

GSCCCA Update

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November 2019

An update on the activities of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority

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Rogers to retire after stellar career

After nearly 27 years as clerk of Superior and Juvenile Courts of Crisp County and nearly 18 years on the Authority board, serving the last three as chair, The Honorable Jean H. Rogers is set to retire on December 31. To recognize this significant event, the Authority honored Rogers at its October board meeting – the 70th and last Authority Board meeting for Rogers – and presented her with an inscribed gold bracelet as a small token of appreciation and admiration for her dedication and hard work on behalf of the clerk community and the Clerks' Authority.



Rogers was first installed to the Authority board in 2002, elected to the position by the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia. At that time, she was elected secretary/treasurer. In 2012, she was elected vice chair of the board, and was then elected chair in January of 2017, serving as the first female chair and only the fourth chair in the Authority's history. As a member of the Board for nearly two decades, Rogers was part of the leadership team that grew the Authority from a single project – the

UCC Project – to a successful, diverse entity overseeing 20+ projects including an invaluable website that currently holds nearly 278 million images and was accessed 5.2 million times this past year by 1.1 million people.

Rogers has served as clerk of the Superior and Juvenile Courts of Crisp County since 1993. Prior to being elected clerk, she worked as a title abstractor for many years. Active in industry activities, Rogers is a past president of the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia, and served as the local project manager for Georgia's first Data Exchange Project. Between the Council and the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Association,

Rogers has served in most every capacity in-

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October board meeting review

The Authority Board met on October 9 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

General Business

The minutes of the July 10, 2019 scheduled board meeting were approved. Greg Morgan, with Mauldin & Jenkins, reviewed the Audited Financial Statements FYE June 30, 2019 and the Internal Financial Statements at August 31, 2019, and reported that the overall financial

health of the Clerks' Authority is very good. He complimented Authority staff for the work done in preparation of the annual audit conducted by Mauldin & Jenkins. The financial report was approved by the Board as presented.

UCC Fee Increase

The Board discussed an increase in the fee that the Authority receives for each Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filing. In light of in-

creasing operational costs, and in conjunction with the effectiveness of HB 288 (Predictable Fee Bill) which mandates a flat fee of \$25 for each UCC filing, it was recommended that the Board increase the UCC fee portion retained by the Authority from \$5 to \$12 in accordance with the Board's authority to do so under Ga. Code § 15-6-61(a)(14). A motion to increase to \$12 the amount of the UCC filing fee retained by the Authority effective January 1, 2020 was approved by the Board.

Fines & Fees Division

Historically, the first quarter has lower fines and fees' collections overall, but as of the end of Q1, collections are on pace with FY 2019. Reporting and remittance compliance among courts remains high. Of note, the Safe Harbor Fund has seen nearly triple collections compared to the same period for the previous fiscal year.

Training Update

Training and outreach efforts remain a priority for the Authority. Usage of the Authority's eLearn training platform continues to increase. More than 12,500 users have registered, with 13,648 unique logins, on the eLearn training site since its inception in February 2019. A unique login is defined as a first-time login. In-person Notary Public training continues to be popular, with more than 1,400 attending classes throughout the state since March 2019. Regarding the Certified Deed Indexing area, 68 clerks and deputy clerks have successfully passed the Indexing Certification exam.

eFiling Project

The use of various eFiling processes continues to grow. Currently, 137 clerks participate in UCC eFile. Of those, 23 clerks now mandate eFiling as the only filing option. For Real Estate eFile, all 159 clerks accept some, or all, real estate document types. Child Support eFile has seen a reduction in the number of clerks utilizing the Authority eFiling portal, as many clerks have chosen to direct filings through their chosen civil eFiling vendor. Since August 1, 2019, 44 clerks have requested to be de-activated. 143 clerks participate in the Authority's online notary application process.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects

It was reported that, as of October 8, 2019, the 1990-1991 Historical Deed Project has been completed. For the Voluntary Historical Deed Project, more than 30,000 instruments have been released to production since the July 2019 Board meeting.

UCC Project

For the first quarter, the number of total UCC filings is on pace with the same period for the previous fiscal year. Projected over the entire FY 2020, more than 254,000 UCCs would be filed if the current filing pace is maintained.



