

# Full Court Press

Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

Open To All, Trusted By All, Justice For All

June 2009

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## JUDGE KATHRYN A. OBERLY INVESTITURE

By Marie Robertson, Executive Office

The Court of Appeals officially welcomed its newest judge, Kathryn A. Oberly, in an investiture ceremony on Friday, May 8, 2009. After the court was called to order, Debra Swingon-Stokes opened the ceremony with a stirring rendition of the National Anthem. Chief Judge Eric T. Washington, presiding over this first investiture in the ceremonial courtroom of the Historic Courthouse, welcomed everyone and discussed the history of the building. Not only have famous Americans practiced law and his-

toric trials taken place in the building in the years since it was constructed in the 1820's, but, more recently, many of those in attendance at the investiture worked in the Historic Courthouse when it housed the Public Defender Service and the District's Corporation Counsel's office.

The Reverend Susan Vergeront, Judge Oberly's cousin, gave the assembly a glimpse of the judge's childhood in suburban Chicago. Her parents, both attorneys, encouraged their children to look up the answers to questions and "find things out for themselves." Sadly, Judge Oberly lost her mother to leukemia in 1961. Judge Oberly's former colleague and a former



Chief Judge Eric T. Washington administers the oath to Judge Oberly as her husband, Haynes Johnson, holds the family bible.

Photo by Dennis Shipley

Deputy Solicitor General of the United States, Mr. Kenneth Geller, talked about meeting Judge Oberly—then with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)—through the first case she argued before the Supreme Court. Although the government lost that case, the lawyers in the Solicitor General's (SG) office were so impressed with the young attorney that they invited her to work with them. Mr. Geller and others from the SG's office continued to work with her in private practice after they left the Justice Department.

As the ceremony continued the Clerk of the Court, Garland Pinkston, read Judge Oberly's commission. With Chief Judge Washington administering the oath of office, Judge Oberly swore to "faithfully and impartially discharge" her new duties while her husband, Haynes Johnson, held the Bible. Michael Goelzer, the judge's son, helped her put on the black robe of a judge.

Judge Oberly thanked her family, friends, and colleagues for attending the ceremony. She recalled that when she clerked for the late Judge Donald P. Lay of the U.S. Court

of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, she thought that she would like to be a judge someday. She said that every day she looks out her chamber's window at the words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. inscribed on a courthouse fountain: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. . . whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." She pledged to do her best to honor these words.

Judge Oberly's new colleagues looked pleased as she took her seat on the bench, and the proceedings were

adjourned. The guests then gathered for a reception in the stately ceremonial foyer at the base of the Historic Courthouse's grand staircase.

Judge Oberly attended Vassar College from 1967 to 1969, transferred to the University of Wisconsin, and earned her B.A. in political science (with Honors) in 1971. In 1973, she graduated *cum laude* from the University of Wisconsin Law School, where she was Articles Editor of the *Wisconsin Law Review*.

Following law school and her clerkship with Judge Lay, Judge Oberly moved to Washington. She served as an appellate lawyer in DOJ's Land and Natural Resources Division and as an Assistant to the Solicitor General of the United States, where she briefed and argued numerous cases in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Judge Oberly entered private practice in 1986 as a partner in the Washington office of Mayer, Brown & Platt; she was one of the founding

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE TO THE OVAL OFFICE

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

Most high school seniors stress out about one thing, and one thing only—graduating. However, former Executive Office Intern Jasmine Williams had one more itsy bitsy tiny issue to worry about—introducing our nation’s First Lady, Michelle Obama, at her high school graduation. Jasmine, 19, had the ridiculously rare honor to introduce First Lady Obama for the 2009 Washington Mathematics Science and Technology (WMST) Public Charter School graduation on Wednesday June 3, 2009. By now, most people reading this are thinking, “I know Mrs. Obama spoke at University of California, Merced, but why would she speak at WMST?”

All the students at WMST didn’t send Mrs. Obama cards on Valentines Day like those at Merced. WMST didn’t have all the businesses surrounding the school send a letter to Mrs. Obama like Merced. The First Lady came to WMST because of a single letter that Jasmine sent Mrs. Obama. Out of all the high schools in the nation, out of all the prestigious colleges, out of all the great schools in the nation’s capital that undoubtedly sent thousands of letters of invitation, Michelle Obama choose to speak at WMST because of Jasmine’s letter.

