

# Full Court Press

Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

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## 28TH ANNUAL EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS CEREMONY

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office



Patricia Williams, 40-year court employee, with Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals Eric T. Washington and Chief Judge of the Superior Court Lee F. Satterfield.

Photos by Lou Shack

Employees are the key to any effective organization. The D.C. Courts are no exception. The court employees work with high-volume calendars, answer hundreds of questions from the public and from court participants each day, develop innovative approaches that enable the courts to become more efficient, and continue to improve the D.C. Courts' service to the public. On September 17, 2009, the Courts held their 28th Annual Employee Recognition and Award Ceremony to recognize that effort.

Although it was raining on Thursday the 17th, the weather couldn't dampen the spirit of the festivities. The Moultrie Courthouse atrium was packed with over four hundred people in attendance — including both Chief Judges, the Executive Officer, and both Clerks of Court — and staff crowding the fourth and fifth floor balconies in

order to watch the events.

The awards ceremony started promptly at 2:30 p.m., with Anne Wicks, the Executive Officer, introducing the Dunbar High School ROTC for the presentation of colors. After the high school color

guard carried the United States flag to the center of the atrium, Catherine Papachristou of the Probate Division sang a beautiful rendition of the national anthem. Immediately after the national anthem, the Courts' very own Jonathan Hopkins performed another musical selection. Jonathan, of the Family Court Operations Division, played the guitar and recited a piece of spoken word entitled *My Life's Work*. Chief Judge Eric T. Washington then took the podium and jokingly asked, "How do you expect me to follow that awesome performance?" Chief Judge Washington then announced winners of the first few awards.

The Enterprise Service Award went to the Capital Projects and Facilities Management Division



Deborah R. White winner of the Sharon Y. Holliday award, with Holliday family members.

(CPFMD). CPFMD is responsible for planning design, renovation, and construction of the full spectrum of the Courts' judicial, office, support, and public use facilities. The team has an impressive list of projects that it has completed this year led by the restoration of the Historic Courthouse, now home to the Court of Appeals.

The Public Service Award was given to Nathaniel Speight of the Civil Division's Small Claims and Conciliation Branch. Over the years, Nathaniel has received numerous commendations from judges, attorneys, co-workers, and customers. When Nathaniel received his award, there was a roar of applause from his colleagues, including several who stood up and held signs congratulating him.

The Public Service Group Award was present-

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## JUDGE RUIZ IS NAMED ONE OF FIVE MARGARET BRENT WINNERS THIS YEAR

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

On August 2 Judge Vanessa Ruiz, of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, was honored to receive a 2009 Margaret Brent Award from the American Bar Association's Commission on Women in the Profession. The Commission established the Margaret Brent Awards (also known as the "Breaking the Glass Ceiling Awards") in 1991 to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women lawyers. Each year only five women are chosen to receive this award for their outstanding achievements and personal excellence in their area of expertise. The award was named in honor of Margaret Brent, who was the first woman licensed to practice law in the American Colonies (now the United States), being admitted in 1638.

Congratulations Judge Ruiz!



2009 Margaret Brent award winners with Roberta Liebenberg, chair ABA Commission on Women in the Profession (far left) and the ABA President H. Thomas Wells Jr. The winners are Linda Addison, Fulbright & Jaworski, second from right; Judge Vanessa Ruiz, District of Columbia Court of Appeals, to her left; Helaine Barnett, President, Legal Services Corporation, second from right; Lovetta Tuell, Anderson Tuell, far right.

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## D.C. BAR LITIGATION SECTION PRESENTS ALVIN MILTON WITH THE FIRST-EVER "ALVIN MILTON OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD"

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

It's not everyday that someone receives an award; and it's even more rare when someone has an award named after him or her. On May 15, 2009, one of the most deserving employees in the Courts, Alvin Milton, earned such an honor when the District of Columbia Bar Litigation Section presented him with the first "Alvin M. Milton Outstanding Community Service Award." This award was named after Alvin, or 'Milton' as most of us know him, for his dedication to the Courts and their efforts to serve the D.C. community in particular, Milton's commitment and instrumental service in every annual Youth Law Fair. During each Youth Law Fair (an event that teaches



Lorelie Masters, from the D.C. Bar Litigation Section, who served as Chair of the Youth Law Fair Committee, presents Alvin Milton with the first-ever Alvin Milton Outstanding Community Service Award.

teenagers about the legal system and various aspects of the law) Milton sets up all the audio, visual, and microphone components; controls all the sound; tapes the entire event; leads visitors to overflow rooms; and does anything else asked of him.

