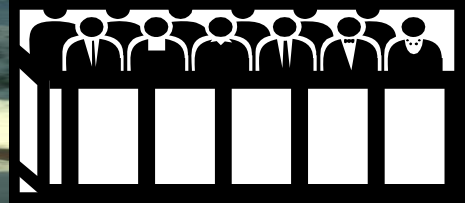


Legally Speaking

Juror Newsletter



Volume 2, Issue 1

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Winter 2006

Welcome to the winter 2006 issue of *Legally Speaking*, a newsletter dedicated to jurors.

We hope you find this issue informative and enjoyable, and we welcome your feedback. If you have a comment or suggestion, please email:

charles.w.keller@nccourts.org

Thank you for your
commitment to justice.

26th Judicial District of North
Carolina



American Idol star Fantasia Barrino



Performs Jury Service

Many Idol fans performing jury service came out of the woodwork when the hit show's third season winner reported for jury service in our court system recently. Fantasia Barrino appeared in the Jury Assembly Room on an otherwise quiet Wednesday morning in December. Fantasia recently purchased a home in the Ballentyne area and was summoned to jury service shortly after moving. After checking in, other jurors immediately recognized her and began asking for autographs. Camera phones came out and Fantasia was gracious enough to pose for a picture with anyone who asked, including Jury Coordinator, Mary Poston.

While efforts were made to respect the Idol's privacy, news of her presence spread quickly throughout the courthouse, and several court employees came to meet the pop star. "She was very approachable," said Mary Poston, Jury Coordinator. "She was extremely gracious, humble, and very willing to have her picture made with anyone." Mary says jurors commented on how they were amazed that a celebrity like Fantasia not only has to perform jury service, but is so willing to take time to do so. Fantasia was actually chosen to serve as a juror on a motor vehicle negligence trial. The judge and attorneys did not have a problem with her celebrity status. The American Idol star actually flew in from New York City late the night before to serve. Deputy sheriffs escorted Fantasia to and from the courtroom. During lunch, she chose the solitude of the jury deliberation room and took a much-needed nap until court reconvened. After being released from the trial at the end of the day, Fantasia, escorted by deputies and her manager, left the courthouse. A small crowd gathered outside to catch a glimpse of her as she left. She planned to fly back to New York after leaving the courthouse to perform in a benefit concert. Like other jurors serving that day, Fantasia will be eligible to serve again in two years.

"I always say you've only got one life to live, and you're not promised a tomorrow. So, you might as well just have a good time with it." -Fantasia

SPOTLIGHT



Mary Poston Jury Coordinator

Mary Poston is the Jury Coordinator for the 26th Judicial District. She is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of UNCC with a BA in Sociology, and she also holds a post-baccalaureate diploma in Paralegal Technology from CPCC. She was employed as a manager at Pillowtex for over twenty-five years, until the company closed in July 2003.

When Pillowtex closed, Mary had to rethink her career plans and decided to pursue her Paralegal Technology diploma. Through this program at CPCC, Mary came to the jury office last summer and completed a successful internship. When the Jury Coordinator position became vacant in December, Mary was hired temporarily in January. Mary applied for the position, and on January 24, accepted the position permanently.



Mary F. Poston

Mary lives in Concord and enjoys spending time with her son, Phil, grandchildren, Michelle and Stephen. In her spare time, she likes to read mysteries, especially those written by Janet Evanovich and Sue Grafton. During college basketball season, she says she can usually be found parked in front of the TV, whenever an ACC team is playing. She always pulls for an ACC team, but her favorites are Duke and Carolina.

