



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Gerald Connolly
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Third Judicial District**

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Third Judicial District Launches New Initiative to Help Close the Digital Divide, Enhance Access to Justice

ALBANY, NEW YORK—Administrative Judge Gerald Connolly today announced an innovative program that aims to narrow the digital divide, enabling Albany area residents who lack a home computer or reliable internet to participate in virtual court proceedings, e-file court documents, and connect remotely to court and free legal services from a secure site in their local neighborhood. The Third Judicial District's Community Court Access (CCA) program is modeled after a faith-based access-to-justice initiative launched last October in the court system's Ninth Judicial District, which is being led by Administrative Judge, Hon. Kathie E. Davidson. CCA is an exciting new partnership of the Third Judicial District, Albany County's faith and community leaders and the District's other justice partners.

The CCA program is being rolled out on a pilot basis in the City of Albany and Coeymans, New York, with plans for expansion in the District's more rural areas in Greene and Schoharie counties. (Besides Albany, Greene and Schoharie counties, the District also covers Columbia, Rensselaer, Sullivan and Ulster counties.)

Each of the two new CCA sites is equipped with video cameras, scanners and other technology needed to participate in virtual court proceedings and e-file court documents; a private area where participants can prepare documents for court proceedings; and a point person, either a specially trained court employee or community liaison, to guide participants throughout their visit. CCA users will also be able to connect with a pro bono service provider for assistance with court forms, or to a law librarian for help with legal research. Additionally, informational handouts on a range of matters, including housing, domestic violence and substance abuse, will be available at the CCA sites.

The Coeymans site, located at the Riverview Missionary Baptist Church on 11 Riverview Drive and led by Rev. Dr. Roxanne Booth and Rev. Antonio Booth, successfully opened in mid-April, with Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Senior Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, generously providing the start-up technology through the Grace Development Corporation, as he did for the Ninth Judicial District's Faith-Based Court Access Initiative.

The Third Judicial District's second CCA pilot site, located at the Albany Public Library's Pine Hills Branch on 517 Western Avenue, launches today. As part of its growing partnership with the region's public libraries, the District, in conjunction with the court system's Office for Justice Initiatives and Office of Legal Information, led a pilot training program for public library staff, acquainting them with the range of court services and resources available, so that they may utilize this information to better assist library patrons.

"Through this inventive court-community partnership, the Third Judicial District can now provide vital assistance to Albany-area residents on civil, family and Surrogate's court matters at a safe, secure, convenient location—eliminating barriers to justice for those who lack the necessary technology to access court services remotely, as well as individuals who may have difficulty getting to the courthouse due to transportation, child care or other issues," said Judge Connolly. "I am grateful to Judge Davidson, Ninth Judicial District court attorney Maria-Alana Recine, and Westchester County Director of

Faith-Based Initiatives and Urban Affairs Crystal Collins for paving the way for the CCA program, and to Rev. Dr. Richardson and the Grace Development Corporation for their tremendous generosity and support. I also wish to thank the Albany Public Library's Deanna DiCarlo and Lauren Cardinal for their hard work in launching the Pine Hills CCA site and fostering the District's court-library partnership."

Operating hours for the Coeymans site are Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m; and for the Pine Hills site, Wednesday, 12 noon to 4:00 p.m., beginning May 12, 2021. COVID-19 safety procedures and protocols are being strictly followed at each facility.

Appointments may be scheduled by contacting the CCA help line at 518-285-6165 or 3JDCommunityCourtAccess@nycourts.gov.

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