

Full Court Press

Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

Open To All, Trusted By All, Justice For All

March 2011

Volume XXVII Number 1

INVESTITURE OF JUDGE MARIBETH RAFFINAN

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

On January 7, 2011, the Superior Court hosted the investiture of Associate Judge Maribeth Raffinan in the atrium of the Moultrie Courthouse. To celebrate the occasion, Judge Raffinan was joined by an audience of her friends, family, and former colleagues, and was sworn in by Judge Todd Edelman, who had his own investiture ceremony in October 2010. Judge Edelman may be one of Judge Raffinan's new colleagues, but he is one of her oldest

as well, as both had distinguished careers as defense attorneys at the District of Columbia Public Defender Service (PDS) prior to joining the bench.

"When I supervised Maribeth at PDS, I was struck by how well she was able to be a staunch advocate for her clients while also maintaining the respect of judges, opposing counsel, and everyone else in the system," Judge Edelman said. "She was the most generous of colleagues, and I know that she will make significant contributions to the work of the Court."

Judge Raffinan was nominated to the Superior Court bench by President Barack Obama on July 28, 2010,

and confirmed by the Senate on September 30, 2010. As a defense attorney, Judge Raffinan represented impoverished clients charged with criminal offenses and supervised junior attorneys in criminal trial matters. "PDS has taught me so much about hard work, commitment to public service and re-



Judge Maribeth Raffinan is joined by her husband Efreem Levy (far right), and the rest of her family at her investiture ceremony.

Photo by Tom Feeney, Jr.

spect for every human being," Judge Raffinan said at her Senate hearing. Judge Raffinan's career also found her in the Moultrie Courthouse often, and much of her experience can be attributed to the lessons learned inside the courtrooms of the Superior Court.

Judge Raffinan was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and was raised there and in Clearwater, Florida. She graduated

from Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, and moved to the District of Columbia to attend law school at The Columbus School of Law of the Catholic University of America. During law school, she had several law-related internships, including the District of Columbia Bar's Family Representation Task Force, the District of Columbia Office of Corporation Counsel's Intra-Family Offense Unit, and at the Superior Court.

It was this early experience that instilled in Judge Raffinan the desire to represent the District's neediest citizens. "I was fortunate to have the opportunity to learn about the law and about legal practice in a city and community where there is such an abundance of opportunity to use legal training and skills to help people," Judge Raffinan said at her Senate confirmation hearing.

Judge Raffinan's successes can be traced back to the courage of her parents, who left their families in the Philippines in 1967 to relocate to Ohio. Today, Judge Raffinan honors her rich heritage and the opportunity her parents afforded her. She is an active member of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association (APABA) and the Philippine American Bar Association (PABA).

Judge Raffinan said she hopes to carry with her to the bench the values she has learned from her family and her work at PDS about being just and fair, and treating every human being with dignity. Clearly she will be a valuable addition to the Superior Court family.

Included in this issue:

- 2 Fathering Court Graduation
- 3 Working on Wellness
- 3 Walk To Win A Wii
- 4 Chief Judge King Portrait Unveiling
- 4 Paternity and Support Branch
- 5 Escape On The Pearl
- 6 Adoption Day
- 7 Multi-Door Opens Satellite Office
- 8 "The Misdemeanor Man"
- 9 Ward 8 Town Hall Meeting
- 10-12 Rave Reviews

FATHERING COURT PROGRAM HOSTS ITS THIRD GRADUATION

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

On January 28, 2011, the Fathering Court Program hosted its third graduation ceremony in the Jurors Lounge, celebrating eight fathers and their successful completion of the re-entry program. The Fathering Court was launched in 2007, and has now graduated 15 men, with another 34 currently participating in the program. This year's proud graduates were: Anthony Best, Carlos Brown, Larry Simmons, Anthony Williams, Christian Carter, Reginald Tyson, Kevin Ross, and Dwell Jordan. All received certificates for completing the year-long program.

Fathering Court is an innovative program that helps fathers returning from periods of incarceration reconnect with their children. It combines needs-assessment, skill development opportunities, case management, peer support, and the completion of a mandatory curriculum. It also puts non-custodial parents in contact with community resources geared towards employment. Other services include housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, mediation services, and referrals for legal assistance. All of these services combine to provide fathers returning from prison with the ability to meet their financial and emotional needs.

The program was developed in response to a finding that found one in four incarcerated D.C. men owe court-ordered child support. The men of the 2011 class of Fathering Court are no longer in that number. Each graduate is now employed, paying child support and serving as a role model for his children, as well as other men in his community. Most importantly, all have become active parents in their children's lives.

