

Full Court Press

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JOHN FISHER SWORN IN AS NEWEST MEMBER OF THE COURT OF APPEALS

By Leah Gurowitz, Executive Office

The Courts celebrated Judge John Fisher's investiture as a Court of Appeals judge in a January 6, 2006 ceremony in the Moultrie Courthouse atrium. Chief Judge Eric T. Washington presided over the event, attended by a large crowd of judges, family, friends, prosecutors, court staff, and other well-wishers. Judge Fisher's immediate family, his wife Margaret Fisher and his children, Clark and Mandana, participated in the ceremony. Friends from years back, some who traveled hundreds of miles, came to celebrate Judge Fisher's achievement.

The ceremony began with Ms. Tracy Nuttal, Executive Assistant to Chief Judge Washington, singing the National Anthem and Clerk of Court Garland Pinkston leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Chief Judge Washington then made brief biographical remarks – including the crucial information that Judge Fisher is not only a bluegrass fan, but that he has often been ridiculed for that passion. The Chief Judge asked Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary Pat Brown to the podium to speak of her former colleague. Ms. Brown clearly relished the opportunity both to praise John Fisher and to tease him. She talked about his encyclopedic knowledge of case law, which was helpful, she pointed out, when Lexis was not working. She spoke of

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his patience in dealing with colleagues who were not as familiar with various areas of the law, stating that the good news was that he would patiently listen to you, the bad news was that you would – in the end – realize that you were completely off-base. Ms. Brown concluded with some heartfelt words about what a fine person Judge Fisher is, one who can be counted on to do what is right, fair and true.

Judge



Chief Judge Eric Washington administers the oath of office to Judge Fisher, as his wife Margaret holds the Bible.

Fisher's wife held the Bible as he took the oath of office. His two children helped robe him. Judge Fisher offered his appreciation to those assembled. He first thanked his immediate family, Margaret, Clark and Mandy, for their constant support and love. He then offered his thanks to his out of town friends who traveled to be present at the ceremony, to other friends and neighbors who came to share the celebration with him, to his former colleagues in the U.S. Attorney's Office who turned out in support, and to his new Court colleagues, including not only the judges but all the Court of Appeals employees, who had welcomed him so warmly.

Judge Fisher was about to return to his seat when the Chief Judge reminded him that he had a new seat now. Judge Noel Anketell Kramer, formerly the newest Court of Appeals judge, escorted Judge Fisher to his rightful place among his colleagues.



Judge Fisher's children Clark and Mandy help robe the judge.

JUDGE JULIET MCKENNA'S INVESTITURE HELD IN DECEMBER

By Leah Gurowitz, Executive Office

At a ceremony on December 16, 2005, Judge Juliet McKenna was sworn in as the newest Associate Judge of the D.C. Superior Court. Chief Judge Rufus G. King, III presided over the investiture, while Judge Lee F. Satterfield administered the oath of office. Judge McKenna's husband, Doug Kendall, held the Bible and, in an intergenerational effort, her mother and daughter robed her.

Family Court Magistrate Judge Carol Dalton spoke of her colleague's energy, drive and enthusiasm. "Juliet's calm demeanor, cheerful dignity and wise courtroom control leaves the parties appearing before her - even when she ruled against them - with the understanding that their concerns were fully heard and a fair and impartial decision made."

Judge McKenna graduated *summa cum laude* from Georgetown University in 1992 and received her J.D. from Yale Law School in 1995. After law school, Judge McKenna joined the law firm of

Crowell & Moring, but left after one year to join the Office of Corporation Counsel (now Office of the Attorney General), prosecuting civil child abuse and neglect matters on behalf of the District of Columbia. In 1998, Judge McKenna began her work with



Judge Lee F. Satterfield administers the oath of office to Judge McKenna, as her husband Doug Kendall holds the Bible.



Judge McKenna's mother and daughter help her with her robe, as husband Doug and colleagues look on.

Lawyers for Children America, a non-profit organization that trains and provides on-going support to *pro bono* attorneys appointed as guardians *ad litem* on behalf of children in the abuse and neglect system.

Judge McKenna was one of the first five magistrate judges appointed in April 2002, pursuant to the Family Court Act of 2001. In that capacity, she presided over abuse and neglect matters, as well as related adoption, custody, juvenile and domestic violence proceedings. In addition, Judge McKenna developed and implemented the Family Court Benchmark Permanency Hearing Pilot Program to ensure that young people "aging out" of foster care are prepared for the transition to independent living and have support systems in place.