Jasmine explains her desire to have the First Lady speak at her high school graduation. “I really wanted Michelle to speak to our school—she’s the perfect role model, she has so much inner strength. I decided that I wanted her to come to our school so I knew I would have to start early. I sent her a letter on President’s Day weekend and waited for her reply.” Jasmine’s letter to Mrs. Obama spoke about D.C. youth and how they are perceived and what they aspire to be. “People see minority youth in D.C. as criminals and concubines when in actuality we’re students that dream of being doctors, lawyers, and politicians,” explained Jasmine.

In late March, Jasmine got the good news. “I found out like everybody else,” said Jasmine “I was watching the news when Mrs. Obama said she



Jasmine introducing the keynote speaker, First Lady Michelle Obama.

chose my school to speak at.” When Jasmine wrote the letter she only told her immediate family and a few of her closest friends. Even after Mrs. Obama announced she would be speaking at WMST, Jasmine, always the humble type, still didn’t tell anyone that she was the one who wrote the letter. However, Jasmine couldn’t avoid the limelight for too long because teachers at her school spread the word that Mrs. Obama decided to come to WMST because of Jasmine’s lone efforts. It’s for this reason that the Principal at WMST asked Jasmine to introduce the

First Lady and then, after her remarks, present a gift from the WMST family.

When asked how she felt about introducing Mrs. Obama, Jasmine said, “Although I had been practicing my speech for months, when I first saw Mrs. Obama it still hit me like a ton of bricks. It was amazing being able to introduce her.” Deputy Executive Officer Cheryl Bailey and *Full Court Press* editor Leah Gurowitz attended the graduation and reported that Jasmine did a fantastic job introducing the First Lady, presenting her with a gift from the Class of 2009, and directing the seniors to turn their tassles from right to left at the end of the ceremony.

As a result of Jasmine’s initiative and determination in successfully inviting Mrs. Obama to her graduation, she was interviewed by several newspapers, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*,

*The Chicago Sun-Times*; three of the four local television stations WRC, Fox 5, and WJLA; and the next day appeared on *Good Morning America*. Asked repeatedly what her goal was, the ever-optimistic Jasmine said she wanted to be Secretary of State.

As to what Jasmine’s immediate plans are, she will be interning at the White House this summer as one of the first participants in the “D.C. Scholars” program established by President and Mrs. Obama. Jasmine will be working in the Office of Correspondence. Ironic how one letter brought the Obamas to Jasmine and now Jasmine will be working to help the Obamas respond to the thousands of letters they receive.



The First Lady congratulates Jasmine as she receives her diploma.

Photos by Giesle Pelote

*The Full Court Press is published by the District of Columbia Courts. Inquiries should be submitted to Room 1500.*

*Leah Gurowitz, Editor  
Dennis Shipley, Creative Director*



# D.C. COURTS RE-DEDICATE CITY'S OLDEST LINCOLN STATUE

By Leah Gurowitz, Executive Office

On April 15, 2009, the D.C. Courts rededicated the statue of President Abraham Lincoln which has stood in front of the Old City Hall building, which has just become the new home of the D.C. Court of Appeals, for over 100 years. The statue was the first public monument to the fallen president, and it was created with funds contributed immediately after the assassination through popular subscription. John T. Ford made the largest donation of about \$1,800, which he raised through proceeds from a benefit performance at his theater, where Mr. Lincoln was shot.

The original unveiling of the statue on **April 15, 1868**, three years after Lincoln's death, was attended by about 20,000 people (over 20% of Washington's residents), as well as by such dignitaries as President Andrew Johnson and Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. In 1919, when the courthouse (formerly the District of Columbia City Hall) underwent a renovation, the statue, originally perched atop a tall column, was dismantled and put into storage. The statue was then re-erected on **April 15, 1923**, this time on a low pedestal. Once placed within easy reach of vandals, Lincoln's fingers were repeatedly broken off and eventually his right hand was re-



*Dr. Edna Greene Medford, Chandler Nutall and Chief Judge Eric T. Washington pose for a photo after the ceremony.*  
Photo courtesy of Leah Gurowitz

carved, though at too large a scale

The monument's most recent homecoming – **April 15, 2009** — took place 141 years to the day after it was originally installed and just one day before DC Emancipation Day. The statue had been moved off-site three years ago to accommodate the renovation of the Historic Courthouse. While off-site, it was meticulously cleaned and restored. The Courts were pleased to re-dedicate the statue in the bicentennial year of President Lincoln's birth.

