

Welcome to the summer 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:

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Thank you for your
commitment to justice.

26th Judicial District
of North Carolina



Sixth Annual Juror Appreciation Week

The Sixth Annual Juror Appreciation Week will take place the week of July 24-28. This year's slogan is: *In real life, the jury decides the ending*, which alludes to the public's perception of justice created by many popular court related crime TV shows, movies, and books. Entertainment, including a guitarist, is being funded once again through a small grant from The Mecklenburg County Bar Association. Door prizes and guest speakers, including former juror and WSOC-TV Meteorologist Tracy Lewis, and Deputy Rob Sherwin and his K-9 partner, Britta, will be featured this year. Jurors will be entertained by movies with a patriotic theme, and free popcorn will be provided by The Courtside Café. Jurors will also be given discounts for lunch at area restaurants. The Honorable Robert P. Johnston and Honorable Fritz Y. Mercer, Jr. will sign the proclamation declaring the week as Juror Appreciation Week on the morning of Monday, July 24. The jury assembly room will be decorated to celebrate the event.

Over the years, other states and communities have found a number of creative ways to celebrate jury service. Some courthouses decorate areas with banners that announce the week; others hold brief ceremonies and invite the media to cover the events; and some go out of their way to welcome jurors with home-baked treats, free snacks or mementos.

Why Participate?

According to the American Bar Association, an estimated one million Americans serve as jurors every year, and more than five times that number show up at their local courthouse to report for jury duty. Besides voting, few activities in the life of the typical American offer such direct contact with our democracy. The 26th Judicial District knows jurors deserve recognition for the service they provide the community. In addition, Mecklenburg County citizens who have not yet been summoned to jury service will be reminded about the importance of serving as a juror. Court officials know this event helps build a positive relationship between the court and community. Finally, participation is important because the most important aspect of patriotism is fulfilling our civic responsibilities.

No man is above the law or below it; nor do we ask his permission when we require him to obey it." -Theodore Roosevelt

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 in the summer of 2004 and completed a successful internship. When the Jury Coordinator position became vacant in December, 2004, Mary was hired temporarily in January, 2005. Mary applied for the position, and on January 24, 2005, accepted the position permanently.



Mary F. Poston

Mary lives in Kannapolis 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.

The Mecklenburg County Jury Commission

Each county in North Carolina has a Jury Commission comprised of three members. Each member must be a resident and registered voter in the county in which they serve. Their duties are to ensure that sources are utilized to develop a master jury list that is representative of the community at large, as well as to ensure that the way in which potential jurors are summoned is done in a fair and random manner.

Gail Logan Gibson, Sandra S. Rook and Carlos E. Sanchez were selected and appointed Jury Commissioners to serve the 2005-2007 term.

Gibson, a native of Shelby, NC, graduated from Appalachian State Teacher's College and obtained a business degree from Appalachian University in Boone, NC. From 1974-1988 she was employed with the North Carolina Court System as the only secretary to Mecklenburg County District Court Judges. In 1988 she became the Jury Supervisor for Mecklenburg County, where she remained until her retirement in 1993. Mrs. Gibson has served as a Jury Commissioner since 1995.

Rook, a Mecklenburg County Jury Commissioner since 1999, graduated from the University of Michigan with a bachelor's degree in nursing and Emory University where she obtained a master's degree in nursing. She has served as a nurse, counselor and Director of Special Services for Florence-Darlington Technical College, and owner of the Speakers Network, a company which established and managed a speakers bureau that provided professional and celebrity speakers for corporate and association meetings around the country.

Sanchez, the first Hispanic to be appointed to the Commission, is a native of Bogota, Colombia and has a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Political Science from Florida International University. Mr. Sanchez is employed as Director of External Affairs for South Carolina in the Mid-Market Division of BellSouth Telecommunications. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the Charlotte Latin American Chamber of Commerce and is active with the Leadership Team Board at Collinswood Bilingual Language Academy.

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 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 to open in January of 2007.



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 street. 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 or 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



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 Courthouse Lobby. A free trolley service also operates within the downtown area, and can take you to other restaurants uptown.