Judge McKenna received the Arthur Liman Public Service Fellowship in 1999. The Bar Association of the District of Columbia presented her with an "Unsung Hero of the Law" award in 2001.

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*Leah Gurowitz, Editor
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D.C. SUPERIOR COURT CELEBRATES 19th ANNUAL ADOPTION DAY

By Jo-Ella Brooks, Family Treatment Court Program Coordinator

Saturday, November 19, 2005 found the atrium of the Moultrie Courthouse transformed by colorful balloons, families, and friends, all there in support of the 19th annual Adoption Day Ceremony. Excited children dressed in their very best were seated among judges, social workers, and proud parents to mark this joyous occasion. The Honorable Anita Josey-Herring, then-Deputy Presiding Judge



Chief Judge King presents a plaque to departing Family Court Presiding Judge Lee F. Satterfield.

of the Family Court, introduced the emcee Barbara Harrison, veteran anchorwoman of News 4 with warm regards and praise for her vital contributions in the lives of so many children as host of *Wednesday's Child*. This year's theme set the stage: *Add to a Family, Multiply the Love*. This Family Court celebration was co-sponsored with the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and highlighted the on-going need for loving parents to adopt children.

The event began with the presentation of the colors by the Friendship Edison Academy in the District of Columbia, followed by the National Anthem



B. Michael Carr performs a song dedicated to the children.

sung by Domestic Violence Courtroom Clerk Renard Reinhart. The Honorable Lee F. Satterfield, then-Presiding Judge of the Family Court, welcomed attendees, followed by a reading from Corey Howard O'Connell whose adoption became final during the ceremony. Chief Judge Rufus

King delivered opening remarks about the special nature of adoption and the joys it brings to both parents and children.

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton spoke passionate words of inspiration lending her full support to the courage and commitment of adoptive families. She was especially pleased to see that a neighbor of hers was having his adoption finalized! Brenda Donald Walker, Deputy Mayor of Children, Youth, Families & Elders, echoed the sentiments of the day, remarking on the dedication of CFSA staff. Maxine Baker of the Freddie Mac Foundation, a sponsor of the event, made brief remarks congratulating all of the adoptive families.

The highlight of the ceremony for many was the remarks of keynote speaker, Victoria Rowell of the television show *The Young and the Restless*. Ms. Rowell is a former foster child who is now helping others through the foundation she established, The Rowell Foster

Children's Positive Plan. Her remarks were clearly heartfelt and inspiring to many in the audience. Ms. Rowell stayed to see every child's adoption get finalized, offering warm embraces to all the adopted children and having her picture taken with



Victoria Rowell dances with MPD Confidential at the reception after the ceremony.

them and their new families. CFSA and the Court were pleased to announce that 411 children were adopted during fiscal year 2005 and more than 30 adoption decrees were finalized at the Adoption Day ceremony.

This year's ceremony was Judge Satterfield's final Adoption Day as presiding judge of Family Court. Deputy Mayor Brenda Donald Walker read a proclamation of Mayor Anthony Williams declaring November 19, 2005 to be "Lee F. Satterfield Day." Chief Judge King presented Judge Satterfield with a plaque marking his significant contributions as the first-ever Presiding Judge of Family Court. Judge Satterfield's colleagues responded with a standing ovation. The ceremony was followed by a reception and musical entertainment provided by the Metropolitan Police Department band, "MPD Confidential."



Magistrate Judge Pam Gray; Damian Miller, staff assistant to Senator Landrieu; and keynote speaker Victoria Rowell share a moment together at Adoption Day.

D.C. COURTS RESPOND TO KATRINA

By H. Clifton Grandy, Convenor, Court Employees Emergency Relief Fund

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, court staff swung into action to support co-workers who were affected by these disasters, creating the Court Employees Emergency Relief Fund (CEERF) Committee. Since the scope of the damage is unprecedented, the group decided that it would dedicate itself to a sustained effort rather than undertaking a one-time collection and that it would focus on assisting family members of D.C. Courts' employees. The Committee created an intranet homepage to publicize the Fund's existence and to facilitate employee contributions, which can be made using a voluntary payroll allotment. The web page also includes an application for assistance.

