

First Ever Children's Roundtable Summit

by Steve Schell

In November officials from more than 50 counties throughout the state participated in Pennsylvania's first ever Children's Roundtable Summit hosted by the State Supreme Court in Pittsburgh. Dependency court judges, solicitors and children and youth service professionals collaborated with national experts at the three-day event to develop county-specific plans aimed at helping to help abused and neglected children find safe, permanent homes in a timely manner.

State Supreme Court Chief Justice **Ronald D. Castille**, Allegheny County President Judge **Donna Jo McDaniel** and State Court Administrator **Zygmunt Pines** provided opening remarks, while Justice **Max Baer**; Office of Children, Youth & Families Deputy Secretary Richard Gold; Dauphin County Commissioner George Hartwick III and Lehigh County Common Pleas Court Judge **Brian Johnson** presented the Child Dependency System Mission Statement & Guiding Principles document. In addition a Dependency System logo and the new Office of Children & Families in the Court's (OCFC) Web site were unveiled. All three were created to assist judges and legal professionals, parents and families, children and helping services professionals

better address often complex and challenging dependency issues. The Web site can be found at www.ocfcpcourts.us.

National experts who participated in the summit included Judge Stephen Rubin, Pima County, Arizona; Judge Charles Pratt, Allen County, Indiana; Dr. Judith Silver, Pediatric Psychologist Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; Larry Brown, Casey Family Programs Consultant; and Dr. Barbara Needell, researcher, California State University at Berkeley. These experts provided a national perspective of the work being done to help dependent children and families and shared strategies used to successfully address issues similar to those facing Pennsylvania's child dependency system.

Additional participants include OCFC Administrator **Sandra Moore**, Butler County Judge **Kelly Streib**, Lackawanna County President Judge **Chester Harhut**, Dauphin County Judge **Todd Hoover**, Blair County President Judge **Jolene Kopriva**, Allegheny County Children's Court Administrator **Cindy Stoltz**, Allegheny County Administrative Judge **David Wecht**, Allegheny County Judge **Kim Berkeley Clark**, **Denise Aylward** of the AOPC's Judicial Automation and others.

Around the Judiciary

Representatives from the courts and news media held a panel discussion at Dickinson College in Carlisle to engage in active learning about each other's jobs and their sometimes divergent needs and goals. The half-day event, titled "The Third Branch Meets the Fourth Estate," was co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Commission on Judicial Independence, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and the Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues. State and federal court judges, journalists from major media outlets and law school and college faculty examined the nature, quality and depth of courtroom news coverage and the media's function in America. The group also mulled over the challenges that media outlets face when covering courts in an era of diminishing newsroom resources, threats to judicial independence and "the public's right to know." Panelists included Chief Justice of Pennsylvania **Ronald D. Castille** (in photo at right); Superior Court President Judge **Kate Ford Elliott**; Dauphin County President Judge **Richard Lewis**; U.S. District Court Judges **C. Darnell Jones** (in photo at left) and John E. Jones III and U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Marjorie Rendell, also the First Lady of Pennsylvania.