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Board meeting review — Cont. from Page 2

Archival Projects

An update was given on the Authority's archival projects. Currently, 155 counties participate in the MyVault Online Archive Program which offers clerks a data backup solution at no cost to the clerk or county. During New Clerks Training in August 2019, Authority staff presented as part of a panel discussion regarding records management. The presentation was an effort to educate new clerks about archival opportunities, disaster planning, and common threats to clerks' offices, such as ransomware. Over the last three months, Authority staff has been upgrading security on backup devices in clerks' offices. There were 11 data restore requests from clerks in the first quarter resulting in over 1 terabyte of data restored during this period. To date, MyVault has restored over 3.4 terabytes of data.

The Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program continues to offer a secure, cost-effective option for clerks to archive digital records. The VMF process has saved the Authority approximately \$4.7 million when compared to traditional methods of microfilm collection and processing. The Authority utilizes the cost savings to assist clerks and counties in other ways, thereby saving counties money.

In August, the Authority received notification from the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council (GHRAC) that it was selected as the recipient of the *2019 Award for Excellence in Archival Program Development by a State Agency or Institution*. This award is in recognition of the Authority's development and implementation of the MyVault Online Archive Program. The GHRAC is the advisory body for historical records planning in the state and consists of 12 members appointed by the Governor.

Notary & Authentications Division

It was reported that the number of total notary commissions is down 4.7% for YTD when compared to the previous year. The number of apostille requests is up more than 23% for the first quarter when compared to the same time period of the previous fiscal year; however, the increase is attributable to a special case. Spain's offer of citizenship to Jews, whose families were expelled from Spain more than 500 years ago, is directly impacting the number of apostilles issued in Georgia. The form required for those wishing to apply for Spanish citizenship requires notarization and an apostille. For September 2019, one notary public accounted for 29% of all apostille production. A nearby synagogue has been offering application services to members and non-members.

Special Recognition

In light of Authority Chair Jean Rogers' planned retirement on December 31, 2019, Executive Director John Earle recognized her significant contributions to the Authority, serving on the Board for the last 20 years and as Authority chair for the last three. Earle praised Rogers for her leadership, guidance and vision over the years which have contributed significantly to the Authority's success. Finally, on behalf of the Authority staff and Board members, Earle presented Rogers with an inscribed gold bracelet as a sincere token of the staff and Board's collective appreciation and admiration for Rogers' decades-long service and dedication to the Authority and the Superior Court clerk's community.

Next Board Meeting

The next scheduled board meeting will be held January 7-8, 2020. ■



Jean Rogers to retire — Cont. from Page 1

cluding on the Strategic Planning and Legislative Committees and as a teacher and mentor for new clerks.

Rogers was the 2007 recipient of the *ÉCLAT Award* (renamed this year *The F. Barry Wilkes ÉCLAT Award*), an honor recognizing Superior Court clerks for their achievements. That same year, she was named 8th District Superior Court Clerk of the Year. Both honors were in recognition of her role in implementing streamlined and integrated criminal justice information. In 2011, Rogers was named *Clerk of the Year for the State of Georgia* by the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia.

Active in civic and local affairs as well, Rogers served on the state board of directors of the American Heart Association and as president of her local chapter. She is a member of First Baptist Church of Cordele, the Crisp Area Arts Alliance, and the Cordele-Crisp County Chamber of Commerce. Rogers is a life-long resident of Crisp County and holds a BS in economics from Georgia Southern University. She and her husband, Mickey, have three daughters and four grandchildren with a fifth on the way.

When asked what Rogers' service and commitment has meant to the Authority, GSCCCA Executive Director John Earle had these glowing

words to say: "Jean has been a tremendous advocate for the GSCCCA since its inception in 1993, serving on the Authority Board for nearly two decades including the last three years as the Authority's chair. Jean's extraordinary leadership, guidance and vision as a Board member, in an unprecedented time of technological growth, have allowed the Authority to flourish in helping maximize a variety of products and services for the benefit of Superior Court clerks' offices and the citizens of Georgia. Jean's willingness to embrace and leverage technological change for the benefit of her office and those that she serves has been a shining example for all Superior Court clerks and other governmental offices.