On December 5, 2005, CEERF held a successful fundraising luncheon and cook-off competition that featured regional specialties. The chefs included Mike Alston (Cajun smoked turkey), Lorraine Anderson (hot wings), Carol Barnes (cake and pin wheels), Cheryl Bailey (salad and sausage & chicken jambalaya), Ruth Gantt (pecan sweet potato pie), Clif Grandy (Cajun green beans, grilled merlition ratatouille, okra stew, blackened shrimp, whipped sweet potatoes, and rice), Meredith Hofford (pecan pie), Hubert Jones (fried catfish), Jed Miller (potato salad and macaroni salad), Marie Robertson (pralines), Laura Reed (chicken gumbo and rice), Vivian Smith (bread pudding), Debra Stokes (Cajun fried turkey), Denise Robinson (chicken big mamou and gumbo), Greg Taylor (chili), and David Tedhams (jambalaya). Cheryl Bailey, Dennis Shipley, and Lisa VanDeVeer assembled muffuletta sandwiches.

All of the cook-off chefs demonstrated creativity and created dishes with a dramatic presentation and delicious taste. Many of the dishes were based upon treasured family recipes. In light of such tough competition, the CEERF cook-off judges declared all of the dishes as winners and recognized each of the chefs with small tokens of appreciation.



Clif Grandy, CEERF chair; Angela Archer, Karen Archer's daughter; Karen Archer; and Cyril Erugo.



CEERF members with Jean Jordan.

On December 14, 2005, CEERF presented gift checks to hurricane victim families. Jean Jordan, of the D.C. Court of Appeals, accepted a check on the behalf of her sister and brother-in-law, Mary and Ernest Bailey. Karen Archer, of the Superior Court's Criminal Division, accepted a check on the behalf of her daughter Renita Bostic and her family. Her other daughter, Angela Archer, accepted a check on behalf of her family and her grandmother, Cecile Woods.

Jean Jordan said that she is grateful she did not lose any relatives to the flooding. Her sister, Mary Bailey, was in Baton Rouge on Saturday, August 27, 2005 and Mary's husband, Ernest, remained in New Orleans not wanting to leave for the predicted hurricane. Sunday morning, Mary attempted to join Ernest in New Orleans, but the highways to the city were closed. On Sunday night, Ernest decided to leave, but by then it was too late because a curfew was in effect. When Ernest went to bed Monday evening, water was already in the house to his ankles. Later, he was awakened by water in his bed.



Jean Jordan (right) and her sister Mary Bailey.

Ernest sawed through the attic to the roof, where he stayed for three days. He has diabetes, but he was able to survive without his medication. He witnessed corpses and dead animals floating in the waters around the house. The water was infested with alligators as well. The Baileys' house was under water for two weeks.

Continued on page 5.

Mary has relocated to the D.C. area and is looking for work. In New Orleans she worked in a hospital operating room. Ernest said he was too cold in Washington and he has returned to Louisiana where he is living with relatives.

When Mary got the gift from the D.C. Courts, she expressed great appreciation. Jean says that she herself is most appreciative because she realizes that her coworkers had no obligation, but gave nonetheless.

Karen Archer is a supervisor in the Criminal Division who has worked at the Superior Court since July 2004. She said that her aunt, who was in a New Orleans nursing home and dependent on a feeding tube, did not survive the disaster. All of Karen's other relatives survived. Karen's household now has four generations under its roof: her mother, Karen, her daughter and her granddaughter!

Before Katrina, Karen's daughter Angela worked for an insurance company. She and her nine year old daughter, A'Jon, lived with her grandmother, Cecile Woods, who needed companionship. Hurricane Katrina flooded their New Orleans home with eight feet of water. Hurricane Rita flooded it again, this time with five feet of water.

Cecile, Angela, and A'Jon evacuated before Katrina came ashore. Now living with Karen in the D.C. area, A'Jon is enrolled in Nativity Academy School and is doing well; Angela is looking for work. Because Angela was neither a homeowner nor a renter, she did not qualify for assis-



Bailey family dining room



The Bailey family SUV



Bailey family living room



Bailey family kitchen

tance beyond the initial \$2,000. This has been a source of frustration for her and she is very appreciative of the CEERF gift.

Karen Archer's other daughter, Renita Bostic, her husband, Michael, and their two children, Donice and DeSean, as well as Michael's mother, Helen Bostic, are now living in Hampton, Virginia with Michael's sister. A week after relocating, Michael, a postal carrier, was able to start work-

ing with the U.S. Postal Service in Hampton. Renita is a chemist and is looking for employment.

Karen says that the children seem to be more resilient than the adults and have adjusted well to their new environments. The cold weather, however, is a new experience

for everyone. Everyone misses their much loved New Orleans cuisine.