Milton was unaware that he was going to receive any award. "It was a complete surprise, I had no idea what was going on until I was actually presented with the award." He explained the events that took place leading up to his receiving the award. "On May 8, 2009, Gregg Poss asked, 'Alvin, could you please wear a suit next Friday?' I responded, 'Why?' and Mr. Poss answered, 'I haven't seen you in one in a while.'" A week later, Milton had his suit on and went to work as usual, still unaware of anything special. "In the middle of the day, Chief Judge Satterfield came to me and said, 'I need you to come somewhere with me.' I wasn't sure where I was going, but since the Chief Judge asked, I went." The two drove from the Superior Court to the D.C. Bar office downtown. At this point Milton still didn't know what was going on. "We walked in the building and I saw a lot of lawyers and judges and I walked to the information table to check in, but they said, 'Oh, Mr. Milton, we've been expecting you, please follow us,' and they sat me in the very front, which I

Milton, Continued on Page 8.

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# MENTAL HEALTH DIVERSION PROGRAM

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

When people commit crimes, police try to find them. If found, they are arrested and the court adjudicates their case. The judge or jury determines guilt or innocence and, if guilty, the judge imposes punishment. But what happens when the defendants have mental health issues that aren't addressed? What happens when the defendants also have serious drug problems? Defendants must be accountable for the crime they committed, but some also need help to deal with very real mental illness. That's precisely why the Superior Court created the Mental Health Diversion Program (MHDP).

Over the past several years the Superior Court has noticed an increase in mentally ill defendants with serious drug problems. In response to the number of crimes committed by the mentally ill, who are arrested and often sent to jail for those crimes, but not given any tools to prevent them from future criminal conduct, the Court developed the Mental Health Diversion Program. This program focuses on criminal defendants diagnosed with mental illness, or with mental illness and drug problems.

The goals of MHDP are to reduce criminal justice involvement of program participants, reduce crime in the community and reduce the re-arrest rates of mentally ill defendants, increase the treatment options available, reduce the rate of jail detention and involuntary hospitalization for program participants, and thus reduce overall system costs (the cost of one day in jail is \$115 versus the cost of one day at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital is \$650).

The program works as follows: When the Pretrial Services Agency learns that a defendant is eligible for MHDP, they notify the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) of the defendant's eligibility. The USAO screens the case by reviewing the defendant's criminal history and the nature and circumstances of the pending charges to determine whether to refer the defendant to MHDP. The criminal judge then certifies the case to the MHDP, if the USAO and PSA find the defendant eligible. The USAO offers the defendant what is called a deferred prosecution agreement (DPA), meaning that if the defendant complies with all conditions of release for a certain

period of time, usually four months, the prosecutors will drop the criminal charges against the defendant.

To be eligible, defendants must meet several criteria. The defendant's charges must involve only non-violent misdemeanors. The defendants must be diagnosed as mentally ill as defined in the Ervin Act i.e., "having a psychosis or other disease which substantially impairs the mental health of a person." The defendant must be competent. The defendant cannot have any dangerous or violent felony convictions within the last five years. The defendant cannot remain incarcerated.

Once defendants are certified to the MHDP, they meet with Magistrate Judge Goldfrank, who presides over the program and is the Chair of the Superior Court's Mental Health Commission. Magistrate Judge Goldfrank holds hearings on Monday and Wednesday afternoons or Judge Davis, who holds hearings on Thursdays. When asked what happens after the cases are accepted, Magistrate Judge Goldfrank replied, "We make sure that the defendants are connected with the right services to treat their specific illness. The same for those that have drug addictions -- we make sure the participant enters appropriate inpatient or outpatient treatment."

MHDP doesn't just refer participants to resources and leave them on their own. In addition to finding treatment services, MHDP requires that the participants meet with a compliance officer weekly for four months (six months in more serious cases). If the defendant attends his mental health and/or drug treatment sessions as well as his monthly meetings with compliance officers, and is not re-arrested during the four-month process, the prosecution drops the misdemeanor charges.