"As Jean closes out her time as the Crisp County Superior Court clerk and GSCCCA Board chair, I am excited for what the next chapter in life holds for her as she spends more time with her family. Her clerk and Authority family will miss seeing her at the annual Spring Conference in St. Simons, the Fall Conference in Savannah and the quarterly board meetings in Atlanta, but on behalf of the Authority staff, we wish Jean the best that life has to offer in retirement. Our door is always open and she's not only welcome, but encouraged to visit anytime she's in the area." ■

Authority mourns passing of first chairman

Charles Woodson Daniel, 1928—2019

The Authority mourns the loss of its first chairman and longtime Pulaski County Superior Court clerk, Woodson Daniel, who passed away on September 26. Daniel exhibited an unwavering support for Georgia's Superior Court clerks and fought for the creation of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority. Governor Zell Miller appointed Daniel to the Authority's Board in 1993, and he was elected chairman by his peers. He served as Superior Court clerk of Pulaski County from 1961 until his retirement in 2000, but remained as the Authority's chairman until 2005. Upon Daniel's retirement as Authority chairman, Barry Wilkes said, "Woodson has been the godfather of the Authority and has been its heart and soul. He set the direction and has always placed the interests of the clerks above all others. His involvement can be directly tied to the success the Authority has experienced."



General Assembly modifies filing fees

Effective January 1, 2020, filing fees for real estate deed documents, UCCs, certain types of liens, and plats are changing. House Bill 288, which modified O.C.G.A. § 15-6-77, was passed by the Georgia General Assembly during the 2019 legislative session and institutes a “flat” or “predictable” fee.

In preparation for the upcoming fee changes, the Authority is modifying calculations for estimated filing fees on our eFile portal, <https://efile.gsccca.org>. The following calculations will be effective **January 1, 2020**:

UCCs

- ❖ UCC1 - \$25
- ❖ UCC1 with an Assignment - \$50
- ❖ UCC3 - \$25
- ❖ UCC5 - \$25

Deeds

- ❖ \$25 per filing
- ❖ If a cancellation, satisfaction, release or assignment, then \$25 x the number of requested cancellations, satisfactions, releases or assignments

Liens

- ❖ \$25 per filing
- ❖ If a cancellation, satisfaction, release or assignment, then \$25 x the number of requested cancellations, satisfactions, releases or assignments
- ❖ If a **tax lien filed by a state or local government agency**, then the following formula is used:
 - ◇ \$5.00 per filing
 - ◇ \$2.00 per additional page
 - ◇ \$2.00 per cross-reference
 - ◇ If a cancellation, satisfaction, release or assignment, \$5 x the number of requested cancellations, satisfactions, releases or assignments plus \$2.00 per additional page plus \$2.00 per cross-reference

Plats

- ❖ \$10 per page

As part of this bill, local or state

government agencies filing tax liens have a different fee schedule. In order to facilitate this for eFiling, the Authority is creating a new user role called a **Local Agency**, which will use the fee schedule noted above and will be available December 2019. Government entities who need to update their user role to Local Agency should submit a request to our customer support, help@gsccca.org.

Finally, the Authority will update the estimated fees to reflect the new fee schedule for **UCC eFilings** where payments *have not been* authorized prior to January 1, 2020. UCC eFilings where payments *have been* authorized prior to January 1, 2020, will **NOT** have adjusted, estimated fees, and the collected fees will reflect the estimated fees. It will be the clerk’s decision whether to accept or reject UCC eFilings due to filing fees. If you have questions or concerns, contact Rachel Rice at rachel.rice@gsccca.org. ■

Fines & Fees update

Legislative changes regarding fines and fees become effective January 1, 2020. House Bill 288 modifies O.C.G.A. § 15-6-77(b) to include the Clerk’s Retirement Fund defined in O.C.G.A. § 47-14-51 as a deduction on all filing fees enumerated in O.C.G.A. § 15-6-77. This includes but is not limited to trade names, notary applications, other civil filings, deeds, liens, and plats. This may also affect state courts depending on enabling legislation.