Karen is deeply touched by her extended Court family and feels closer than ever to everyone. She is a private person, but she let it be know that the Katrina disaster was more than she could quietly suffer through and that she needed support. She says that the Court family has come through. Her mother and daughters were overwhelmed

and cried when she called to inform them that CEERF had gift checks for them.

Since the economic disruptions caused by the hurricanes and the subsequent flooding continues, CEERF is continuing to accept donations, which will be distributed in 2006 after a new round of applications have been accepted.

Court employees may find out more about the CEERF at <http://dccweb.dcsc.gov/opencms/export/herf/index.html>.

D.C. COURTS CELEBRATE NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

By Carrie Newton Lyons, Law Clerk, D.C. Court of Appeals

On November 14, 2005, the D.C. Courts held their first celebration of Native American Heritage Month, a nationally-recognized month to highlight and honor the contributions of Native Americans. Mr. Lawrence Baca, a member of the Pawnee nation and the Deputy Director of the Office of Tribal Justice, Department of Justice (DOJ), spoke at the event. He is the senior Native American attorney at DOJ and the first Native American hired into the DOJ Honors Program.

Mr. Baca spoke to about 30 attendees of the brown bag event about numerous issues facing Native Americans today. He focused on legal

issues such as the intersection of tribal courts and tribal justice with federal and state courts. When Mr. Baca was a youth in California, he lived in towns that prohibited Native Americans from entering restaurants and stores. He remarked that although progress has been made with regard to the treatment of Native Americans, further progress is needed, especially with regard to Native Americans in the legal profession.

Mr. Baca also noted that the Supreme Court has considered more cases concerning issues of federal Indian law than any other area of law. Nevertheless, he said, federal Indian

law is still rarely taught in law schools and is not regarded as an important field. Mr. Baca finds this odd since Indians are the only racial or ethnic group specifically mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. Finally, Mr. Baca commented on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), a statute which requires that courts acknowledge tribal sovereignty and the importance of preserving Indian culture by allowing Indians preference in the child custody proceedings of Indian children. After the presentation, several attendees asked Mr. Baca questions about federal Indian law and policy.

FAMILY TREATMENT COURT GRADUATION HELD IN NOVEMBER

By Meredith J. Saladyga, Executive Office Intern

On November 4, 2005, the Family Treatment Court held its 5th graduation ceremony to recognize the mothers and female guardians who completed the program. Family and friends gathered together to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduates. Judge Lee Satterfield, then-Presiding Judge of the Family Court, and Judge Anita Josey-Herring, now Presiding Judge of the Family Court and the Family Treatment Court judge, presided over the ceremony. Brenda Donald Walker, Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders gave remarks.

The Family Treatment Court is a year-long comprehensive and residential substance abuse treatment program for mothers and female guardians whose children are the subject of child neglect allegations. Participants spend the first six months of the program living in a treatment facility with their children. The treatment facility offers on-site and community-based services, such as substance abuse education, parenting skills workshops, counseling, and childcare. The program provides a unique opportunity for each mother to



Jo-Ella Brooks, Family Treatment Court Program Coordinator, congratulates the graduates.

receive treatment without being separated from her children. Up to four children under the age of 11 can live with their mother during the treatment.

Once the participant completes in-

patient treatment she moves to community-based aftercare, administered by the D.C. Addiction Recovery and Prevention Administration. The aftercare includes helping program participants obtain employment, housing, and educational opportunities.

The November graduates were proud of their accomplishments and appreciative of the support they received from the program staff, Judge Josey-Herring, and the many family members in attendance at the ceremony. Several speakers gave tribute to Judge Josey-Herring, who will no longer preside over the Family Treatment Court program since she will be busy in 2006 as Presiding Judge of the Family Court.

Congratulations to the program participants on their hard work!



The procession out of the graduation ceremony - All smiles!

MULTI-DOOR CELEBRATES TWENTY YEARS

By Wallace Meissner, Civil Training Manager, Multi-Door Division

The Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division celebrated its 20th anniversary at a December 9, 2005 reception honoring its corps of volunteer mediators. Despite somewhat tricky weather conditions, an intrepid group of more than 50 mediators was on hand in the Jurors' Lounge for a ceremony that recognized their many contributions to the court, attorneys, parties in disputes, and the community at large.

After a warm welcome from Clerk of the Court Duane Delaney,



Chief Judge King talks to Billie Jo Garcia, Family Mediation Case Manager.