Magistrate Judge Goldfrank believes that real progress is being made. "Based on my observations, it is clear that the quality of life of a defendant who completes the program has improved," Magistrate Judge Goldfrank wrote to Chief Judge Satterfield. At the end of the program there is a ceremony at which the defendant is presented with a certificate, rose, and a medal which reads, "Life is a journey, not a destination."

# PROFILE OF DŨNG NGUYỄN, THE AMERICAN DREAM

By: Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

The D.C. Courts are a very interesting place to work, and court employees are even more interesting. There are no two employees with the same story. Some of the employees were tri-athletes in their college years; some are published authors; and some are from different countries. Dũng Nguyễn is one of the court employees who was born and raised in another country; more specifically he was raised in Vietnam.



*Dũng Nguyễn working at his desk,*

Photo by Eddie Holiday

After learning about his life in Vietnam, his journey to America, and what he accomplished since living in the U.S, Nguyễn, in my opinion, is one of the most fascinating people at the Courts. After reading this profile section, I imagine many of you will think the same.

Dũng Tiến Nguyễn was born in 1955 in South Vietnam after his parents moved to the region. His parents moved from the North to the South after the Geneva Conference, which partitioned Vietnam into the Communist North and the non-Communist South. His parents traveled from the northern region all the way to the Southern Vietnamese capitol of Saigon to raise their children. Saigon was, and still is, the largest city in Vietnam and is home to Vietnam's top universities. Nguyễn's parents knew their son would achieve great things, so they enrolled him in the best schools in Saigon.

While Nguyễn was in high school, he passed all of his courses with excellent grades

and decided he was going to become a medical doctor when he grew up. When asked what made him want to be a doctor he had two responses, the first was: "I actually wanted to be an Army Surgeon. My father was a high ranking officer and he was treated with so much respect by all of his soldiers." Nguyễn adored the



*... and as a hip college student recently arrived in the United States,*

military lifestyle and culture of hierarchy, rank, and respect; however, his parents dissuaded him from joining the army due to the dangerous situation in Vietnam during the 70's. The second reason he wanted to become a doctor was because of his grandmother: "I wanted to be a doctor because my grandmother suffered and eventually passed away due to cancer, and I wanted to make sure no one else felt pain like that," Nguyễn said.

Regardless of the reasons why Nguyễn wanted to be a doctor, his parents were going to make sure that he left the dangerous environment of Vietnam and received his education in the United States. Nguyễn explains how he was going to leave the country, "My father had a good friend in the U.S military who was a 2-star general and wrote my letter of recommendation to attend the University of Nebraska—and, in fact, I received a full scholarship upon my arrival." The only thing Nguyễn needed in order to leave the country was for the Prime Minister of South Vietnam to sign off for the departure. Until then he had to just wait.

In the meantime, Nguyễn enrolled in pre-med classes at Sinh Hóa the pre-med school in Thu Duc City (about 25 miles from Saigon). During his time at the medical school, Nguyễn reconsidered his desire to become a doctor. "The doctors put the students by themselves in

*Nguyễn, Continued on Page 5.*

the morgue for a few hours in order for the students to get used to seeing and being around the deceased,” explained Nguyễn. “After being in the morgue I decided that medical school wasn’t for me.” (Interestingly enough Nguyễn’s wife is a doctor at the National Health Information Center working to find a cure for cancer and make sure that no one suffers from the disease.)

His paperwork was eventually processed and in 1973 Nguyễn left his family to live in the United States. His new life in America was rough, Nguyễn recounted: “When I first came to America, it was really hard: I was not completely fluent in English, I wasn’t completely aware of all the customs, and I was alone—all of my family and friends were still in Vietnam.” Naturally, being away from his loved ones created homesickness, “I was the only Vietnamese person at the University of Nebraska. The school paper constantly interviewed me. After speaking about my home and family so much I became homesick,” he said.

His homesickness would end in 1975 when the rest of his family immigrated to the United States and took up residence in Silver Spring, Maryland. In order to be near his family, Nguyễn transferred to the University of Maryland. Once reunited with his family, Nguyễn taught his family what it was like to be “American,” but he still needed some help. “When I saw my family, I explained the do’s and don’ts. But it wasn’t until our neighbors invited us to dinner, showed us around the area, and explained how the American system works, that we began to fit in.”