Judge Milton Lee, who presides over the Fathering Court Program, and Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield opened the ceremony with remarks that touched on the rising success of the program and its



Graduate Dwell Jordan celebrates his accomplishment alongside Fathering Court Presiding Judge Milton Lee (right).
Photo by Tom Feeney, Jr.

long-term impact on the men, their children and our community. Ron Scott, the Fathering Court Program Manager, followed by acknowledging some of the early struggles that the graduates faced but persevered through, as well as expressing his appreciation of the graduates' personal growth. Then the graduates' mentors and case managers received declarations of appreciation for their hard work, and each made brief remarks outlining the challenges, failures, and more importantly, suc-

cesses their mentee graduate had experienced. Ultimately all were successful in the program, on the job, and as fathers.

Speaker LeCount Holmes, Jr. inspired all in attendance with his remarks, which included a recollection from his early childhood. Holmes reminisced about a time when he first learned how to swim. Afraid of the potential dangers of swimming, he needed the guiding hand of his father to propel him forward and to reassure him of safety. Holmes' father provided that support, and it remained a vivid memory that stands as a foundation for the successes of the speaker's life today.

The program concluded with the presentation of certificates to the graduates. Each graduate was introduced and cheered by the crowd as he came forward to accept his certificate. Family Court Presiding Judge Zoe Bush closed the ceremony by telling the graduates and audience members that there is nothing more important than parenting a child, and reminded them that while the challenges don't get fewer as children grow older, the joy remains. It was clear from graduates' faces that they have experienced that joy and it is worth facing all the challenges that they encountered during the program to succeed as fathers.



The D.C. Courts would like to extend a special thank you to the volunteers of the "2011 Customer Service Greeter's Program."

Everyday these employees have braved the winter weather in an effort to preserve our vision "Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All."

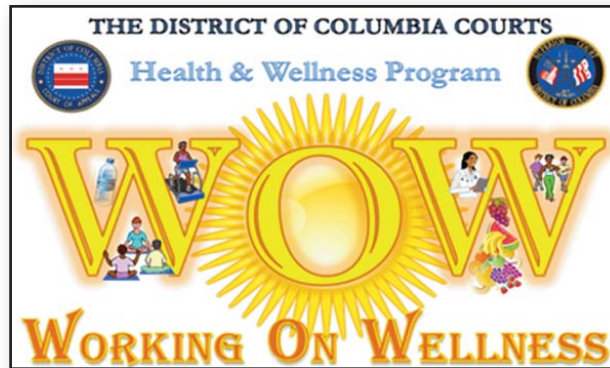
HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM: WORKING ON WELLNESS

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

The District of Columbia Courts are proud to launch the Working on Wellness-(WOW) program, an initiative dedicated to providing comprehensive programs and resources to help improve the overall health of court employees. The program will not only improve the physical wellness of the program's participants, but will instill in employees a "take charge" approach to making life-style decisions that improve health and quality of life. The program does not focus solely on physical health, but rather encompasses a range of factors that contribute to one's overall health. This includes the balance between work and life, proper nutrition, stress management, as well as physical health.

The program held its kick-off on January 21st with a seminar hosted by Rick Bradley, author of *Quick Fit- the 15 Minute No Sweat Workout*. The kick-off tutorial provided the participating employees with ways to fit a workout into their busy work-day schedules, as well as providing information pertaining to portion control and a balanced diet. On February 18th and 25th, the Health and Wellness Committee offered free biometric screenings courtesy of Kaiser Permanente. Participants went through a series of a health tests, and received their body mass index, glucose, cholesterol,

and blood pressure numbers right on site. The screenings gave participating employees great insight on their overall health, and provided a starting point for healthy change. Employees were also able to create a personal profile using the "Fitness Journal" to track their biometrics and overall health and fitness activities.



The Health and Wellness Initiative was launched in the summer of 2010, spearheaded by Willard Stephens and Darlene Ellis, along with nine dedicated employees from various divisions within the D.C. Courts. After comprehensive research and preparation, the Health and Wellness

Committee was formed, and a long-term Health and Wellness Program was implemented. Based on employee feedback from the court-wide Health and Wellness Survey in October 2010, WOW posted on the intranet a list of local fitness facilities where D.C. Courts' employees can receive discounted membership when Court identification is presented. In addition, they initiated the placement of vending machines containing healthy snacks in the Historic Courthouse, Moultrie Courthouse and the Gallery Place office space. The WOW program owes all its early success to the hard work and dedication of the committee members; we will all benefit from their efforts.

WALK TO WIN A WII: PLAYING FOR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

By Cheryl Thomas, JAA to Magistrate Judges Brenneman, Doyle and Melendez

Medically, the benefits of walking are undisputed. Walking can reduce the risk of heart disease and improve heart function and muscle tone, as well as lower blood pressure, cholesterol, risk of stroke, and risk of injury.