Superior Court Chief Judge Rufus King thanked the mediators for their service and emphasized the larger role they play in repairing and strengthening the often frayed con-

nections between people involved in litigation. He noted that many who find themselves in the courthouse are people with troubles, and that mediation frequently enables them to reach outcomes that can better serve their interests.

Sig Cohen, a



Family Court Mediators Lisa Goings and John King talk over dessert.

longtime mediator at Multi-Door, spoke briefly and thanked the Court for its appreciation of the volunteers' efforts. Acting Director Karen Leichtnam recognized the work of the Division's mediators and

distributed certificates to those now active in the Division's various mediation programs.

Following the program, mediators, Multi-Door staff, judges, and guests enjoyed refreshments, conversation, memories, and gratitude.

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THE LAW

By LaVerne Boone, Judicial Administrative Assistant

The D.C. Courts are always pleased to have young people come to learn about the law and the judicial process. Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby and several colleagues have welcomed a number of groups recently. Judge Blackburne-Rigsby hosted four separate student groups in her courtroom last summer. On June 21st nearly 40 students from the NAACP Youth Council observed a medical malpractice trial and were able to ask the judge and the attorneys questions about the case. The NAACP Youth Council enjoyed meeting all of the legal professionals, such as the courtroom clerk, court reporter and attorneys involved in the case. On June 23rd,

30 students from across the country who were participating in the Junior Statesmen Foundation Program and had identified law as their chosen profession joined Judge Blackburne-Rigsby in her courtroom to learn more about the judicial process and ask questions about attending law school and the legal profession. On July 13th, 40 students from the National Bar Association Crump Law Camp observed portions of a trial and had the opportunity to ask questions. One student from the Crump Law Camp commented that the experience taught her "how to interact in a court proceeding." On July 28th, Judge Blackburne-Rigsby welcomed students from the D.C. Government's Summer Youth Employment Program to her courtroom, where she spoke

with them about the D.C. Superior Court and the importance of setting goals for their future.

In the fall, Judge Blackburne-Rigsby was pleased to welcome 90 honors students from Paul Public Charter School on October 26, 2005. The school's mission is to educate students to



Students from Paul Public Charter School; Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby and Judge Robert Rigsby.

be responsible citizens, independent thinkers, and community leaders. The students had an opportunity to observe proceedings before Judge Wendell Gardner, Judge Gregory Jackson, Judge Zinora Mitchell-Rankin, Judge Robert Rigsby, and Judge James Boasberg. Following their observations in the courtrooms, the students met with Judge Blackburne-Rigsby and participated in a question and answer session. Based on letters that the students sent fol-

lowing their visit, they were quite impressed that each of the judges had welcomed them into their courtrooms. One student commented in her letter "I enjoyed the question and answer period because it was very motivational and high spirited. I learned that a certain type of judge can only give a 180 day sentence [misdemeanor judges], which was very interesting." Another student commented, "The judges were very nice and encouraging in trying to help us maintain a good life."

EMPLOYEE PROFILE – CRYSTAL L. BANKS

NEW FACE IN CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

By Meredith J. Saladyga, Executive Office Intern

Within the halls of the Gallery Place offices, there is a small (but mighty!) group of individuals that make up the Center for Education and Training. The newest member of this hardworking group is Crystal Banks, Assistant Director for Judicial Training. Crystal coordinates classes and training opportunities for court employees and managers as well as education seminars for judges of the D.C. Courts.

Raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Crystal attended Amherst College in Massachusetts before receiving a J.D. from Temple Law School. After spending time in Georgia and Florida, Crystal found herself in D.C., and now with the D.C. Courts. This position is Crystal's first on the courthouse side of legal operations, but certainly not her first in the legal profession. Prior



Crystal L. Banks

to arriving at the Courts, Crystal was an Assistant District Attorney in Philadelphia for ten years, as well as the owner of a legal search firm. Looking to apply her knowledge and experience to another side of the law, Crystal found her place in the Courts. With her experience from judicial clerkships, partnered with her years in prosecution, she has found a perfect

fit coordinating judicial training.

When asked what she enjoys the most about her job, Crystal quickly responds with “the opportunity to work with all different types of people.” A self-described “people person,” Crystal enjoys working in a law-related field. She is also pleased that she has gotten to know her co-workers so well in her first few months at the Courts.

Outside of the workday, Crystal's family is the main focus of her life. She is married to a chiropractor with a practice in the District, and she has a 13 year-old son, who describes her as a “cool mom.” Crystal loves living in D.C. and experiencing the various cultures that come with the area. She also enjoys all kinds of dancing – so look out for her at the next Court celebration! Welcome to the Courts, Crystal!