After transferring to the University of Maryland, he didn’t stay long. After one semester, he transferred again to Bowie State University. In 1977, he graduated with his Bachelors of Arts in Business Management. The next year in 1978, Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes presented him with a post-graduation Business and Finance Award.

After graduation, Nguyễn began working. One of his earliest jobs was at Drug Fair. He came

to Drug Fair through a management-training program and became the assistant manager after only two weeks. Two months later, the manager was relocated and Nguyễn was promoted as the manager of the store. Although he was happy with his new position, there were drawbacks. “The responsibilities as manager were taxing,” Nguyễn said, “I regularly got off

work at midnight. In addition, I had to deposit all the earnings late at night, I wasn’t comfortable with that.” Those reasons prompted Nguyễn to look for a different career and that’s what brought him to the Courts. “I was looking in *The Washington Post* for a job that would utilize my background in accounting and the Courts were offering an auditor position in the Probate Division—so I decided to call for an interview,” Nguyễn said. After the phone conversation, Nguyễn came the Courts for an interview and was greeted by Register of Wills Henry Rucker. “We spoke about two and a half hours about computers and Bowie State and then he told me to speak with Thomas Burn,” Nguyễn said. After a meeting with Mr. Burn, he was hired for the position and

started work the next week.

Nguyễn has been working with the Courts for more than 25 years and has a range of duties within the Probate Division. In 2001, he received the *Special Achievement Award* for his innovative system that saved the Courts time and money. “There was a payment backlog problem and then Chief Judge King asked the Probate Division to fix it. Wallace Louis and I created a ‘Fee Request System’ and made sure that everyone was paid within 45 days and solved the problem,” explained Nguyễn.

When asked what his motivation is for working so hard to make the Courts a better place, he explained “My satisfaction comes from making people happy. I feel my job makes other people’s lives easier.” The last thing Nguyễn wanted me to take away from the interview was his view on America. “This country really is the land of opportunity. I worked really hard, but it’s a combination of hard work and the many friends that I’ve made over the years that helped me get where I am today,” he said. Nguyễn is definitely right that with hard work, trust, and friends, anything is possible!



... and as a toddler.





The Enterprise Service Award went to the Capital Projects and Facilities Management Division (left) Joe Sanchez CPFMD Director receiving the award at the ceremony. (right)



ed to the employees of the Civil Division's Information and Records section: Vondell Wiggins, Sasha Vance, Darlene Davis, Edward Meeks, Matthew Shumate, Aaron Manzo, and Brislin Thomas. This team has continued to provide exceptional service in locating records for staff and the public in a very timely manner and executing projects with pride perfection.

Chief Judge Satterfield then conferred the Unsung Hero Award and the Management Achievement Award. The Unsung Hero Award was presented to Alan Reid of the Family Court Operations Division. Alan is responsible for a high-volume calendar and completes all of his duties with distinction. He is quiet, dependable, and consistently performs at the highest levels of efficiency. Gale Woodland of the Information and Technology Division won the Management Achievement Award for an innovative idea that helped the Superior Court identify potential jurors for a lengthy trial prior to *voir dire*, so that far fewer people had to be summoned to seat a jury for that months-long trial. Gale's approach saved the Court time and money and resulted in fewer jurors being summoned for the lengthy trial. The Superior Court plans to use this innovative model for future lengthy trials. After these final two awards were presented, Atrina Smith of the Civil Division performed for the audience, demonstrating amazing vocal talent.

Executive Officer Anne Wicks then introduced the new graduates of the 2009 Management Training Program. She then went to announce to the audience the winning team from the Management Training Program. This year's winner was the "Go Green Team" (Carla M. Andrews, Criminal Division; Mary Corbin, Family Court; Claudette Taylor, Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division; Makisha Wiley, Budget and Finance Division; and their mentor, Dan Cipullo, Director, Criminal Division). This team developed a green initiative, including various programs that, when adopted, will promote morale, improve employee

well-being, and help the environment. Catherine Papachristou then returned to the dias and sang a beautiful rendition of *My Funny Valentine*.

Court of Appeals Clerk of Court Garland Pinkston then announced the Length of Service Awards. These tokens of appreciation were given to the employees of the Courts who have worked 10, 20, 30, and in one instance, 40 years. More than 70 people received the awards and afterward a raffle was held for administrative days off. Once the raffle was finished, Superior Court Clerk Duane Delaney presented the Sharon Y. Holliday Award.