The Courtside Café

<http://www.courtsidecafenc.com/>

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

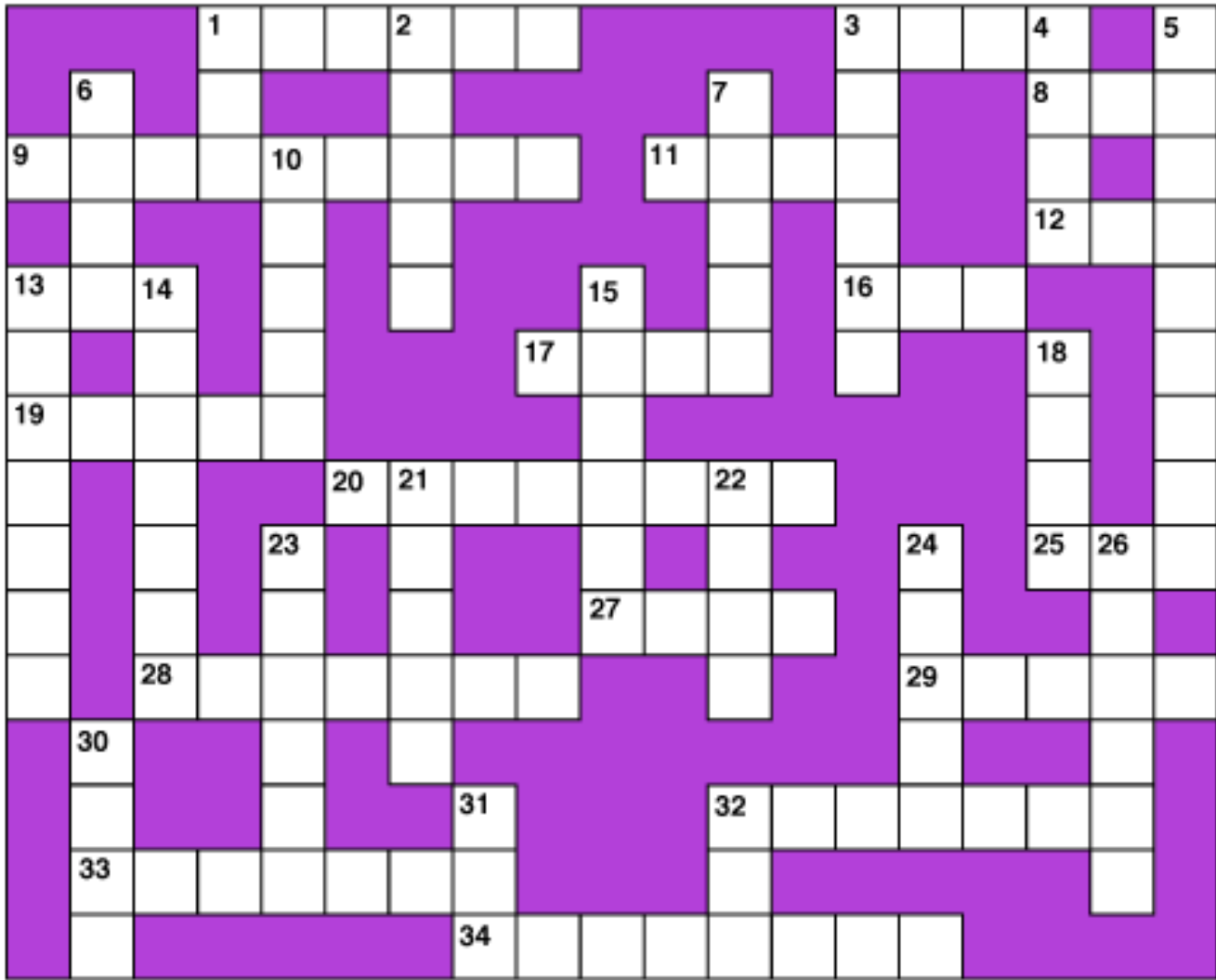
Serving a daily lunch buffet.

Cameron Brown Grill

Serving lunch daily: sandwiches, plate lunches.

Next Issue: Fall 2006

SUMMER CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1. Light rain
- 3. String _____
- 8. Single
- 9. Jumping & hopping game
- 11. Summer month
- 12. Have lunch
- 13. Very warm
- 16. City home for wild animals
- 17. Summer month
- 19. Sandy spot
- 20. Water sport
- 25. Used to pave roads
- 27. Relax

- 28. Step back
- 29. Very humid weather
- 32. Warm weather foot wear
- 33. _____ storm
- 34. Thrilling

DOWN

- 1. Short form of sister
- 2. Time piece
- 3. Cool wind
- 4. Musical symbol
- 5. Summer month
- 6. Go it alone
- 7. Weather word

- 10. Capture
- 13. Leisure activities
- 14. Follows a car
- 15. June 21
- 18. Always do your _____
- 21. Pools are full of this
- 22. Birds home
- 23. Suntan _____
- 24. Hot & _____
- 26. Summer month
- 30. Better _____ than never
- 31. _____ you sleeping?
- 32. Take a seat