



# JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT

*Chief Magistrate Alan G. Davis*

Each year this space chronicles the advancements, improvements and challenges that the prior fiscal year brought. Sometimes those are improvements to the internal workings of the Court, such as more efficient case processing efforts. At other times they are more concrete, public-face examples, like the opening of a new court location. Fiscal Year 2011 was no different. As with most other years, change was our steady companion. Instead of examining the changes themselves, this year I'm using this opportunity to recognize the most significant constant that exists in this Court - its judges and staff - by highlighting how the people of this organization face their everyday challenges, adapting to change - often embracing it - like no other Court in this State. Our judges and staff are remarkable.

The first place this is evident is in the hours we work. Many afternoons, from the widow of my chambers, I watch as the parking lot of the county courthouse pours out the vehicles of that building's weary workers. I con-

template this scene with interest, wondering how many of those about to head home realize or appreciate that there are some in the Delaware judicial branch who, at that very moment, are just starting their day or who are napping in anticipation of a full night of work.

The Delaware Constitution affords criminal defendants the right to a "forthwith" bail hearing. So, since crime never sleeps, neither do we; four Justice of the Peace Court locations are designated 24-hour operations and one location serves 16 hours a day. Being open all the time certainly brings unique challenges. Riding out a blizzard for a couple of days with staff being unable to leave and replacements struggling to arrive is not unheard of. Nor is the unannounced police round-up, which turns an otherwise quiet night into a standing-room only lobby at two in the morning.

Never knowing what the next night brings - from the mundane to the exciting - is part of the experience of

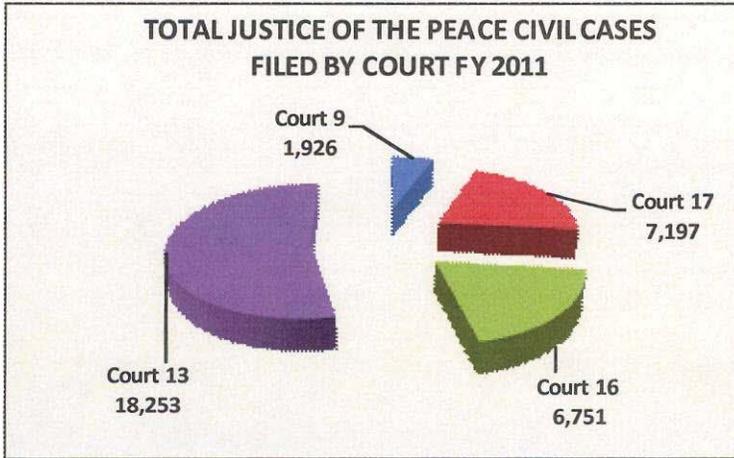


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working here, but the pace also adds to the stress. Missing weekend events, cutting short holiday gatherings and facing menacing weather are all familiar experiences to many of our judges and staff. Maintaining 24-hour operations creates a challenge for retaining quality staff for these very reasons. While our staff members take these positions with the full knowledge of this requirement, it does not diminish the human impact of actually experiencing it.

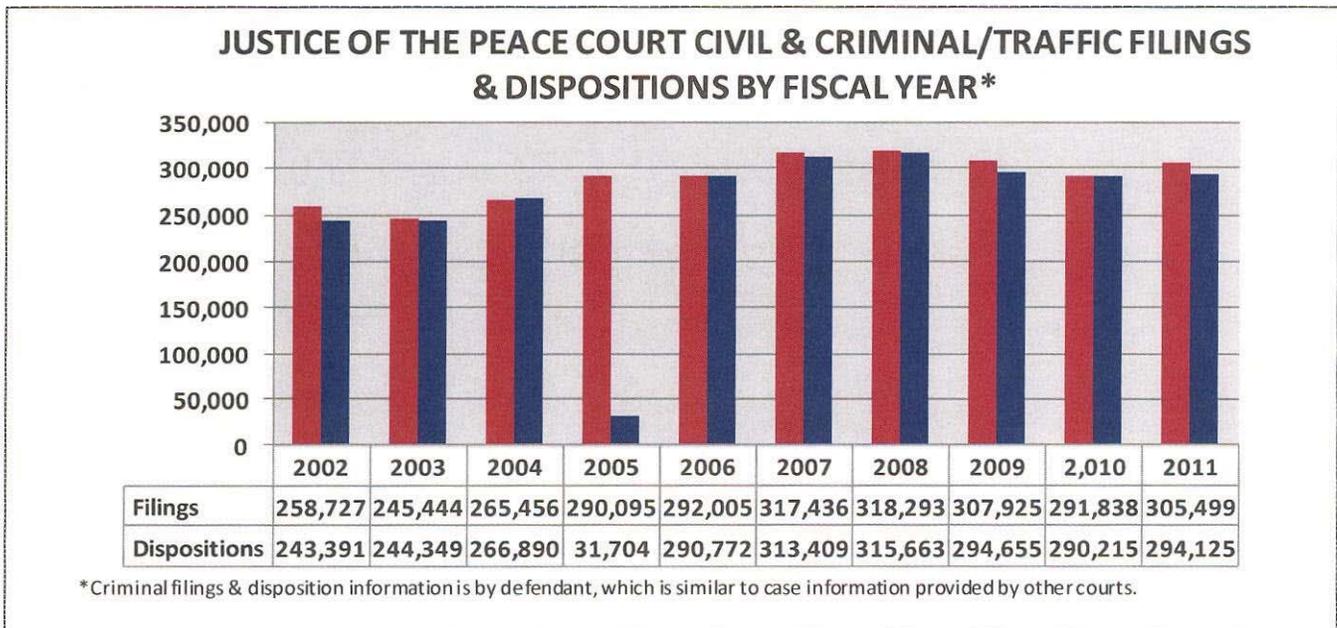
majority of arrest and search warrant requests from police agencies. We made, conservatively, 97% of all initial bail decisions. Capiases from other courts were returned to our court over 21,000 times last year. We did that work with more judges but with fewer staff than most of the other courts of this state.

