Jury Duty Stamp Unveiled During Ceremony at Courthouse

The United States Postal Service recently issued a commemorative stamp for jury duty. While the national unveiling of the this stamp took place in New York City on September 12, a local unveiling was held here in our courthouse on September 13. David C. Fields, Jury Commissioners Carlos Sanchez and Sandra Roork, and Mayor Pat McCrory Officiated the ceremony.

In the more than two centuries since the U.S. Postal Service began, it has grown and evolved with America. The U.S. Postal Service is proud of its role in portraying the American experience to a world audience through the issuance of postage stamps and postal stationery.

How are stamp subjects selected? Each year Americans submit proposals to the Postal Service on literally thousands of different topics. Every stamp suggestion is considered, regardless of who makes it or how it is presented and almost all subjects chosen to appear on U.S. stamps and postal stationery are suggested by the public.

Who selects the stamp subjects? The Citizen’s Stamp Advisory Committee is tasked with evaluating the merits of all stamp proposals. The Committee is comprised of 15 members whose backgrounds reflect a wide range of educational, artistic, historical and professional expertise. All share an interest in philately and the needs of the mailing public. The Committee’s primary goal is to select subjects for recommendation to the Postmaster General that are both interesting and educational. Both the Postal Service and the members of the Citizen’s Stamp Advisory Committee adhere to certain basic criteria to determine the eligibility of subjects for commemoration on stamps and postal stationery. These criteria were first formulated in the early 1970’s, and have been refined and expanded gradually since then.

In addition to the Postal Service’s extensive line of regular stamps, approximately 25 new subjects for commemorative stamps are recommended each year. Recent legislation requires the Postal Service to issue “semi-postal” stamps which draw attention to important social causes; however, “semi-postal” stamps are not considered as part of the commemorative stamp program and separate criteria apply. Final stamp selections are made with all postal customers in mind, not just stamp collectors. While the Postal service relies heavily upon the Citizen’s Stamp Advisory Committee, it has the exclusive and ultimate authority to determine both subject matter and designs for all stamps and postal stationery.

The U.S. Postal Service continued its tradition of portraying the American experience by issuing the Jury Duty commemorative stamp at the Manhattan State Supreme Court in New York City on September 12.

This stamp calls attention to the importance of jury service, an essential obligation, shared by all eligible citizens, that is a cornerstone of democracy in the United States. Serving on a jury is an important part of public service to our communities.

The Postal Service takes pride in this uniquely American institution and recognizes the important role of our citizenry in the delivery of justice. By showing a diverse group of 12 representative jurors in silhouette, art director Carl T. Herrman and stamp designer Lance Hidy emphasize that, under the U.S. Constitution, the American jury system guarantees citizens the right to a trial by a jury of their peers. This stamp is an excellent way to highlight jury service, a great strength of our nation from its very beginnings.
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 is a North Carolina State Bar Certified Paralegal. 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 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. Roork 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.

Roork, 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 AT&T 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.
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/1-277/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 validate your ticket in the Jury Assembly Room. You must give the validated ticket to the attendant as you exit the parking deck. 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. Enter the Mecklenburg County Courthouse through the entrance on McDowell Street. All visitors must go through a security checkpoint. You must remove all metals from your person, including belts, keys, cell phones, change, etc. You may be asked to remove your shoes.

LEAVING THE DECK: Please exit in the lane marked JURORS, which is the lane closest to the booth. You will need to give your validated ticket to the attendant at the booth. The far right lane is for monthly parkers only. Jurors are unable to exit using the far right lane.

ADA REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATION

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 704-686-0268 (Relay North Carolina 7-1-1) prior to your date of service.

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 programs, please contact: Charles Keller, Community Access and Outreach Administrator at 704-686-0269, or email: charles.w.keller@ncourts.org.

You can also visit our website at www.nccourts.org to download brochures, catalogs, and forms regarding these programs.
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 not allowed into the building.

Arriving

You must check in with the Jury Coordinator at the desk in order to receive credit for your service. 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 for your service. 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 to complete.

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.
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 on Level 2 next to the Clerk’s Office. 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/
Inside the Courthouse on Level 1
Serving breakfast and lunch daily.

**Showmar’s**
Government Center
Serving lunch daily: soups, sandwiches, salads, daily lunch specials. *20% discount with juror badge or jury summons.*

**Green’s Lunch**
Serving lunch daily: sandwiches, hot dogs, hamburgers, baked potatoes.

**The Crowne Plaza Hotel**
Serving a daily lunch buffet.

**The Coffee Cup**-Cameron Brown Building
Serving lunch daily: sandwiches, plate lunches.

**Quizno’s**  4th Street Parking Deck
Serving lunch daily: sandwiches, salads, and soups.

**KokoMo’s Coffee Shop**- 4th Street Parking Deck
Serving coffees and pastries daily.

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**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