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIVISION ACHIEVES NOTABLE CERTIFICATION

By Meredith J. Saladyga, Executive Office Intern

Congratulations to the I.T. Division for gaining certification and recognition on several levels of the Software Engineering Institute's Capability Maturity Model Integrated (CMMI), a best practice standard for efficient software and systems engineering practices in I.T. departments. The Division reached its most recent goal of achieving “Level 2” certification, which requires the Courts' I.T. policies, procedures, and practices to meet guidelines in seven areas necessary for system operation. These include how the Courts manage quality and account for I.T. assets. The Division also gained recognition in Level 3, which involves areas such as Project Management and Project Monitoring. What this means to the D.C. Courts is that the I.T. Division can now apply the techniques it used for IJIS to make other projects equally as successful. The I.T. Division is committed to continually improving information technology delivery throughout the D.C. Courts. The D.C. Courts' I.T. Division is most likely the first court unit of its kind to accomplish CMMI certification. The achievements are the result of nearly three years of hard work on the part of Ken Foor, I.T. Director, and his dedicated teammates in the I.T. Division.

SEASON OF HONORS

By Meredith J. Saladyga, Executive Office Intern

The new legal magazine *Lawdragon* recently named Superior Court **Chief Judge Rufus King** and **Judge Herbert Dixon** to its inaugural list of the “500 Leading Judges in America.” Both judges were chosen from approximately 20,000 nominees submitted by their peers in the legal profession, based on factors such as fairness and the operation of their courtrooms. *Lawdragon* featured Judge Dixon on the “Trivia” portion of its website, which is currently featuring a judge each day by giving a piece of trivia information to help readers guess the judge associated with the clue – Judge Dixon’s clue recognized him for his

leadership as the Chair of the National Conference of State Trial Judges. The list, which officially debuted in January 2006, is a companion to the existing “500 Leading Lawyers in America.”

Magistrate Judge Karen Howze was an award recipient at the Second Annual Awards Celebration held by The Quality Trust, an organization designed to assist District residents with developmental disabilities. The award recognizes Judge Howze’s dedication to legal advocacy efforts on behalf of people with disabilities.



REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

By Meredith J. Saladyga, Executive Office Intern

Shirley Justis, Deputy Clerk in Case Management, received the Bethune Achievers Award from the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW), Mid-Atlantic Region, on Sunday, October 2, 2005.

Shirley, a life member and current active member of the NCNW, D.C. Section 2, works to assist women and families in the greater Northeast and Southeast areas of the District through programs such as Thanksgiving basket distribution and community educational seminars. Shirley has dedicated more than ten years of community service to help enhance the quality of life for the community. In addition to the Bethune Achievers Award, Shirley recently received Certificates of Appreciation for her duties as Assistant Recording Secretary and member of both the Benevolence and Telephone Committees for D.C. Section 2.

Congratulations, Shirley, for your dedication to the community!



NEW EMPLOYEES JOIN THE COURTS

By Meredith J. Saladyga, Executive Office Intern

Kelly Williams Brown joined the Courts in June 2005 as a Courtroom Clerk in the Civil Division. Raised in southern Maryland, Kelly received a Bachelor of Arts from Winston-Salem State University and attended Old Dominion University for graduate studies. Prior to working at the Courts, Kelly taught elementary school in the District and in Norfolk, Virginia. She chose a job at the Courts as a “new challenge” and to expand her career. Daily interaction with judges, attorneys, and fellow court staff, as well as the “challenge of learning the many different aspects of the courtroom” are the parts of Kelly’s position that she most enjoys.



When not at the courthouse, Kelly enjoys spending time with her family, her husband of almost nine years and their two daughters, attending church, and engaging in outdoor activities, such as going to parks. She loves to bake and make crafts with artificial flowers. Kelly also plans to return to school in the near future to complete her Master’s Degree in Urban Studies, with an emphasis on mediation, her particular interest in the field. Welcome, Kelly!

Makisha J. Wiley began as Administrative Assistant to Chief Financial Officer Anthony Rainey in May 2005. Originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Makisha attended the University of Maryland. Prior to coming to the Courts, Makisha was a Secretary at Marine Corps Headquarters, a Program Assistant at the National Institutes of Health, and a Senior Project Assistant at the National Academy of Sciences. Makisha came to the Courts to “cultivate other



areas of interest” as well as to achieve personal academic and career goals. Makisha noted that her favorite part of her job is working with her co-workers. Welcome aboard, Makisha!