At the event on April 15, Chief Judge Washington welcomed the crowd and thanked them for braving the rain to celebrate this significant event in D.C. history.

Professor Dr. Edna Greene Medford, from Howard University, spoke of Lincoln's views on slavery, freedom and justice...and how they evolved over his lifetime.

And seven-year-old Chandler Nutall stole the show with her reading of an essay she had written about her favorite president, Abraham Lincoln. Despite her age, Miss Nutall was well spoken, not at all intimidated by the crowd, and had some very definite thoughts about the man she so admires.

The statue is now back in its rightful place, on a new pedestal that reads: Re-erected on April 15, 2009 - In honor of the bicentennial year of the birth of Abraham Lincoln and in celebration of the renovation of the Historic Courthouse.

*Judge Oberly, Continued from page 1.*

members of the firm's Washington-based appellate practice. While at Mayer, Brown, Judge Oberly's clients included several major accounting firms. In 1991, Judge Oberly joined one of these firms, Ernst & Young, as an Associate General Counsel in charge of appellate and special litigation.

In 1994, Judge Oberly was appointed Vice Chair and General Counsel of Ernst & Young, a post she held until her appointment to the Court of Appeals. Judge Oberly was responsible for all of Ernst & Young's litigation, she supervised the firm's transactional legal work, and she advised on legislative, regulatory and public policy



*Judge Oberly (top row, far right) takes her seat on the bench.*

Photo by Dennis Shipley

issues affecting the firm. Judge Oberly was also a member of the firm's Americas Executive Board.

Among her civic and professional activities, Judge Oberly is a member of the Council of the American Law Institute. In addition, from 1991-1994, she served as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of Sheridan School in the District.

# D.C. COURTS HOST COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

By Leah Gurowitz, Executive Office

Goal 6.1 of the Courts' 2008-2012 Strategic Plan is to "inform the community about the role of the judicial branch, promote confidence in the Courts, and foster the sharing of information among justice system agencies and the community." One of the two priority actions identified to achieve this goal was hosting an Open House to inform the community about the Courts. On May 1, 2009, Law Day, that goal was achieved with plenty of fanfare, a lot of effort, and a number of very positive reviews.

The Courts launched a major outreach campaign to encourage attendance at the event, with signs on metrobuses and the Chief Judges participating in an "Ask the Judges" radio show on WTOP, and Judge Satterfield being appearing on WTTG and WJLA television news, and Judge Lopez appearing on WRC and Univision. The turnout was good and the reaction positive.

Adult visitors truly enjoyed the opportunity to talk to *pro bono* clinic staff and other legal service providers, including Bread for the City, the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program, Law Students in Court, the Legal Aid Society, Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Neighborhood Legal Services, University Legal Services, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless and others. They also enjoyed visiting booths representing various court divisions (including the Human Resources Division, which had information on jobs available at the Courts). They were able to observe trials in process and to see the newly-renovated Historic Courthouse, home to the D.C. Court of Appeals, which held several bar swearing-in ceremonies. A good-sized crowd attended the judicial Town Hall meeting with the two chief judges and the Superior Court presiding judges taking questions from the audience, asking questions on a wide range of issues.

And there were activities for children as well. Two D.C. third grade classes participated in *Stay on the Right Side of the Law*, a program created by

Management Training Program team members David Bell, Janice Butts and Thomasine Dixon-Marshall. Among other things, their program introduces students to the judicial system by having them perform a mock trial of *The Three Little Pigs* in an actual courtroom. Both classes of students, with the help of Judges Zoe Bush and Hiram Puig-Lugo, donned judicial robes and even pig and wolf masks and acted out the typical roles in the courtroom. After hearing both sides, student jurors deliberated and rendered a verdict in the case. While the jury found the wolf guilty in the morning session, the afternoon jury was unable to reach a verdict as apparently the prosecutors had not proven the wolf guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

And thanks to Cardozo Senior High School and Professor Richard Roe for putting on a mock trial on the very serious issue of teen dating violence and 'when no means no.'