Magistrate Judge Brenneman doesn't focus solely on how to get through her calendar and get home to exercise. She focuses on spreading the fitness bug to people who appear on her Mental Habilitation Calendar as well. Encouraged by First Lady Michelle Obama's program to get up and move, and to celebrate Disability Awareness Month, on October 28, 2010, Magistrate Judge Brenneman held the drawing for two winners out of 55 contestants in the first "Walk to Win a Wii" contest. She created this win-win strategy by



Magistrate Judge Brenneman embraces one of the winners of the "Walk to Win a Wii" contest.

offering a contest to win a Nintendo Wii game as first prize and another one for effort. The prizes were donated by attorney John Connelly and teacher Brian Lake.

The contest was advertised by a mass mailing to the all of the respondents who appear before Judge Brenneman for their annual reviews of commitment. From June 1 through August 31, entrants were challenged to walk 10,000 steps a day for seven days in a row. The two winners were

Ralph Matthews and James Copeland.

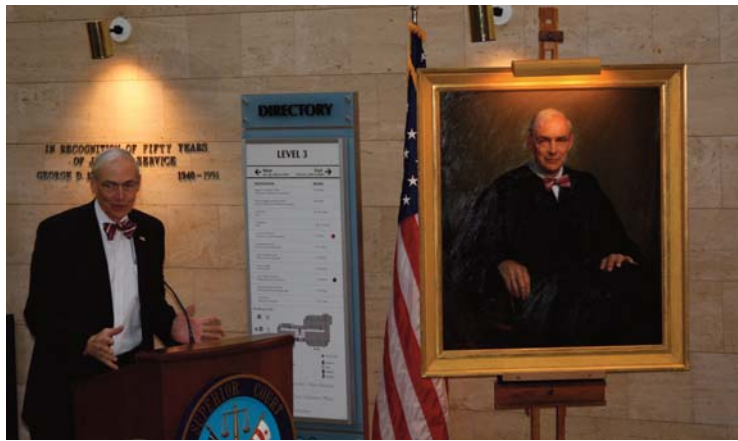
From Magistrate Judge Brenneman's perspective, "it was a chance to interact with the people who appear before me in a more relaxed setting similar to Special Olympics. It was an honor for me to be a part of this special event."

PORTRAIT PRESENTATION FOR CHIEF JUDGE RUFUS KING, III

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

On January 20, 2011, the third floor atrium of the Moultrie Courthouse was packed for the unveiling of a portrait of former Chief Judge Rufus G. King, III. The portrait of Judge King, who served as the Chief Judge of the Superior Court from 2000 to 2008, was a spot-on portrayal. Peter Egeli created the work of art in his studio located in Drayden, Maryland, and flawlessly captured King's facial expression, physical stature, mannerisms and, of course, his renowned bow tie.

Chief Judge Lee Satterfield opened the ceremony by welcoming all in attendance, and thanking those for coming to honor his predecessor. Then the master of the ceremonies, and Judge King's first law clerk, Jonathan Dana, introduced the guest speakers. Two of Judge King's former law clerks, Michael Lyles and Lawrence Eiser, made remarks honoring their former boss. The Honorable William Pryor, who served as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals from 1984 to 1988, and for whom Judge King once clerked, also honored Judge



Former Chief Judge Rufus King, III thanks members of the audience for attending the unveiling of his portrait. Photo by Tom Feeney, Jr.

King with kind words that reminisced on their careers and their friendship. Nearly all of Judge King's former law clerks attended the ceremony, dating as far back as 1984. Also in attendance were Judge King's long-time J.A.A., Donna Blassic, and Judge King's wife, Barbara Stevens.

Before the ceremony concluded, Judge King thanked the audience and gave particular thanks to those who helped raise and donate

funds for the portrait. He also thanked all of his former clerks and staff members who attended the ceremony for coming back to honor him. As he finished his brief speech, Judge King quipped that perhaps everyone should admire his portrait at another time, and instead encouraged people to attend the reception down the hallway.

The Chief Judge Portrait Fund Committee, which raised the funds for the portrait, included Michael Lyles, Larry Eiser, Edward O'Connell, Jonathan Dana, Rainey Brandt, Donna Blassic, and Duane Delaney. The portrait now hangs in Courtroom 315 in the Moultrie Courthouse.

PATERNITY AND SUPPORT BRANCH HOLDS EMPLOYEE TRAINING

By: Delores T. Henderson, Section Supervisor

On December 3, 2010, the Family Court's Paternity and Support Branch hosted its third annual training for employees. The theme for the conference, "Feet on the Ground, Head in the Clouds," was suggested by Branch Chief Sherry Coppet. Sherry chose this theme to underscore to employees the importance of sharing ideas and suggestions while staying focused and committed to divisional goals. Above all, employees were encouraged to rise above adversity.