Sharon Y. Holliday had a phenomenal career at the Courts. From her start 1985 as Lead Control Clerk to her many promotions that led to her being the Branch Chief of the Central Intake Center, she was known for always going the extra mile. When she passed unexpectedly in April, the Courts decided to honor her memory this year with the Sharon Y. Holliday Award of Excellence. The award was presented to Deborah R. White, Supervisor for Juvenile and Neglect Branch of Family Court Operations. Deborah is dedicated to making Family Court a better place. She quietly goes beyond in all she does and refuses to take credit for the many accomplishments that her division has achieved. Deborah is a precious asset to the Family Court Operations Division and creates an aura of excellence similar to that possessed by Sharon Holliday.

At the conclusion of the award ceremony, Ayesha Upshur of the Crime Victims Compensation Program sang a tribute to all of her fellow employees. Many remarked that the turnout this year was the best ever. That was important as it allowed employees to recognize their co-workers' dedication, commitment, team-spirit, and professionalism on the job, as well as other talents in areas such as music and poetry. We hope to see everyone at next year's ceremony!





Above are the two chief judges with the award winners for (top) The Unsung Hero - Alan Reid of the Family Court Operations Division; (second from top) Management Achievement - Gale Woodland of the Information and Technology Division; (third from top) Public Service/Individual - Nathaniel Speight of the Civil Division's Small Claims and Conciliation Branch; (fourth from top) Public Service Group Award - Information and Records section of the Civil Division; and (left) Management Training Program - the "Go Green Team".



# 11<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BACK-TO-SCHOOL BASH

By: Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

When you think about a place full of kids, balloons, music, games, and pizza, the last place you think about is a courthouse. However, Superior Court had all of that when it hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Back-to-School Bash. This “Bash” was co-sponsored by the D.C. Superior Court and the FRIENDS of the Superior Court. Linda Allen Benton, President of FRIENDS started the “Back-to-School Bash” project many years ago in order to make sure that students start the school year with the necessary supplies to excel—this year was no different.

Judge William Jackson, the presiding judge of Family Court gave the opening remarks. “We [the adults] were all at some point in the same grade that you’re going into now. We’re celebrating the anticipation of a new year of learning and fun,” he said. Judge Jackson knew that the children were more interested in pizza and games than speeches, so he kept his remarks brief. After the opening



From Left: Dorothy Coleman, Director, DC Courts’ Child Care Center; Marilyn Newton, Treasurer, FRIENDS of Superior Court; Esther Namian, Board Member, FRIENDS of Superior Court; and Beverley Gibbs, Social Worker, CCAN.

Photos by Eddie Holiday



Attendees, thrilled with their gifts.

remarks from Judge Jackson, the kids ate pepperoni, cheese, sausage, and buffalo chicken pizza and drank fruit punch. After the kids ate, it was time for the games. The Child Care Center Staff did a wonderful job and set up a number of games, such as musical chairs, feed the clown, bowling, free throw shooting, and hot potato. For each game won, the children received prizes. After the games, the kids had chocolate cake. Toward the end of the bash, the children had their faces painted and received backpacks stuffed with school supplies (notebooks, filler paper, folders, crayons, rulers, pens, pencils, and a book.) Esther Namian and Florence Williams, long time members of FRIENDS, said that this year’s Back-to-School Bash was “a great success!”

Milton, Continued from page 2.

thought was strange,” said Milton. That feeling of confusion was immediately switched to excitement and then pride as Lorelie Masters from the D.C. Bar Litigation Section, who served as Chair of the Youth Law Fair Committee, presented Milton with the award.

A month later, Milton received additional acknowledgement during the D.C. Bar’s Annual Awards Dinner. Alvin Milton is a very humble man, “I’m very appreciative of the award. I just want to make sure that the Courts are functioning at their best,” he explained. Gregg Poss echoed that sentiment: “Alvin is incredibly dedicated to the Courts. The word “no” is not in his vocabulary; it does not matter who you are, if you ask Alvin to do something you can be sure his answer will be yes.” When Gregg was asked what his reaction was to hearing that Alvin was not only going to receive an award, but that it would be named in his honor, he said “I have to say it didn’t surprise me that much because I know Milton and his work ethic and commitment to the community; I was only happy that he got the recognition he deserves.”