“(b) All sums as provided for in this Code section shall be inclusive of the sums that the clerks of the superior courts may be required to collect pursuant to Code Section 15-6-61, 15-6-77.4, 15-6-98, 45-17-4, or 47-14-51, or as otherwise provided by law as a deduction from the applicable fee. The sums provided in this Code section are exclusive of costs for service of process or other additional sums as may be provided by law.”

Guidance from the Office of Attorney General of the State of Georgia regarding O.C.G.A. § 15-6-77(b) is available at <https://www.courttrax.org/advice/AGLetter09192014.pdf>.



Authority's MyVault program recognized

The Clerks' Authority was recently honored with the **2019 Award for Excellence in Archival Program Development by a State Agency**. The award was sponsored by the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council, an advisory body for historical records planning in the state, and presented on October 15 at the Georgia Archives. The Authority and the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia were nominated together for their joint work in promoting disaster planning awareness and, specifically, for the development of the statewide MyVault Online Archive Program.

The Authority launched MyVault in 2007 as an enterprise-level data protection service; it was created to help Superior Court clerks protect the irreplaceable public records maintained by their office. MyVault was designed and implemented by the Authority in support of the clerks' ongoing business continuity planning efforts. The intent of the program is to serve as a second line of defense against a data loss event or larger disaster at the courthouse. Enrollment in the program allows clerks to securely protect their real and personal property records, court data, accounting and business records, and general purpose documents, among others. Safeguarding these records ensures their long-term protection and provides a reliable method for restoring lost data if necessary.

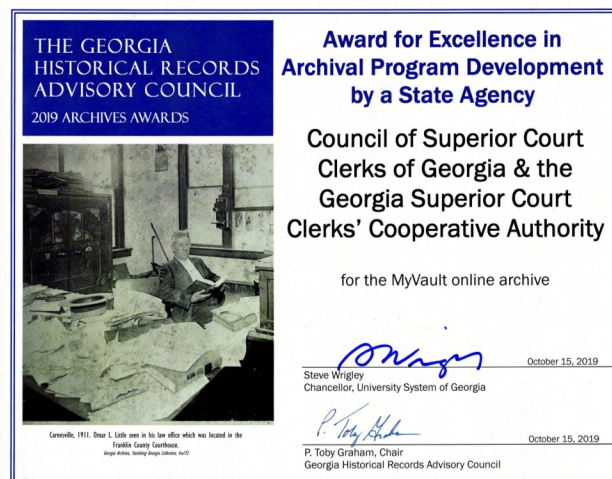
The MyVault program is designed to meet the needs of all counties of all sizes and with varying levels of IT support and complexity. The program is currently protecting the electronic records of Georgia's Superior Court clerks in

155 counties with 134 terabytes of live data and over 863 million files currently being stored and protected. MyVault has received a total of 141 requests to restore data since 2008, with 11 requests in the last quarter alone. Internal audits, ransomware attacks, and human error are the top three reasons clerks have requested data from the vault in recent months. Over 3.4 terabytes of data have been restored back to clerk servers since the project started.

The Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council (GHRAC), who presented the award to the Authority, was established in 1993 and consists of 12 members, appointed by the Governor,

who include citizens, educators, members of local government, historians and professional organizations. The council works to educate and promote awareness for the significance of Georgia's historical records, advocates for the planning and preservation of these records, and works to ensure that the public has access to these records. Additionally, the council advises the Board of Regents and the Georgia Archives on programs and issues relating to records management and the preservation and protection of historical records.

Each year, the GHRAC hosts the Outstanding Archives Awards Program which recognizes the outstanding contributions of indi-



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MyVault recognized — Cont. from Page 6

viduals and organizations in archival development in Georgia. There are twelve different award categories recognized. A reception was held at the Georgia Archives on October 15 celebrating all 2019 award recipients. The awards were presented by Christopher Davidson, J.D., state archivist and assistant vice chancellor of the University System of Georgia. MyVault Archive Program Manager Tara Johnson and VMF (Virtual Microfilm) Coordinator Jonathan Clark attended the reception and accepted the award on behalf of the Authority. They are pictured to the right along with GHRAC Vice Chair Sheryl B. Vogt. ■



2020 training topics – Send your suggestions!