Clearly there were events for people of all ages and interests and a significant level of community interest. Congratulations to all involved and to event chair Willard Stephens.



Staff offer assistance at the "Welcome" table at the newly opened Historic Courthouse.



Employees hand out schedules and give directions to Open House events.



The audience listens to Judge Jose Lopez during the Open House Town Hall Meeting.

Photos by Jon Peterson, Dennis Shipley and Willard Stephens





A sign on the new front entrance of the Moultrie Courthouse welcomes the public to the Open House.



Michael Francis and Dee Dee Callahan at the Criminal Division booth.



Metrobus with sign announcing the Open House.



Chief Judge Lee Satterfield starts the discussion at the Open House Town Hall Meeting.



View of the Moultrie Courthouse atrium during the Open House.



# NEW COURT EMPLOYEES

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

## Matthew W. Bryden

Matthew Bryden started working at the D.C. Courts as a Family Court courtroom clerk in July of 2008.



Photos by Eddie Holiday

He was born and raised in Ellicott City, Maryland. In 2006, Matthew graduated from the University of Delaware with a double major in Criminal Justice and Psychology. When asked why he came to the courts he explained, "It [the courtroom clerk position] went well with my educational background and it seemed very interesting." Matthew plans to attend law school in the future. One thing that might surprise you is that Matthew is a marathon runner. He competed in cross-country and track in college and has run in the Philadelphia and Marine Corps marathons.

## Natoshia M. Mossen

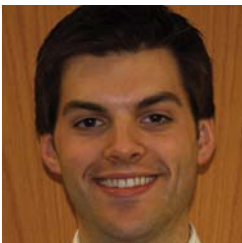
Welcome Natoshia Mossen, new deputy clerk of the Paternity & Support Branch. Natoshia was born



and raised in Washington, D.C. She attended Coolidge Senior High school and after that went on to Virginia State University where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management. Before she came to the Courts she was a manager for Steve Madden, a retail store. She came to the courts because she was looking for long-term employment in the judicial sector. "I was looking for advancement in a field that protects my community—my hometown residents." One thing that you might not know about Natoshia is that she sang in the Virginia State Gospel Choir and was invited to sing at the Vatican three years in a row.

## Adam Gould

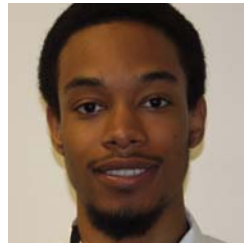
Adam Gould is a new bilingual deputy clerk. Adam



started working for the D.C. Courts in January. He was born and raised in Auburn, Maine and graduated from the University of New Hampshire. Adam moved to the District in October 2008. Before working at the Courts he worked for Thomas-Reuters as a Data Analyst and Researcher. Adam came to the courts because he wanted to live in the nation's capital and utilize his Spanish and International Affairs degree. In the future, Adam aspires to work in the field of international trade development. Adam enjoys singing and during his matriculation through University of New Hampshire he sang contemporary songs in an *a cappella* group with 14 other young men.

## Clive Grant

Clive Grant joined the D.C. Courts in May, working in the Criminal Division as a Deputy Clerk.



Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Clive attended Banneker High School and then went on to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) where he majored in Business Administration. After two years at VCU he decided to finish his education at Montgomery College in Silver Spring, Maryland. When asked why he came to the courts, Clive responded, "Superior Court just felt like a great place to move up and offers great stability." Clive has aspirations of being an entrepreneur focusing on the music and fashion industry. In his free time, Clive enjoys playing basketball.