So to Alvin Milton, award-winner, we say “Congratulations and thanks for all you have done for the D.C. Courts and the District. You do us proud.”



## KEITH E. ROBINSON EARNS HIS Ed.D. IN EDUCATION

By Eddie Holiday, Executive Office Intern

On June 20, 2009, Senior Education Specialist Keith E. Robinson received his Doctor of Education with a concentration in Organizational Leadership and a specialization in Human Resource Development from Nova Southeastern University. Keith's educational background spans more than 20 years. He first earned his A.A. from Central Texas College in 1987 while serving on active duty in the United States Navy. He then went on to earn his B.S. in Psychology from Bowie State University in 1989. Nine years later, Keith earned his Master of Science in Administration in Human Resources Administration from Central Michigan University. Impressively, while pursuing his masters, he was promoted to Navy Chief Personnelman. After his Masters degree, Keith Robinson began working with the D.C. Courts in the Center for Education and Training but was still motivated to advance his education.

Keith says his mother inspired him to excel and always wanted the best for her son; she is also the reason why he pursued his doctorate. "My mother passed away unexpectedly in the summer of 2002; and in our last conversation she asked me, 'Son, I know you have a Masters degree, but what about your doctorate?'" Keith took that to mean that her last wish for her son was to become a doctor. At that time he



Dr. Robinson at work.

Photo by Eddie Holiday

didn't know when he would start his doctoral program, but promised he would complete it in five years. Interestingly enough, when he was hired by the Courts in May 1999, the then-director of CET asked him what his goals were for the next five years, to which he replied "to earn my doctorate!"

Three years later, May 2005, Keith started his doctoral program. His road to earn the doctorate was rough; there were many classes he had to take and research assignments to complete. However, on May 5, 2009 he completed his dis-

sertation, *An Evaluation of Succession Planning to Improve Court Employees Career Development Opportunities*, and on June 4<sup>th</sup>, he defended his dissertation before the faculty.

"I came into the defense auditorium as Mr. Robinson and came out Dr. Robinson," Keith said. After he successfully defended his dissertation, Keith "jumped for joy." He further explained that "It's a good feeling to have been blessed to fulfill that promise to my mother—I started in May 2005 and graduated on June 20, 2009, that's four years and I told her five." He also said, "All that I hope to be, I owe to her [his mother]." His mother would definitely be proud of all of his accomplishments, and we at the Courts sure are. Congratulations Dr. Robinson!

### The Center for Education and Training is Helping Train Area Youth as Well

Each year, the Washington D.C. High School Computer Competition (HSCC) team competitively selects 30 area high school students, who train every Saturday for 8 months in preparation for the national computer competition. The students are trained and the team coordinated by Lou Shack, the Manager of Technology Learning in the Courts' Center for Education and Training (CET). The Courts allow the team, under Lou's leadership, to use the CET computer training lab, convenient for the students given its proximity to Metro. The students are provided training on a wide-range of topics, such as computer programming, databases, and other technologies, enabling them to compete with the best in the nation. This year, the D.C. area team took 3rd place at the National High School Computer Competition in Raleigh, North Carolina. Each student who participated in the competition received a \$1,500 college scholarship. This is the fourth consecutive year that this team has placed in the top five nationally, so kudos to Lou and his fellow team members!



Lou Shack (far right) with his winning team members.

# FAMILY COURT RECOGNIZES CHILD WELFARE LAW SPECIALISTS

By Wilma Brier, CCAN Office Branch Chief.

The National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) announced its most recent list of attorneys who have been certified as Child Welfare Law Specialists (CWLS) on June 30, 2009, and the Family Court of the D.C. Superior Court is pleased to announce that 25 of these attorneys are practicing in the Family Court. The NACC is accredited by the American Bar Association to conduct the Child Welfare Law Specialty program. In recognition of the importance of the work done by child welfare attorneys, the Family Court subsidized their participation in this educational effort with Court Improvement Program funds.

Certification as an NACC Child Welfare Law Specialist signifies to the community, colleagues, courts, and clients that an attorney possesses an enhanced level of knowledge, skill, and experience in child welfare law.