Couple Finds True Love While on Jury



“Jury duty is not all bad!” stated Robert Seymour, Jr., who recently served as a juror at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse in Charlotte, North Carolina. In addition to receiving \$12 for his day of service, Mr. Seymour met his future wife three years ago while serving jury duty. In fact, his date of service (January 11, 2006) was only 3 days shy of the previous service date, January 14, 2003, when he met his bride to be. “It was fate,” said Seymour, “I was going through a separation and performing jury service was the last thing on my mind.” But when his future wife, Glenda Ollis, caught his attention that morning, he was glad he had received the summons. “We had been noticing each other in the jury assembly room throughout the morning, and I was trying to figure out a way to approach her,” said Seymour. “At lunchtime, I used the old, *Do you know a good place to each lunch around here?* line.” He and Glenda, along with a few others, proceeded to Green’s Lunch, a local lunch landmark and favorite of jurors. “We went to Green’s as a group, but she and I ended up sitting at table by the window together. The rest is history!” Mr. Seymour recalled that after lunch, he and Glenda shared popcorn together as they watched the afternoon movie, *Miss Congeniality*, in the jury assembly room. “I asked her if she wanted to have dinner that night and she said yes.” Seymour reminisced about that day: the two had lunch, watched a movie, and shared popcorn, before going out to dinner, all in one day. “It was more like a date than jury duty!” He added that jury duty was actually a good place to meet someone because “you know the people are not there looking for a date, like a club or bar. They’re there to perform a civic duty.” He added that the comfortable, relaxed atmosphere in the jury assembly room made it easy to talk to people and made serving much more pleasant.

To add another twist of fate to this love story, Seymour added that his original 2003 summons went to his ex-wife’s address, and she purposefully hid the summons in a box with some of his belongings, and then tucked it away in the attic. “I think she hoped I would get in trouble for not coming!” stated Seymour. It was not until he was moving his things that he discovered the summons. Mr. Seymour then called the jury office and discovered he had been issued a Failure to Appear Letter and rescheduled to January 14, 2003: the day he would meet his future wife.

When he received the summons to serve on January 11 of this year, Mr. Seymour was excited and reminisced about his service, nearly three years ago to the date. While serving, his wife called him and joked, “I guess you’ll find somebody new at jury duty!” Not so. Seymour says he and his wife are soul mates and share many common interests. They each have two children from previous marriages, and have managed to meld into a wonderful family.

What can be learned from this? Love can strike in any place, even the jury assembly room. So, if you are bored while waiting to be called into a courtroom, take a few moments to talk to the person sitting next to you. They may just turn out to be your soulmate!

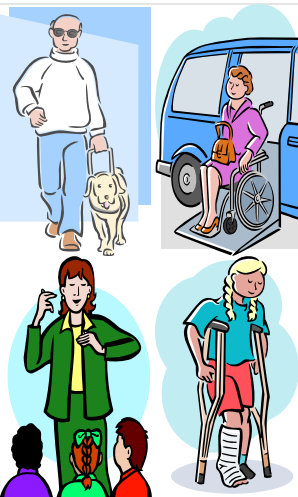
Courthouse Construction

The eight-story building being constructed in front of the current courthouse is the new Mecklenburg County Courthouse. This state of the art facility will house courts and offices that are currently divided into three buildings.

The new jury assembly room will be located on the fourth level of the new courthouse, at the 3rd and McDowell Street side. This impressive space is double height, with large windows that afford a stunning view of Marshall Park. The new assembly room will be capable of seating 250 people comfortably. Jurors will be given a choice of theater, lounge, or café seating throughout the 24,000 square foot space. Three large screen televisions will feature three separate movies simultaneously. Other TV monitors throughout the space will feature cable channels. The new space also features a café area, complete with sink, refrigerator, microwave, and water fountain. The Courtside Cafe will also serve light snacks and beverages in the space. A business center will allow jurors to work, surf the internet, fax, print, and telephone while they wait. There will also be multiple internet hook ups throughout the entire space for laptop computers. A balcony will overlook the entire space, and will feature an additional 50 seats. A quiet room will be available for those who prefer solitude. Lockers and a game room will also be unique features in the space.