## George Barbour

Though he was born in Cleveland, Ohio, George Barbour considers Oakland, California, his home. George attends the University of Maryland where he is working towards his B.A in Legal Studies. George joined the



Criminal Division in May as a deputy clerk. Prior to working at the D.C. Courts, he served in the military for 22 years. During his time in the military he worked as a Histology Instructor at the Armed Forces' Institute of Pathology (AFIP). As a histology instructor, George worked closely with medical examiners and autopsy work. It was his time at AFIP that sparked an interest in the legal profession. "While I was working there [AFIP], I met my mentor who was a pathologist as well as a lawyer and just my interactions with him really made me interested in the legal profession." said George. In the future, George plans to attend law school and even aspires to move on to a judgeship—"This is where government is and I want to be apart of that." In his previous profession as a pathologist George would often see death, so in his free time George enjoys gardening—seeing things live and grow. Welcome George, the Courts are expecting great things from you.

## Veda Rasheed

A native Washingtonian, Veda Rasheed graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Bowie State



University. Prior to joining the D.C. Courts as a Deputy Clerk in the Criminal Division, she was the supervisor of four employees at Sun Trust Bank. She explains that she was interested in a deputy clerk position because, "it sets me in a legal environment where I can learn about courtroom procedure, professional skills, and gain life experiences." Veda's ultimate goal is to be an attorney and practice criminal law. In her immediate future, she aspires to attend Georgetown University Law Center. Veda lives by the wise words of Malcolm X, "If you stand for nothing, you fall for anything." We are definitely glad to have you here at the Courts Veda, welcome!

## SUPPORTING OUR GUARDIANS

By Nana Perry, Program Manager, Guardianship Assistance Program

On April 24, 2009, the Probate Division held its first ever Guardianship Conference. Approximately 125 court-appointed guardians and 25 guest speakers attended the event which offered valuable information to help guardians in their role. The conference was held in the training rooms at Gallery Place and was supported by the Center for Education and Training. Attendees received a warm welcome from Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield, Presiding Probate and Tax Judge, A. Franklin Burgess Jr., Deputy Presiding Probate and Tax Judge, Rhonda Reid-Winston, and the Register of Wills, Anne Meister.

The half-day conference offered a variety of topics for attendees to choose from. Speakers were invited from several community and government agencies including American University Washington College of Law, D.C. Healthcare Resource Partnership, Quality Trust, Washington Hospital Center House Calls Program, Iona Senior Services, and D.C. Department of Disability Services. In addition, several skilled solo practitioner attorneys volunteered their time and



*Back Row L to R: Program Manager – Nana Perry, Student Visitors – Janis Rowberry (Catholic University), Sunny Chen (Catholic University), Herandy Pastrana (Howard University)  
Front Row L to R: Student Visitors – Aileen Hayes (Catholic University), Stephanie DeCarlo-Wilson (University of Maryland), Tracie Mines (University of Maryland)*

Photo by Nana Perry

expertise to present on guardianship matters. The overall feedback was positive both from family member guardians and attorney guardians appointed from the Probate panel. Of those who completed the conference evaluation form, over 98% agreed the conference was helpful and informative.

The conference also benefited from the support of student visitors who assisted in planning, preparing and facilitating the conference as one of their assignments. The student visitors were part of the first group of social work student interns serving under the

Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP). GAP is a new program in the Probate Division's Office of the Register of Wills which began in August 2008 and partners with local universities to ensure the needs of adult wards under court supervision are being met. Master's level social work students are appointed as student visitors by the Probate Court to conduct visits and interviews with wards, guardians, family members and facility staff. The Probate Division would like to extend a sincere thank you to these students and to all the court staff who assisted in making this event a tremendous success!

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## NEW ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

Courthouses are one of the few places where ordinary citizens may impart justice while performing their civic responsibility to the community. The D.C. Courts' vision is: Open to all, Trusted by all, Justice for all. The Courts have made an effort to become more "Open to all," by purchasing assistive listening devices. (ALDs)

The ALDs were installed into the Moultrie Courthouse a few months ago. An example of the ALDs usefulness occurred on February 10<sup>th</sup>, when a group of 20 Spanish-speaking individuals attended a trial. Because of the newly installed system in the courtroom, they were all easily accommodated and were able to listen to the English-to-Spanish translation of the proceeding.