Child Welfare Law Certification is only available to attorneys who represent children, parents and agencies in child abuse and neglect cases. It is modeled after physician board certification and requires that attorneys satisfy the following requirements:

- Substantial involvement in the practice of child welfare law for the three years immediately preceding the application.
- Satisfactory continuing legal education credit in child welfare law.
- Acquisition of satisfactory peer reviews of competence, including one judge.
- Satisfactory writing sample.
- Passage of the NACC national child welfare law exam

NACC Child Welfare Law Attorney Certification is expanding across the country and is currently available in the following jurisdictions: California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah.

When you see the acronym "CWLS" after an attorney's name, you will know that the attorney has been certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist. Members of the District of Columbia's first group of CWLS attorneys from the Family Court Panels are: Iris Barnett, Cathy Braxton, Debra Burton, Deborah Cason Daniel, Margaret Clark, Thomas Devlin, Jenny Epstein, Harry Goldwater, Murphy Henry, Joseph Jose, Nancy Karkowsky, Cynthia Nordone, Lisa Orlow, Lucy Osakwe, Amrutha Rode, Anne Schneiders, and Sharon Singh.

Members of the District of Columbia's first group of CWLS attorneys from the Office of the Attorney General for DC are: Tyrona De Witt, Jennifer Hancock, Pamela Landeros Soncini, Keely Magyar, Lilia Merezicky, and Andrew Reese. Members from the Children's Law Center: Nancy Drane; and from the University of the District of Columbia Legal Clinic: Tanya Cooper.

More information about attorney Child Welfare Law Specialists is available on the NACC website, <http://www.naccchildlaw.org/>. The newly certified attorneys received special recognition at a reception at the Court in July and at the NACC's annual conference in New York in August.

The Family Court offers its heartfelt congratulations to these attorneys. Families in District of Columbia who come before the court will benefit from the enhanced skills and knowledge these attorneys will bring to their cases.



*Front row, left to right: Jennifer Hancock, Nancy Drane, Lilia Merezicky, Nancy Karkowsky, Anne Schneiders. Second row, left to right: Margaret Clark, Debra Burton, Iris Barnett, Lisa Orlow, Amrutha Rode. Back row, left to right: Tanya Cooper, Sharon Singh, Andrew Reese, Deborah Cason Daniel, Thomas Devlin, Pamela Landeros Soncini, Harry Goldwater, Murphy Henry. Not pictured: Cathy Braxton, Tyrona De Witt, Jenny Epstein, Joseph Jose, Keely Magyar, Cynthia Nordone, Lucy Osakwe.*

Photo by Eddie Holiday



# My Life's Work

by Jonathan C. Hopkins

I love playing around with words.  
And like Tiger playing a round, I've turned  
preying on nouns and verbs  
into praying aloud in church;  
worship.  
My pen's a warship  
spraying a crowd with words  
that I use to battle.  
In my youth, I used to battle  
my truth like you too battle.  
I had more pride than U2's  
"Rattle & Hum".  
My childhood years  
were saddles with some  
issues of grown ups.  
I saw my parent's marriage blown up,  
family close to holding a headstone up.  
Life's pain flooded my ears  
like it turned my headphones up.  
Little did I know  
I had my life's thread sewn up  
in my right hand.  
While folks were busy  
blaming the "white man",  
my pen was busy  
framing my flight plan.  
My ink aiming  
insight's hand to  
dent up my page.  
I've learned when  
I've pent up my rage,  
my pen dumps my rage  
and my lead and my ink  
turns me from chump to sage.  
My pen pumps the page  
with my light.  
I use my lead and I bite  
your veins when I wryte.  
But I don't suck.  
When I strike,  
I inject, in your neck, all my text,  
like Twilight...  
backwards.  
"Light-Twi".

I wryte my  
crack words  
that I am addicted to.  
Not white or black words  
I inflict on you,  
but I try to stack words  
that enrich your view  
and maybe even switch your view.  
Every man is a fool or a king;  
you gotta decide which are you.  
How do you deal  
with life's witch's brew?  
Which star will you take your life  
and hitch 'er to?  
Are you a pitch or two  
from striking out,  
or is life striking doubt  
and psyched you out?  
Are the Vikings out  
destroying your empire?  
See, I haven't come to inspire,  
I've come to inquire  
as to where are your wings?  
How do you fly?  
When life wields its Sting,  
do you cross swords or cry?  
Me, I cross chords  
and cross words  
about the Cross, Lord  
and try  
to show you how to  
spread your falcon wings,  
spin gold from your lead  
like life is alchemy  
and how to live life  
on Martin's balcony.  
Whether you're Lawrence  
and Bro' Man just broke in your house  
or you're Dr. King  
and a gun man is scopin' you out.  
Don't go through life  
just gropin' about,  
instead of silently mopin',  
go open your mouth.  
Small talk says you're copin',  
I'm hopin' you'll shout!