Much thought has been given to the design of the new courthouse. In fact, a survey was conducted among jurors during the planning phase to find out what would make jury service more comfortable. The new design will be more efficient, visitor friendly, and will be a structure the citizens of Mecklenburg County can be proud of for decades to come.

The new courthouse is scheduled for occupancy in December of 2006.



ADA REQUESTS FOR ACCOMODATION

If you are hearing impaired and wish to request an auxiliary aid or service (i.e. assisted listening equipment, sign language interpreter, or captioning) for communication access, or if you are in need of any other type of accommodation, please contact the **ADA Coordinator at 704-417-1858 (Relay North Carolina 7-1-1)** prior to your date of service.



Free parking for jurors is available at the 4th Street Parking Deck, which is located at the intersection of 4th and McDowell Streets. The public entrance to the parking deck is on 4th Street, directly across from the 3rd and 4th Street/I-277/John Belk Freeway exit ramp. As you enter the deck, punch for a ticket and park on Level 4. *Accessible parking for persons with disabilities is available on Level 2.* You will be issued a parking pass in the Jury Assembly Room to turn in with your ticket as you exit the parking garage. If you have an oversized vehicle (up to 9 feet in height) you must park on the 2nd Level. Never park on the streets. You will not have time to feed the meter throughout the day. If you choose to park at any location other than the 4th Street Parking Deck, including the Government Center parking deck, or if your vehicle is ticketed and/or towed, you will be directly responsible for the cost.

ONCE YOU HAVE PARKED: Using the crosswalk, cross over McDowell Street. Walk past the new courthouse under construction and cross 4th Street at the next crosswalk. As soon as you cross the street, turn left and follow the sidewalk to the construction fence where you will bear to the right. The sidewalk ends at the main entrance of the Civil Courts Building. Enter the main entrance of the Civil Courts Building located beneath the covered driveway. Through the glass doors, you must go through the security checkpoint. There may be a line, so plan accordingly. You must remove all metals from your person, including belts and steel toed shoes. Take the elevator to the 3rd floor. Turn left out of the elevator and walk to the end of the hallway to the Jury Assembly Room (310).

Things You Should Know!

Reporting

Please report to the Jury Assembly Room on time. Court operates on a tight schedule and your promptness affects this schedule. Allow extra drive time, time to park, as well as for the 10-minute walk to the courthouse from the 4th Street Parking Deck. If you have never driven downtown before, you may find it beneficial to make a dry run on a weekend to see where you will be parking and reporting. There are also several CATS routes that pick up and unload near the courthouse.

Security

Every effort is made to ensure the courthouse is a safe environment. The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office is in charge of courthouse security. It may take you some time to get into the building through security. All visitors to the courthouse must walk through a metal detector. Removing all metal objects from your person, including belts and steel-toed shoes, will speed up this process. You must place all items you are carrying in a basket to be scanned. The metal detectors will not pose a health risk to you; this includes pregnant or nursing mothers. If you have a special need or disability, please inform the deputies. Laptop computers are allowed in the courthouse. You will be asked to turn these on for the deputies before being allowed to enter the building. Knives, scissors, or any other sharp objects are not allowed into the building. Cameras are also not allowed into the building.

Arriving

If you arrive before 8:00 AM (the general public is not allowed to enter the building prior to 7:30 AM), a sign-in sheet will be in the window. Please sign in with your **juror number**. It is a common misconception that we have your social security number. **WE DO NOT HAVE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS.** The Federal government, however, does require this number in order for you to be paid. You will be asked to write your social security number on the slip at the bottom of your summons, and place it in a secure box. If you do not have your summons, please see the Jury Coordinator, who will give you a social security slip.

Orientation

Once everyone has arrived, the Jury Coordinator will begin a live orientation, which will answer most, if not all, questions you may have. Please be patient and pay attention during this orientation. Cell phones, pagers, computers, and CD players must be turned off during this orientation, or they will be confiscated.

