

# AJA BENCHMARK

A Publication of the American Judges Association • Vol. 28, No. 4 • Winter 2005

## An Elected Judge's Odyssey

Mitt Nuzum, Marietta Municipal Court, Ohio

**I** agreed to write an election article about the experience of an elected judge long ago. This is not the article I expected to write because I lost my bid for reelection, and I leave the bench at the end of this year. I have served nearly 13 years as a judge and spent some of the most enjoyable and fulfilling time in the profession as an active member of AJA. This is not a sad story. Read on.

I have served as a single judge in a limited-jurisdiction court with a countywide jurisdiction in rural southern Ohio. I have complete administrative responsibility over the court. We have a high volume of traffic cases. The court traditionally generated excess funds for the city treasury. I used grant funding to start a probation department and a drug court. Crime fell. Lives were being saved. The very success of some of my programs and a policy change in traffic enforcement resulted in our caseload falling from a high of 17,000 per year to 9,500. That made a deep bite in our revenue stream.

Our cramped facilities are not handicapped accessible. They cannot be made secure, and juror accommoda-



The editor rides the zip line.

tions are abysmal. I convinced the community that we needed to build a justice center for the court. This was  
*continued on page five*

## AJA Invites You to Beautiful Idaho for the 2006 Midyear Meeting

**C**ome to the shores of beautiful Lake Coeur d'Alene (pronounced core-da-lane), Idaho, for the 2006 Midyear Meeting of the American Judges Association, May 18-20. The meeting will be held at the Coeur d'Alene Resort, called America's top mainland resort by *Conde Nast Traveler*.

AJA's midyear meeting will include one or two continuing judicial education programs, plus business meetings of the AJA Board of Governors.

Coeur d'Alene is located 31 miles east of Spokane, Washington, and is one of the prettiest settings in the western United States. We hope to see you in Idaho this spring! 

