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First Coast public defender: First year's report to the people

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After serving the Fourth Judicial Circuit as public defender for one full year in Clay, Duval and Nassau counties, I would like to share many of our accomplishments in 2009.

The mission of the public defender is to provide superior public service. This is done by maintaining an efficient administration to protect taxpayers, delivering effective representation to protect clients, engaging in the community to protect and improve our quality of life.

We have built an efficient administration.

We launched the Strategic Planning and Continuous Improvement program to promote growth within the organization.

We assigned a permanent attorney for screening assistant public defender appointments and application fees.

We developed a Resource Recovery Program.

We streamlined deposition notification and cancellation procedures to conserve costs.

We started a program of electronic subpoena notification to the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

We formed a new partnership with private industry for a video conferencing system to reduce interoffice travel and attorney down time.

We began the shift to paperless office through modernized wireless Internet apparatus and enhanced scanning systems.

We developed a public information office to ensure transparency.

We opened an independent Web site for the office featuring a first-of-its kind case tracking system to reduce the burden on intake.

Also, we continue to improve and deliver effective representation for our clients.

We tried a substantially larger amount of cases than the previous year; installed an electronic legal library system to conserve costs; created an electronic record repository for capital legal cases; appointed a mitigation specialist to consult on homicide cases and provide mitigation training; and expanded a video conferencing system.

We expanded community outreach with a number of programs.

I consider it a distinct privilege to represent Florida's Fourth Circuit as public defender.

I credit those committed public servants on my staff for their dedication and hard work.

It is my goal to continue providing this brand of leadership; efficient administration, effective representation and engagement in our fine community

MATT SHIRK,

public defender,

Jacksonville

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