The Authority recently wrapped up its 2019 training schedule with a final webinar on *Real Estate Indexing Standards: Clerk Questions*. As we close out 2019, we are already looking ahead to 2020 and are currently planning to offer training on the following topics:

- ❖ **Real Estate Indexing Standards (Classroom Training)** – Suitable for both new and experienced indexers, this course provides a practical application of the standards where we examine sample documents and determine how to index according to the standards. The program will address clerk questions submitted to the Authority's indexing mailbox, indexing@gsccca.org, including a review of the submitted instruments with guidance for indexing provided. Course material will include multiple examples on how to extract information from sample images with varied instrument types.
- ❖ **Indexing Standards Certification Exam Study Guide** – This one-hour webinar takes an in-depth look at the Indexing Certification Exam and provides tips and tools for successfully passing the exam. Participants will learn what to remember when taking the exam and whether it's different from your local indexing system.
- ❖ **Virtual Microfilm (VMF)** – Did you know all clerks have access to virtual microfilm data for their county? The Authority has converted all deeds, liens and plats from every county into VMF, which is available at the clerk's fingertips. This 30-minute webinar will walk clerks through how to access this data and provide tips on how to use this information.
- ❖ **Program Status Reports** – The Authority creates a daily Program Status Report providing clerks with a status of their office and Authority programs. This 30-minute webinar will review the Program Status Report, discussing each column, what triggers an alert (red), how to resolve an alert, how to register to receive the report and more!

Is there a topic you would like the Authority to address? Let us know! Send suggestions and requests to Rachel Rice at rachel.rice@gsccca.org.



Elder-Johnson awarded 2019 ÉCLAT

Congratulations to the 2019 recipient of *The F. Barry Wilkes ÉCLAT Award*: **The Honorable Angela Elder-Johnson**, clerk of Superior, Magistrate and Juvenile Courts of Oconee County. The ÉCLAT (pronounced eh-clah) Award was established in 2005 by the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia as a means for recognizing Superior Court clerks for Exceptional Commitment, Leadership, Accomplishment, and Teamwork. This year, the ÉCLAT Selection Committee changed the name of the award to **The F. Barry Wilkes ÉCLAT Award** to honor Wilkes' decades-long



service and commitment to the Superior Court clerk community. (Article on Page 9.)

The ÉCLAT Award presentation was held on October 15 in Savannah during the COAG Fall Conference and was led by Barry Wilkes, who remains president of the ÉCLAT Trust. After providing some of the history and specifics of the ÉCLAT Award, Barry shared with the group the reasons why Angie is so deserving of this honor. Those comments follow:

“This year, the committee, after receiving numerous nominations, selected a Superior Court clerk who the committee believes is deserving of The ÉCLAT. The individual honored today is therefore deemed worthy of our recognition, praise, and gratitude. This recipient has exhibited exemplary leadership in her office producing tangible improvements to service for the benefit of Superior Court clerks and has promoted statewide something beneficial to Superior Courts and Georgia’s judicial system.

“Ironically, but not surprisingly, the one we honor today is described similarly by one or more of her peers as quiet, altruistic, wholeheartedly committed to both her constituents

and her fellow Superior Court clerks, hard-working, a visionary, and, above all else, dedicated to the ideal that it doesn’t matter who gets credit as long as the job gets done.

“Over the years, I learned that there are generally two kinds of people: those who seek and get the credit and those who did the work. The former are usually ostentatious. Many suffer from *logorrhea*, the disease best described as vocal diarrhea or what my mother called the “motor-mouth” disease. Commonly, the latter are often quiet and reserved. The former are the ones who most often get the credit, while the latter are the ones who get the job done so that the former can get the credit.

“ This year’s recipient is a true servant, in every sense of the word ... She is a quiet leader but not afraid to get down in the trenches, get her hands dirty, and do whatever it takes to get the job done.”

“Today, we honor a clerk of Superior Court who shies from the limelight; who is very quiet and reserved; but who, this year and for many years previously, has worked hard on clerks’ behalf. This individual is definitely what former Georgia governor Joe Frank Harris called ‘a work horse’—not a show horse.