The ALDs aren't magical pieces of equipment that allow the wearer to miraculously translate other languages and increase the volume and clarity of sounds, there's a lot more that goes into them. Alvin Milton, Senior Audio Technician, explained how the device works. "After each person is given an ALD wireless headset, the interpreter plugs his wireless transmitter into a jack that is located next to the podium in the courtroom. His translations are then sent via cabling to the emitter located above the judge's bench. The emitter broadcasts the interpretation to the courtroom where individuals where the ALD headsets, or 'receivers' can listen to the interpretation."

Gregg Poss, Senior Associate Director of the Information Technology Division (IT) said, "These ALDs really go to the 'Open to all' part of our vision. This new system will meet the needs of those individuals whose primary language is not English and those individuals who have hearing impairments." Congratulations to all the IT staff, and especially those men and women working in the Central Recording Office, for this major accomplishment.

# Rabe Reviews

**Rhema Christian Center Church**  
**1825 Michigan Avenue, NE**  
**DC 20018**  
**Reverend Barbara A. Wood**

March 29, 2009

DC Superior Court  
Ms. Dianne King,  
Director, Family Division  
500 Indiana Avenue,  
NW, Room 4240  
Washington, DC 20001



Dear Ms. King,

I am writing this letter to commend **Ms. Angela Carroll** for the professional customer service provided to me. I would also like to commend you for your selection of an excellent employee. I have been a DC resident for over 50 years, and as you know, DC Government employees often get some bad publicity. Ms. Carroll squelches that rumor. I've built my career and ministry believing that one who surrounds his or herself with positive people will indeed succeed. You have apparently done that.

My Senior Pastor, Arvel E. Givens, tasked me to obtain licenses for his ministerial staff of 14 members, consisting of pastors, ministers, evangelists and elders. It was indeed an awesome task, which required a lot of legwork and paperwork. When my pastor was licensed over 30 years ago, he put "charismatic" as his religious affiliation. We are a non-denomination church, and charismatic is not recognized by some as a religious affiliation, which means he couldn't endorse his ministerial staff as non-denomination applicants. This simple task, which had great potential to become big, was accomplished without complication. I must give credit to Ms. Carroll for her professional, knowledgeable and patient approach. Ms. Carroll is extremely knowledgeable about the processes. There was not a question that she couldn't answer, and trust me, I had a "lot" of questions. But with much patience, she handled them all. She exudes confidence and provides care for her customers. I couldn't let another day go by without acknowledging her unyielding professionalism. Please pass my appreciation on to her.

Sincerely,  
Reverend Barbara A. Wood

April 28, 2009

Clerk of the Superior Court  
Moultrie Courthouse  
500 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Room 2500  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: **Ms. Tonya Stevenson**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Matthew Brinegar, and I am a member of the District of Columbia bar. I am writing to bring attention to the absolutely wonderful assistance I received from one of your clerks, Ms. Stevenson.

Unfortunately, I had foolishly combined a motion for temporary injunction and preliminary injunction into one motion. My client was desperate to file these motions (and the complaint) because the foreclosure on her home of 18 years was set for the following morning. With a tremendous amount of patience and kind words, Ms. Stevenson worked with me—beyond 5:00 PM—to get the job done. The judge was then able to favorably rule upon the motion later that evening.

Such professionalism is commendable and a valuable service to the D.C. attorneys and the community as a whole. I understand that a clerk's job can be difficult, as many *pro se* parties and some attorneys do not understand the detailed requirements to file complaints and motions. Without the competence of clerks like Ms. Stevenson, justice would surely not get done.

Thank you once again.

Jeannie Adams, Director  
District of Columbia Superior Court  
Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division  
March 24, 2009

Dear Ms. Adams:

I am writing belatedly to bring to your attention the outstanding service that was provided to me by Multi-Door employee **Mr. Andre Randall** last fall while a case in which I participated as defendants' counsel made its way through the mediation process.

The parties engaged in two mediation sessions and Mr. Randall was always courteous and professional. Following our second session, however, Mr. Randall went above and beyond the call of duty when he assisted me over the course of a few days with locating a copy of our signed mediation agreement. I was truly grateful for his assistance and dedication and wish to commend him for his work.

Thank you, Mr. Randall, and all the employees of the Multi-Door Division for the important work you do.