Gloria Blumenthal joined the Courts last fall as a bilingual Courtroom Clerk. Born and raised in Vázquez de Coronado, a small town in San José, Costa Rica, Gloria studied at the University of Costa Rica and the Manuel María de Peralta Institute for Foreign Service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Costa Rica. She also graduated from the Paralegal Studies Program at Georgetown University in September 2005.



Gloria worked in several different fields before settling in at the Courts. From 1992 to 2002, she worked for the Costa Rican government. In 2002, she taught civic education and American government and politics to middle and high school students at the Close Up Foundation, a non-profit organization. Gloria came to the Courts with the desire to help “all the people who do business here,” as she has a wealth of related academic and professional knowledge, in addition to fluency in both Spanish and English. Gloria notes that not only is she able to contribute to the community, but that she is presented each day with “new opportunities to learn and improve.” Enjoying the challenges of her new position, Gloria is grateful to the other Courtroom Clerks for their assistance and patience and to the judges for their support and the opportunity to work with them.

Outside of the Courts, Gloria loves learning in all ways, including from movies, concerts, and good books. Bienvenida, Gloria!

On October 13, 2005, Magistrate Judge Fred Sullivan met with 5th grade students from Parkview Elementary School and spoke to them about court operations. The event was part of “Project Legal Enrichment and Decision-Making” (L.E.A.D.), a curriculum for fifth-grade students in the District, which is taught by teams of prosecutors and staff from the U.S. Attorney’s Office. The Project L.E.A.D. curriculum is designed to educate children about the effects of criminal activity such as drug use and theft, and the program is taught in more than a dozen District elementary schools.



Photo courtesy of Kathleen O'Connor.

FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS AND CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Marie Robertson, Senior Court Manager, Executive Office

The crane is up and the concrete is going down! The most visible of the Courts' construction projects is surely the new garage for the Old Courthouse. It is hard to miss, with a 133-foot tall crane, construction fence, cement trucks, and a large hole in the ground. At the corner of 5th Street and Indiana Avenue, approximately 5,000 truckloads of dirt were removed to create the garage, which is scheduled to be complete later this year. The new garage will provide secure parking for the D.C. Court of Appeals judges and staff, and for the judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. It will also replace the parking that was lost to the north of the Old Courthouse due to the renovation and expansion of the building. In the future, other surface parking lots will be replaced by underground garages to return Judiciary Square to the park-like green space it was intended to be.

Only slightly less visible is the renovation work in Building A, constructed in the late 1930's. The Courts are replacing heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, including installation of new ductwork; upgrading the plumbing; adding sprinklers; and upgrading the fire alarm and security systems. The interior space is being renovated and reconfigured to house the Multi-Door and Probate Divisions. Before each division relocates, court staff work with the architects and planners to review layouts and ensure that the newly constructed office space is efficient and meets the needs of the Courts and the public. Phase One of the renovation is scheduled to be finished in September 2006, when four civil courtrooms become operational and the Multi-Door Division moves in. In Phase Two, the third floor will be renovated and reconfigured for the Probate Division. Expected occupancy for Probate is Spring 2007.

The largest of the Courts' capital projects is the restoration of the Old Courthouse at 451 Indiana Avenue for the D.C. Court of Appeals. Asbestos and lead have been removed, preparing the building for major construction activities. Procurement is in progress to select the construction firm and award the contract. Once renovation begins, it is expected to take two years to complete. This architectural jewel and historic landmark will be restored to its original character; at the same time it will be readapted for use by a modern court. The Old Courthouse will have a new entrance facing E Street to meet modern standards for public access and security. A new underground courtroom below the existing main portico will accommodate heavily attended ceremonial proceedings. The Old Courthouse was built in stages beginning in 1820. The last major renovation was in 1916.

In late January 2006, the Courts began to repair and upgrade the secure corridors in the Moultrie Courthouse. Renovation will include lighting, fire and security, and replacement of flooring, wall coverings, and ceilings. The work will proceed two floors at a time, beginning with the 1st and 3rd floors. It is anticipated that the 3rd floor will be done in May 2006. The entire project will take 2 1/2 years.

Congratulations to the Capital Projects Team for managing these major construction projects!



