

## *Lee Ann's Legacy*

by

Chief Judge Michael G. Williamson

“Hers is an American success story,” said Chief Bankruptcy Judge Paul M. Glenn in June of 2006 on the appointment of Lee Ann Bennett as Clerk of our court. As described by Judge Glenn, “She has literally come up through the ranks,” having held almost every job within the Clerk’s office during her 18 years of service to the federal court system. “Her performance has been exceptional at every level and in every Division of this Court, she has proven her abilities, and she is highly regarded by all in the Court.”

Judge Glenn’s words were prophetic. In the years that followed with Lee Ann at the helm of our court, she oversaw the management of a court with an operating budget of more than \$9.6 million and at one time employing more than 160 senior staff, deputy clerks in charge, supervisors, and case managers resident in Tampa, Jacksonville, and Orlando.

In recent years working with Chief Judge Karen Jennemann, Lee Ann helped guide our court through the transition of eight judge teams to a new model based on “One Court, One Team.” Her knowledge of court administration led her to be appointed Chair of the Bankruptcy Clerks Advisory Group in 2015, where she provided advice to the Administrative Office of the United States Courts on topics including work measurement formulas, shared administrative services, and bankruptcy rules and form changes. Not surprisingly, she was recognized for her achievements by being awarded the Director’s Award for Outstanding Leadership in 2015.

It also came as no surprise when I recently received a call from Jim Duff, the Director of the AO, telling me that Lee Ann was on the short list for consideration as his Deputy Director. He asked what my thoughts on her abilities were. I responded, “Director Duff, you don’t need to ask me, just ask the staff of your office what they think of her. Every time I visit the AO, they individually pull me aside and tell me that Lee Ann is the best Clerk of Court in the country.”

So it was no surprise when Chief Justice John Roberts appointed Lee Ann to be Deputy Director of the AO. As Deputy Director she is responsible for the day-to-day management of the AO, with approximately 1,000 employees in five locations providing counsel and support to more than 2,000 federal judges and approximately 29,000 judiciary employees nationwide.

Truly, “hers is an American success story”—of a young woman, fresh out of Atlantic Christian College in Wilson, North Carolina, in 1982, starting with a chapter 7 trustee in Wilson then on to a position as a paralegal in an Atlanta bankruptcy boutique firm leading her to our Jacksonville Division in 1991.

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And the rest is history.

Our history.

Thank you, Lee Ann, for all you have done for our court and for what you have contributed to the bankruptcy profession.



Pictured above: Lee Ann at a party celebrating her becoming Clerk of Court in 2006;

Pictured below: surrounded by the Tampa office staff at her farewell party in 2017.