Very often we initiate programs or accept the responsibility of additional effort that is not entirely within the scope of our "normal work". In fact, many of these system enhancements do little for our Court's benefit, adding to our workload, but we accept, seeing the benefits of the system as a whole. Below is a partial list of those duties we have undertaken over the course of the years and some of their impacts:

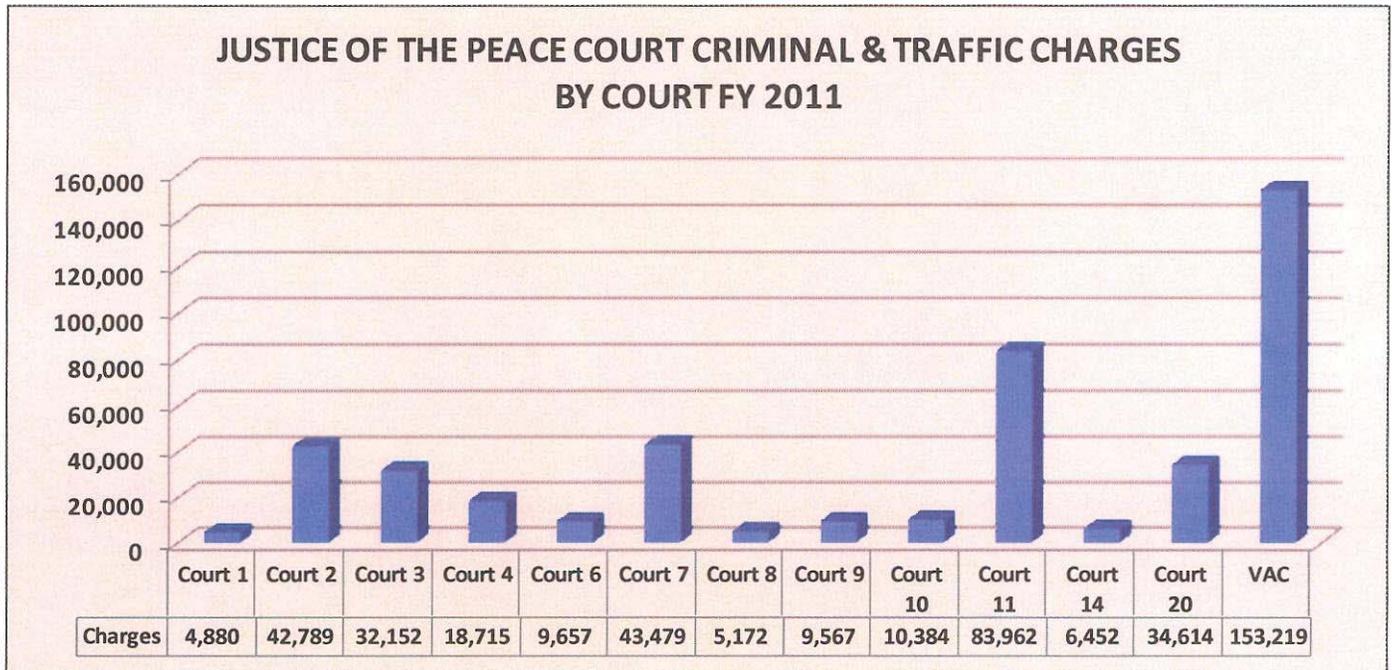


- **Police Prosecution Process** - This project has re-invented the way that this Court handles traffic cases, to the benefit of the public as well as agencies across the criminal justice system. This benefits police agencies by increasing "road time" for officers. It has reduced the overall transfer rate to the Court of Common Pleas by more than half, thereby reducing traffic backlogs in that court in New Castle County from 6-9 months to 9 weeks. This process also benefits the Attorney General's office, by reducing their CCP caseload. The public spends less time in court, makes fewer appearances and has an opportunity to plea bargain a case where there previously was none.
- **VAC** - Our Voluntary Assessment Center processed over 153,000 traffic tickets in FY 11. While the advent of electronic tickets and payments has eased the bur-

The unique nature of this Court and the people who serve in it is also evident in the job that we do every day for the people of this state, our criminal and civil justice partners and our sister courts. As succinctly stated as possible, this Court, through its staff and judges, does a lot of work. In FY 11 we processed over 400,000 criminal charges and nearly 35,000 civil cases. We reviewed the overwhelming