“During all the years I’ve know this clerk, I don’t believe I’ve heard her say more than a

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2019 ÉCLAT Award — Cont. from Page 8

dozen words. Honestly, for a long time, I thought she was mute and/or severely introverted; however, I, one who has long suffered from logorrhea, now realize that she didn't say anything in my presence because I was always the one doing the talking.

“Clerks who nominated this outstanding clerk for the 2019 ÉCLAT Award cited many reasons why she is deserving. She has chaired the Superior Court Clerks’ Training Council since 2015, during a time when countless changes have occurred in this organization’s membership and in clerks’ training needs. With the help of members of the Training Council and under her tutelage and leadership, the Certified Superior

Court Clerk program sponsored by the Association and in partnership with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government has been updated to address ever-increasing roles and responsibilities of Superior Court clerks.

“During what could have been contentious adversity and divisiveness, her leadership helped bring unity through the augmentation of training opportunities for clerks of Superior Court. When Superior Court clerks’ training during the winter conference of the Constitutional Officers’ Association of Georgia was no longer

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ÉCLAT renamed to honor Wilkes

Earlier this year, the ÉCLAT Selection Committee voted to change the name of the award to **The F. Barry Wilkes ÉCLAT Award** to honor Wilkes’ decades-long service and commitment to the Superior Court clerk community. Wilkes retired in 2016 after serving 31 years as clerk and court administrator for the Superior, State, Juvenile, and Magistrate Courts of Liberty County and 16 years on the Authority board, the last four as chairman.



Following are the remarks Wilkes made during the ÉCLAT Awards presentation about his thoughts upon learning of this honor from Fannin County Superior Court Clerk Dana Chastain, a member of the ÉCLAT Selection Committee.

“When Dana called me and asked if I would be offended if my name was added to The ÉCLAT Award, I was stunned and overwhelmed. In the recesses of my amygdala—the part of brain that processes emotions—there was an explosion taking place. However, I honestly had some trepidation (and I say this not trying to feign modesty).

“I worried that adding my name to the award would diminish its value and sully its purpose. The ÉCLAT was created for one purpose—to honor clerks for their accomplishments—so I didn’t want the award to be for any other purpose.

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2019 ÉCLAT Award — Cont. from Page 9

available to clerks of Superior Court because the conference was discontinued for economic and political reasons, this year's ÉCLAT recipient met with various groups who were upset about the issue and she, working with other members of the Training Council and leadership of the Association, came up with a



Pictured from left to right: ÉCLAT Trust President F. Barry Wilkes, 2019 ÉCLAT recipient Angie Elder-Johnson, Angie's husband Chuck Johnson, Oconee County Tax Commissioner Jennifer Riddle, Oconee County Sheriff Scott Berry, Captain James Hale with the Sheriff's office, Jenna Pulliam, and Angie's son Bryce Watson.

compromise, offering a full fifteen (15) hours of training each winter in Atlanta. Furthermore, under her leadership, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government now offers annually twelve (12) hours of stand-alone training in Athens to clerks who

cannot attend the spring and fall conferences, when training is typically available—and she worked closely with the Institute for Continuing Judicial Education, Carl Vinson Institute, and the Superior Court Clerks' Training Council to provide all clerks expanded training opportunities, both in-state and out-of-state. She was instrumental in revamping Training Council bylaws to enable clerks desiring to do so to earn credit for training they receive under the auspices of the national court association when they attend national conferences—and so that more than half of the mandated fifteen (15) hours of training clerks must have annually may be achieved through peer-to-peer training sponsored by the Training Council.

“This year's recipient works tirelessly and in concert with the Association and COAG conference committees to facilitate the inordinate and often intricate behind-the-scenes details

necessary for all training opportunities to come off without a hitch, from the simplest to the most complex—from registration to instructors' media needs, to evaluation forms, to presentation of certificates to graduates of the program.

“Having participated in this year's training for new clerks, I can avow that this year's recipient of the ÉCLAT Award, working with other members of the Training Council, did what she always does—quietly and fastidiously, she realized a need, got to work, and helped create a training program that was desperately needed for all the new clerks of Superior Court.