Courthouse Etiquette

Please note that cellular phone use, cameras, and tape recorders are not permitted in the courtroom. All cell phones and beepers must be set in silent mode. Cellular phones may be used in the jury assembly room in designated areas, but must be turned off during juror orientation and/or when entering a courtroom.

Dress Code

Casual business attire is suggested. Shorts, tank tops, bare midriffs, shirts with controversial depictions or wording, or similar dress are not allowed in the courtrooms. The temperature in court can be unpredictable, so please dress accordingly. Shoes must be worn at all times; beach sandals for flip-flops are prohibited.

CIVICS Program

Interested in volunteering with the court system? Our CIVICS Program (Citizens Involved in Volunteering In the Court System) has been created to allow anyone with a desire to help their community in a unique way the opportunity to volunteer. The hours are flexible within the Monday through Friday, 8-5 timeframe. There are no educational requirements; however, basic office skills and the ability to speak Spanish are a plus. You must be at least 18 years of age, have a clean criminal history, and have no cases pending before the court.

Speak Now!

Need a speaker for your civic, church, school, or neighborhood organization? Speak Now!, the 26th Judicial District Speaker's Bureau, can provide you with a court official to speak on a wide range of legal topics at no cost. A tour of the courthouse and/or jail can also be arranged.

For more information on either of these program, please contact: Charles Keller, Community Access and Outreach Administrator at 704-347-7864, or email: charles.w.keller@nccourts.org.

You can also visit our website at www.nccourts.org to download brochures, catalogs, and forms regarding these programs.



SUGGESTIONS FOR JURORS

When you receive your jury summons:

Tell your employer.

Dress respectfully when you go to the courthouse.

Be prepared to fill some down time. Bring something to read.

Answer all questions you are asked honestly and completely.

If there is something you do not understand, ask the judge or other court personnel.

When you sit on a trial:

Use only the evidence you are given.

Do not conduct your own research.

Write a note to the judge if you have a question about the trial.

Follow the judge's instructions. Do not interpret the judge's conduct as a cue about the case.

Respect each other and each other's opinions.

Source: American Bar Association



Lunch Time!

These restaurants are within a short walk of the courthouse. All accept debit cards, except Green's Lunch, which is cash only. There is an ATM located in the Civil Court-house Lobby. A free trolley service also operates within the downtown area, and can take you to other restaurants uptown.

The Courtside Cafe

800 East Fourth Street

1st Floor of Civil Courts Building
Serving breakfast and lunch daily.

Showmar's

Government Center

Serving lunch daily: soups, sandwiches, salads, daily lunch specials.

Green's Lunch

Serving lunch daily: sandwiches, hot dogs, hamburgers, baked potatoes.

Best Western Hotel

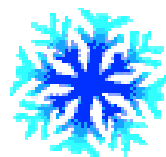
Serving a daily lunch buffet.