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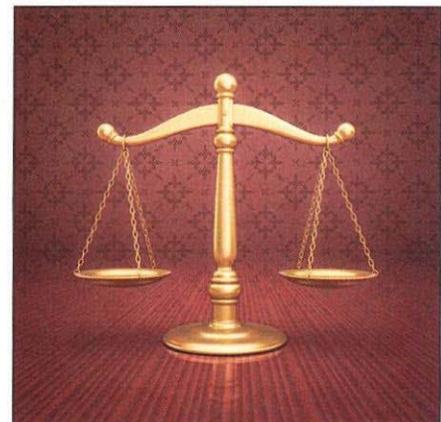


den of its functions, when the VAC was created it was revolutionary, greatly improving public convenience by eliminating the need for personal appearance of traffic defendants wishing to plead guilty.

- State-wide Videophone Court – Established in 2002, this court location provides videophone access to warrant and bail setting processes for the vast majority of police agencies in the state, reducing transportation costs, improving officer safety and eliminating delays for defendants who are released. Of the over \$10 million in cost avoidance that the videophone system provides throughout the criminal justice system, nearly ¼ of that is directly attributable to the Statewide Videophone Court. The monthly statistics from this location indicate that the Court is handling a video matter every six to nine minutes while it is operating.
- Truancy Court – This problem-solving court deals with a relatively low number of cases each year, but does so in an intense and focused fashion. Because

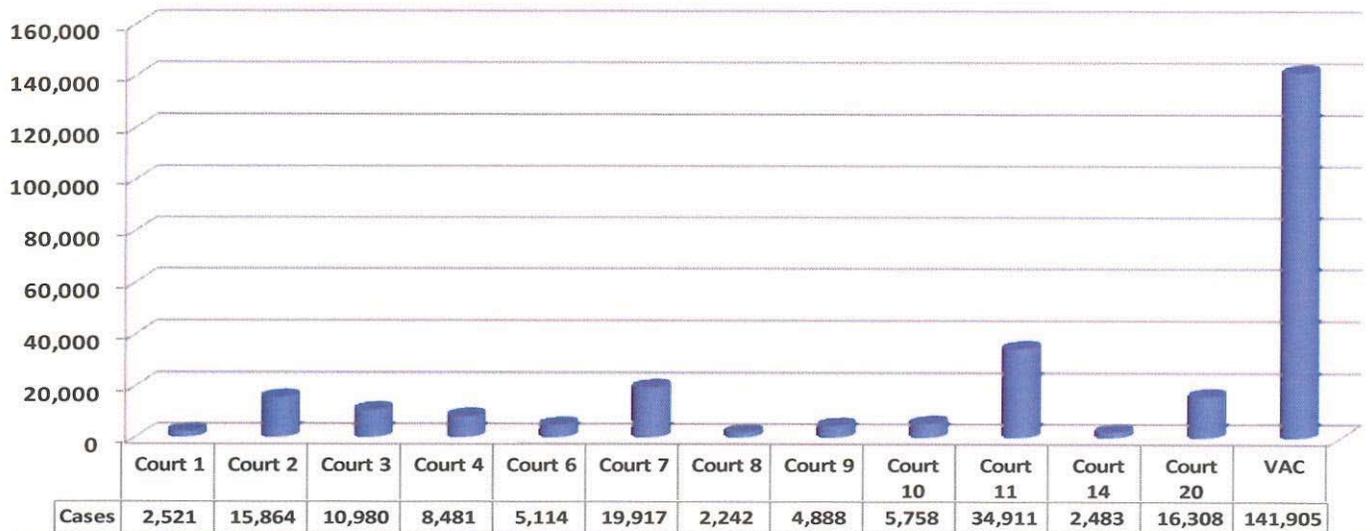
the complex core causes of truancy are related to so many other potential criminal and social upheaval for a student and his or her family, early intervention in the Truancy Court process often diverts the need to address these serious underlying issues at a higher level in the criminal justice system or the social support network.

