life? Want to reduce stress hormones? Interested in strengthening your immune system? Try the biology of laughter!

## Q & A

### What aspect of your job do you enjoy most?

I love the people that I work with and our office environment. Everyone is very family-oriented, which is an enormous benefit to any mom.

### Who are your heroes in real life?

My Dad and my kids. My Dad has always demonstrated incredible strength, determination and integrity even through the most extreme circumstances. He always does the right thing, no matter what the sacrifice. I idolize my Dad.

My children are amazing little people. They are so full of love and support that I sometimes think they parent me. Kids are inspirational; they love unconditionally, and always, always keep your life in perspective.

### What is your motto?

Never give up.

### How do you unwind at the end of the day?

Unwind? That never happens! We are always on the go. There simply is not time for that built into my day - and that's okay. I don't want to miss anything, so I need to keep moving!



## KAREN HAGLE-BERRY

### EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

**Karen Hagle-Berry** has been named the *Employee of the Month* for May 2002. **Circuit Judge Warren Burk** describes Karen as friendly, outgoing, upbeat and helpful. She is the Energizer bunny<sup>™</sup> of judicial assistants – taking on additional duties within her division, coordinating the Speakers Bureau, and graciously volunteering to assist others outside her immediate circle. This single mom also makes time for children other than her own, setting aside an hour or two each week to mentor a young student.

## SEMINOLE JUDGES FEATURED IN LIGHT OF HOPE CEREMONY

**Circuit Judge Debra Nelson** served as master of ceremonies at the *Light of Hope Ceremony* held at Sanford's Memorial Park on April 12. The Guardian Ad Litem Program of Seminole County organized the event with support from the Seminole County Sheriff's Office and the Seminole County Friend's of Abused Children, Inc.

Judge Nelson began the candlelight vigil with *A Prayer for the Children*, a bittersweet poem, author unknown, that reads in part: "*We pray for the children who sneak popsicles before supper, who erase holes in math workbooks, who can never find their shoes. And we pray for those who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire, who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers, who never counted potatoes, who are born in places where we wouldn't be caught dead.*"

**Circuit Judge Donna McIntosh** was also a featured speaker at the event. The Juvenile Division Judge and mother of two shared her concerns for Florida's most vulnerable victims. The program ended with a moment



Judge Debra Nelson



Judge Donna McIntosh

of silence as a Sheriff's helicopter flew over the crowd with a search light, symbolizing hope for the abused, neglected, and abandoned children currently in Seminole County's court system.



#### Historic Titusville Courthouse

##### ***Circuit Summary***

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**Senior Staff Attorney Brian De Santo will no doubt hear future arguments from son Nicholas Matthew, but for now, all is quiet.**

## CHANGES IN STORE FOR SEMINOLE COUNTY SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY

**Brian De Santo** likes a challenge. It's one of the reasons he enjoys his job as the senior staff attorney in Seminole County. "There is no typical day," says De Santo. "Every day I'm faced with numerous files and a wide range of legal issues. It may be civil. It may be criminal, but it's all interesting."

De Santo's ability to juggle multiple assignments and his quick-change approach to researching legal issues might come in handy at home, now that he is a father. His wife, **Allison**, recently gave birth to the couple's first child, **Matthew Nicholas De Santo**. The future Gator weighed in at eight pounds, five ounces.

De Santo, along with staff attorneys **Catherine Cameron** and **Randall Bishop**, provide indispensable support to the Seminole County Judges. The attorneys research substantive and procedural questions, draft orders, and advise the Court and its administration on legal matters.