Cameron Brown Grill

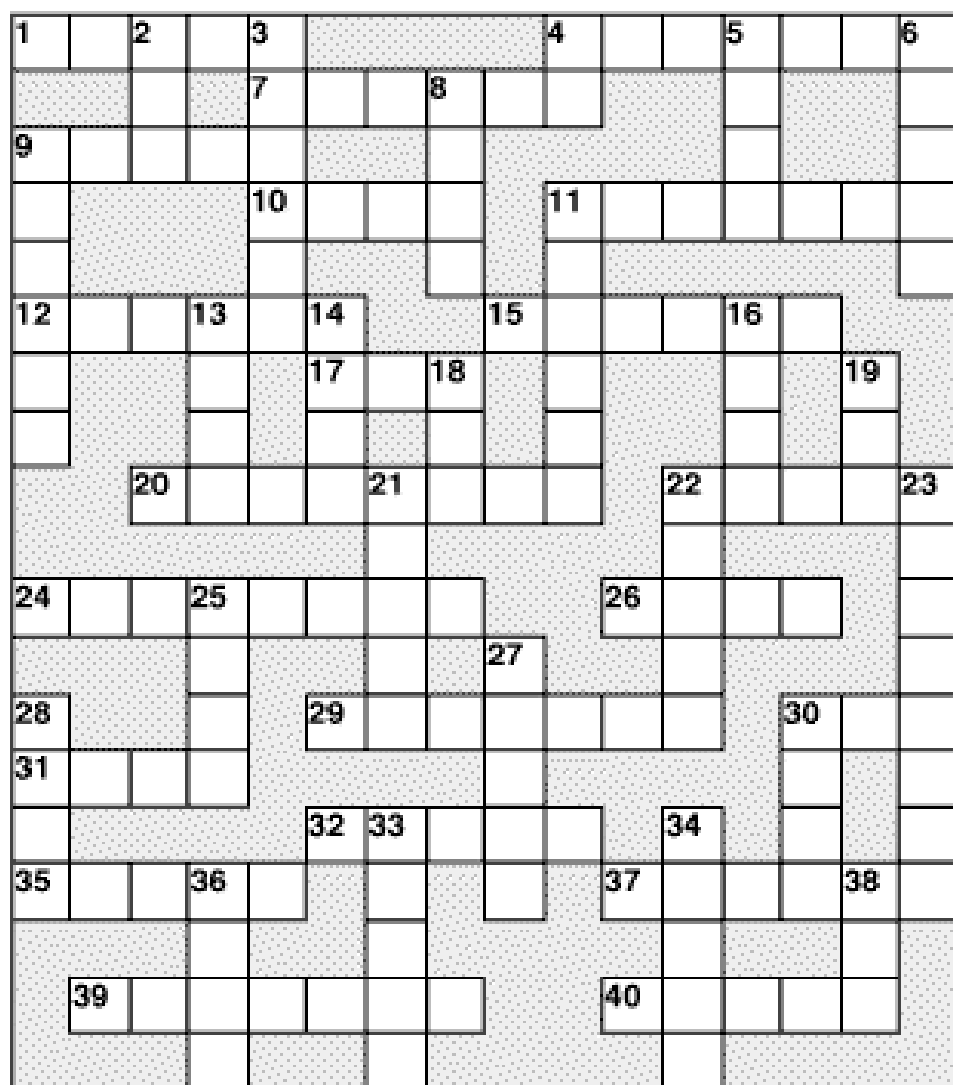
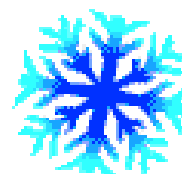
Serving lunch daily: sandwiches, plate lunches.



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Spring 2006



Winter Crossword



Down:

- 2. Frozen water
- 3. Small
- 4. Myself
- 5. Small pie
- 6. Neck warmer
- 8. Chilly
- 9. Used to move snow
- 11. A season
- 13. Strong emotion
- 14. Ripped
- 16. Nil
- 18. Bath _____
- 19. Cloud of water vapour
- 21. Last month of winter
- 22. Wooden snow vehicles
- 23. Winter road condition
- 25. Be carried on
- 27. Locomotive
- 28. Carried along by wind
- 30. Piece of hockey equipment
- 33. Make this in the snow
- 34. Winter foot wear
- 36. Faucets can do this
- 38. You hear with this

Across:

- 1. Sudden cold breeze
- 4. Hand warmers
- 7. Hanging spike of ice
- 9. Freezing rain
- 10. Show and _____
- 11. Conditions outside
- 12. Flowering plant, colour
- 15. Achoo
- 17. Not in
- 20. Month of winter
- 22. Carols, etc.
- 24. Valentine month
- 26. Thaw
- 29. Keeps drinks warm
- 30. Small dog
- 31. Winter Olympic sport
- 32. Silky material
- 35. Breezy
- 37. Ice sport
- 39. Foot warmer
- 40. Direct a vehicle's course