The remarkable thing about these efforts is not that we have undertaken them, or even that we have performed admirably in them; it is that our staff takes such gigantic modifications and increases to our work in stride and without complaint. I'm continually awed by this simple fact: The volume of our workload is not the measure of our worth as a court, it is the capacity of our people to continue to perform those duties every day.

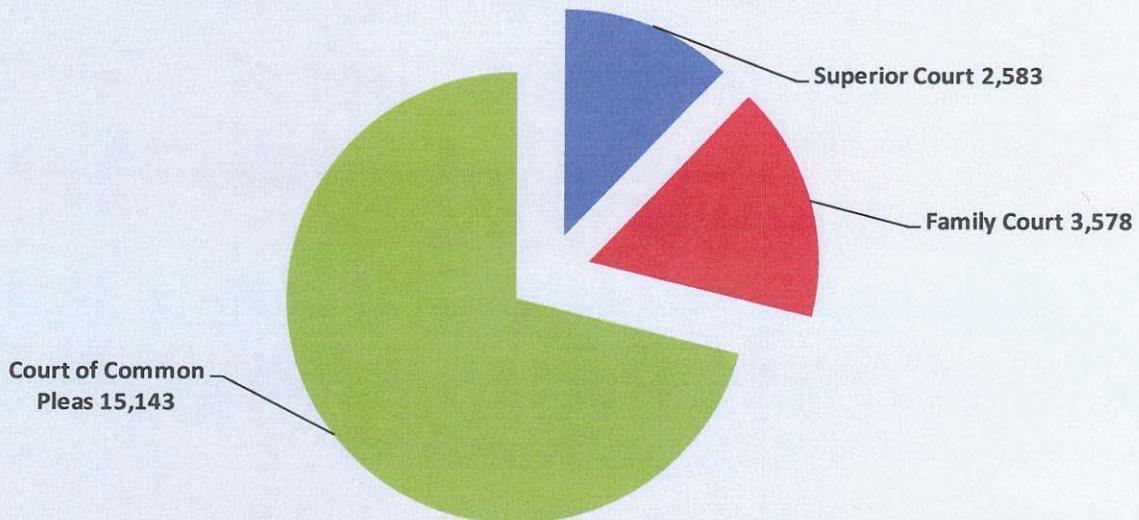


# JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT

## JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT CRIMINAL & TRAFFIC CASES BY DEFENDANT BY COURT FY 2011



## CAPIASES CLEARED BY JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT FOR OTHER COURTS FY 2011



JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT JUDGES

SUSSEX COUNTY



*Seated (left to right)*

Michelle Jewell, Stephani Adams, Deputy Chief Magistrate Sheila Blakely, William Hopkins Jr., Marcealeate Ruffin, Jana Mollohan, James Horn

*Standing (left to right)*

John McKenzie, John Hudson, William Mulvaney III, William Boddy III, John Martin, Herman Hagan, Larry Sipple, John Adams, Richard Comly, Christopher Bradley

*Not Pictured:* Jeni Coffelt, William P. Wood

# JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT

## KENT COUNTY



***Seated (left to right)***

Debora Foor, Tracy Warga

***Standing (left to right)***

James Murray, Deputy Chief Magistrate Ernst Arndt, William J. Sweet, Robert B. Wall Jr., Dwight Dillard

***Not Pictured:*** D. Ken Cox, Pamela Darling, R. Hayes Grapperhaus, Kathleen Hutchison

## NEW CASTLE COUNTY



***Seated (left to right)***

Cheryl Stallmann, Beatrice Freel, Rosalie Rutkowski, Kathleen Lucas, Deborah McNesby, Nina Bawa, Marie Page, Rosalind Toulson

***Standing Middle Row (left to right)***

Susan Cline, Katharine Ross, Kathy Gravell, Nancy Roberts, Roberto Lopez

***Standing Back Row (left to right)***

William Moser, Sean McCormick, James Hanby Sr., William Young III, David Skelley, Thomas Brown, James Tull, Thomas Kenney, Vernon Taylor

***Not Pictured:*** Deputy Chief Magistrate Bonita Lee, Marilyn Letts, Stanley Petraschuk, Paul Smith, Terry Smith