“Although she is not being recognized today for the following accomplishments, they should be mentioned nonetheless. At home, this distinguished clerk single-handedly spearheaded her local court system's criminal eFiling project. Working with her county governing authority and a special purpose local option sales tax committee, she commanded the eFiling project for the benefit of her sheriff, district attorney, magistrate judge and Superior Court judges. Now, her county, under her direction, is successfully eFiling all criminal felony and misdemeanor cases—for cases in which defendants are represented by private council or a public defender. It is because of her vision, leadership and persistence that her county was able to accomplish this technological feat without funding from criminal reform grant funds set aside for this purpose by former Governor Deal. She had a dream, saw the need, took up the cause and, with much, much work and perseverance, made the project happen.

“This year's recipient is a true servant, in every sense of the word, at home, to her fellow clerks of Superior Court, and to the citizens of Georgia. She is a quiet leader but she's not afraid to get down in the trenches, get her hands dirty, and do whatever it takes to get the job done. She provides extraordinary leadership, is a paradigm of what the ÉCLAT Award stands for, and possesses all the credentials that uniquely qualify her to receive this prestigious award.

“In the program provided to you, other accomplishments she has achieved are enumerated.

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2019 ÉCLAT Award — Cont. from Page 10

However, her greatest achievement professionally is memorialized in the praise she receives from her staff. Her chief deputy clerk, Lesia Weaber, says ‘she is the most selfless person we know ... is the epitome of patience and tolerance ... [and] makes sure we, along with the public she serves, are all treated with respect and kindness. Oconee County citizens are fortunate to have her serve as their clerk and we, as her staff, are truly blessed to have [her] as our boss, but we are even more blessed to have her as our friend.’

“As president of The ÉCLAT Trust, on behalf of the members of the selection committee and the 159 elected clerks of Superior Court of the great state of Georgia, I proudly present this year’s recipient of the 2019 ÉCLAT Award—the Honorable Angie Elder-Johnson, clerk of the Superior, Magistrate, and Juvenile Courts of Oconee County.”

Congratulations, Angie, for this well-deserved honor! ■

ÉCLAT renamed to honor Wilkes — Cont. from Page 9

“I worried, too, that my antagonists—and there are probably a few still living—would criticize clerks who were proponents of the idea.

“And, lastly, as I later told my wife, Janelle, it’s awfully vain for anyone to think they are significant enough to have anything—other than a child—named in their honor. (Now, if you are dead, that’s a different story because you don’t have a say in the matter). But, as Janelle told me, the only children I ever sired were projects for clerks of Superior Court and, therefore, that I should simply shut up and graciously accept your kindness.

“You and I are brothers and sisters who share a bond that cannot be broken by time, space, envy, hatred or even death. Most of my life was dedicated to ideals that only those blessed to be a member of our clerk family can understand. Those ideals were borne out of necessity but came to fruition because—and I truly believe this—because we were predestined as conduits for miracles that Almighty God planned for us before we were in the womb—miracles, not for our glory, but for his alone—albeit miracles that unfolded for the good of those who entrusted us with the sacred seal of their office of clerk of Superior Court, in service to them.

“I am a clerk of Superior Court as long as I live. In time, those things that came to fruition because of dreams that I was given for the benefit of clerks of Superior Court—then, now, and forevermore—may dissipate and be forgotten. Whether they do or not, nothing will ever diminish the feeling of satisfaction that I experienced when I, in my youth, was chasing windmills and fighting wars in the trenches with my fellow clerks of Superior Court, wars that everyone believed we would lose, but few that we ever did.

“In my dotage, those times warm what is left of my heart and, as I now piddle daily, the faces and voices of those dear clerk friends with whom I shared most of my life constantly remind me that, once, I was part of something transcendent, bigger than life, and greater than I could have ever dreamed.

“I am honored and I am humbled that, despite all the mistakes I made along the way, you still deem me worthy of this tremendous honor.

“When I am dead and gone, hopefully some young clerk will ask, ‘Who was Barry Wilkes?’ If any of you are still around, please tell that clerk, ‘He was a Superior Court clerk who loved us, from November 13, 1983 until he drew his last breath. Because he did, his life was enriched and he profited, albeit without gain.’”