See, ever since the days  
of my Fallopien route,  
and I feel gripped,  
like I'm being roped in by doubt,  
I don't run away,  
or run from the fray,  
I hear what I'll say  
and then go pen my bout.  
I play the whole game,  
even when it's a rout;  
take my swings at the world  
when I ink the lined pad.  
You want to reassign your wrath,  
then go find your path.  
Unbind your hands,  
fight past your past,  
make tight your mast,  
take flight and laugh!  
So I invite this class  
to always stand proud.  
Sort through your "Angels & Demons"  
like you're reading Dan Brown.  
Stand your ground  
no matter at all what you're called to  
be.  
Whether you're tall and play ball  
or chasing a law degree.  
Be successful at life?  
Yeah, have the gall to be!  
You gotta think to yourself,  
"This job is too small for me."  
Do your job well,  
but it's not meant at all to be  
all of you.  
Be strong like the Hulk  
with the olive hue  
and don't be afraid to say  
"I love you"  
when the words are sorely needed.  
These words all live inside of me;  
if I'm cut I'd surely bleed it.  
So spend you time,  
uncovering your plotline.  
It is your story; read it!

# Kabe Reviews

**From:** Friendship Collegiate Charter School  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 11, 2009 11:31 AM  
**To:** Banks, Crystal L.  
**Subject:** Many Thanks!!!



Hello Ms. Banks.

We met last Thursday at Superior Court when you gave a fabulous tour to my girls. They had a great time and said that the trip was their favorite one of the summer. I just wanted to personally thank you for your time and efforts. They really enjoyed themselves. Also, if you can forward me any information on the intern program, I would truly appreciate it. Have a wonderful week and thanks again.

August 21, 2009

Hon. Herbert B. Dixon, Jr.:

I am a lifetime resident of DC, at 31 years old. I have appeared for jury service four times in the past 12 years. Of all the agencies and services I interact with in the District, I find the **Superior Court Staff** to be the most organized, clearest communicating, most respectful (least likely to patronize), most accountable, most accommodating, and friendliest District employees.

In short, I am impressed.

As a result, my "jury duty" experience was more than bearable — almost enjoyable. Thanks to you, personally, for your own example of respect and efficiency. Thanks to your staff, and thanks to the **courthouse staff** — I include everyone from the front door to the top floor.

Sincerely, appreciatively

August 27, 2009

Mr. Dan Cipullo  
Director, Criminal Division Room 4016  
500 Indiana Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20001  
Subject: **Note of Appreciation of Mr. Aaron ROBINSON'S Performance**



Dear Sir,

It so happens that we often tend to be quick in complaining about or criticizing civil servants, and rarely think of thanking them for work not only well done, but also done promptly and in a very understanding and friendly manner. Such an attitude means so much for families who, for no fault of theirs, are under great pain and distress by having one of their members in a penitentiary.

During the past few years, ... I have had to call various units of the Superior Court and Appeals Court to seek information and clarification, or to ask for copies and transcripts of documents for which I have full power of attorney and was prepared to bear the cost. Some agents made me feel that I was bothering them and some had even a completely negative attitude.

You can imagine, therefore, my joy to fall on some exceptional person such as Mr. **Aaron Robinson**, Branch Chief for Special Proceedings, whom I didn't know personally, except through telephone conversations. What a rare person and what a blessing, to deal with him! He starts, with a soft voice, to welcome you and encourage you to come forward with your questions and requests. He has the gift of listening to you and to sympathize with your pain. If there is something in his power to do, he does it efficiently and expediently, without making you feel that you are obtaining more than your due.

My humble voice bears no other force than to acknowledge the merit of an exceptional and outstanding civil servant who performs beyond the call of duty. Through you, I would like to let him know how deeply grateful I am for all his assistance and that I encourage him to continue with the same spirit of kindness, ethics and efficiency. I wish him great success in his career.