☆☆☆☆☆ **Rave Reviews** ☆☆☆☆☆

December 15, 2005

Duane B. Delaney
Clerk of the Court
D.C. Superior Court
500 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Performance of Mr. **Nathaniel Speight**

Dear Mr. Delaney:

This letter is being written to commend the performance and attitude of **Nathaniel Speight**, the Small Claims Courtroom Clerk. As you are aware, Mr. Speight and I had been working together several days a week for a number of years. Mr. Speight has been single-handedly controlling the docket, as well as lawyers, *pro se* litigants and their witnesses with good humor and a firm hand. Mr. Speight has handled these responsibilities with efficiency and professionalism.

As we have discussed in the past, I have always thought of Small Claims Court as a true "people's court." This court gives all litigants an opportunity to have their differences heard by an impartial mediator or judicial officer. For most litigants, this may be the first time that they are faced with the vagaries and intricacies of the court. Whether a litigant wins or loses may not be the only memory they walk away with from their day in court. They will also remember how they were treated by the courtroom staff and with Mr. Speight they will leave at the end of the day knowing they were treated with fairness and competency.

Sincerely yours,

Bruce H. Cherkis

—Original Message—

From: Margaret Duval

Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2005 4:32 PM

To:

Subject: Thank you

Hi, Terry-

I just wanted to let you know about the outstanding service I received while I was working at the **Landlord Tenant** Resource Center today. Not once, but twice, the Resource Center served customers whose evictions were actually taking place while we were speaking with them. Both times we ran down to the **Clerk's Office** to file applications to stay the writs, and in both cases the clerks behind the counter gave us immediate attention even though they were obviously very busy. In the midst of two very tense situations, it was nice to encounter that kind of professionalism.

Please pass my appreciation on to your colleagues.

Best,

Margaret R. Duval
Supervising Attorney
DC Bar Pro Bono Program
1250 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Washington, DC 20005

January 3, 2006

Mr. James Holland

Court Reporting Division

Superior Court of the District of Columbia

500 Indiana Avenue, NW Room 5500

Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Holland:

It is not often that I get to write these kinds of letters of appreciation and thanks, but this one is well-deserved. I have to write to tell you how pleased and impressed I was by the help I received from **Bryant Baldorado**. He certainly went out of his way to find the transcripts that I was looking for (having almost no information!) and also initiated contact with me to keep me informed of the progress on obtaining my request. He's really one in a million!

On November 23, 2005, I came to the Court Reporting Office to see if I could find a transcript of the closing arguments of a case that my dad was involved in a long time ago. The only information I had was the case number. No dates, no judge's name, no case name. The first person I encountered in Room 5500 was incredibly unhelpful. She sent me downstairs to a computer room that only had recent cases on it. I went back upstairs and, thankfully, was greeted by Bryant. I again said what I was looking for and somehow he found the name of the case, the judge, the reporter, and even the proceeding date. He was pleasant and informative as he helped me fill out my request form. Then I paid and he made a copy of my request for me to keep in case there were any problems.

As I said, it's really rare to find a person that is truly service-oriented. Most people I have encountered over the years, whether it be a customer service agent at my credit card company or a service technician fixing an appliance, are unfriendly, unhelpful, or both when it comes to solving a problem so I try to go out of my way to be sure those that are exceptional get recognized. So, here's to Bryant!
Sincerely,

Stefanie B.

" Job Well Done " 12-1-05

I AM WRITING
this letter about one of your outstanding persons L,
Ms. **ANTONETTE SWEENEY** "Grand Juror Specialist".
I found Ms SWEENEY to be VERY CONSIDERATE,
helpfull pleasant AS WELL, AS BEING VERY
KNOWLEDGE ABLE ABOUT THE PROCEEDS AS WELL AS
MAKING US THE JUROR FEEL AS COMFORTABLE AS
POSSIBLE

I PERSONALLY FEEL THAT IT'S A PLEASURE TO
SEE MS SWEENEY DOING A FINE JOB AND GOING
THAT EXTRA STEP TO HELP US THE JUROR WITHOUT
QUESTION OR HESITATION. I KNOW THAT IT NOT AN
EASY JOB WITH TIME SCHEDULES AND ETC.
MS SWEENEY DOES IT EFFORTLESSLY. I REALLY
BELIEVE THAT SOMETIMES THE SMALL THINGS ARE THE
MOST IMPORTANT. I WISH THERE WERE MORE PEOPLE
LIKE MS SWEENEY WORKING FOR YOU MS SUE BAILEY-
JONES "I BELIEVE THAT A LOT MORE JURORS
ECHO MY FEELING"

William L. Jones