Speakers at the training included Wanda Starke and Zabrina Dempson from the Clerk of the Court's Office, Willard Stephens (Executive Office), and Lou Shack (Center for Education and Training). The speakers were selected because of their ability to share insight into the organizational structure at the D. C. Courts and stress the importance of working collaboratively to further the Courts' mission. As senior court managers, the speakers shared their experiences about facing and overcoming challenges. They also provided clear and practical advice to staff in areas of career advancement within the D.C. Courts.

The training was a huge success. The Paternity and Support Branch would like to thank the speakers for contributing to the knowledge and development of branch employees, and thank Dianne King, Family Court Operations Division Director, for supporting and encouraging the branch to engage in this important yearly training event for staff. Most importantly, thanks to the staff of the Paternity & Support Branch for their active participation.



From Left to Right: (Front Row) Mark Stevens, Cynthia Jacobs, Natoshia Mossen, Candice Frink, William Sanchez, (Back Row) Carl Lucas, Shirley Cureton, Lorraine Anderson, Yvette Howe, Brenda Little, Jaime Stratton, Michelle Donaldson, Linda Eborn, and Terrence Smith. Other Participants: Carolyn Cosby and Elizabeth Trice.

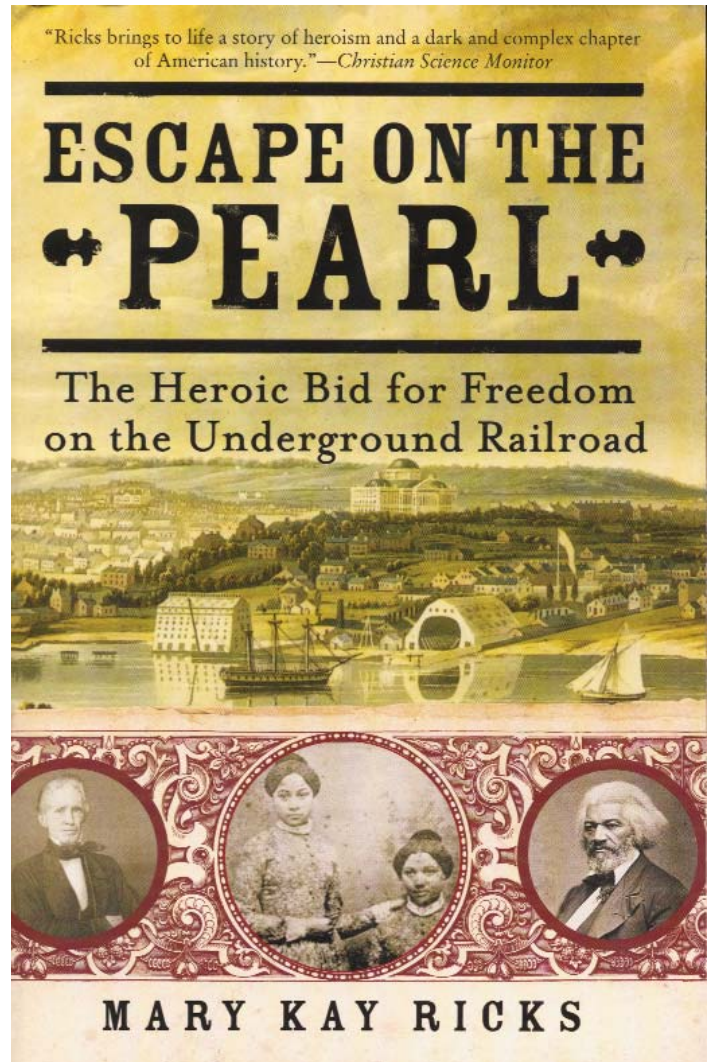
A HISTORIC DISCUSSION OF BLACK HISTORY AT THE HISTORIC COURTHOUSE

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

On January 23, 2011, the D.C. Court of Appeals was proud to host this year's Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ) mid-year meeting at the Historic Courthouse, providing the perfect forum for a discussion with Mary Kay Ricks, author of *Escape on the Pearl*. The Judicial Family Institute sponsored the law and literature session, which kicked off the four-day CCJ conference, highlighting the role of the Historic Courthouse in the slave escape attempt. Ricks' well-regarded novel details the failed attempt of 77 slaves to escape in 1848 by sailing down the Potomac River on a ship called the Pearl.

In *Escape on the Pearl*, Ricks weaves the historic facts and settings of slavery, politics, and the abolitionist movement into the fabric of her story that focuses on the slaves who dared to attempt to escape. One of the protagonists was Daniel Drayton, a pioneering abolitionist and one of the lead orchestrators of the slave escape. Along with Edward Sayres, pilot of the Pearl, Drayton set sail along the Chesapeake Bay from Washington, D.C. on April 15, 1848. But due to difficult sailing conditions, most notably a lack of wind, the slave owners eventually foiled the escape and captured those on the ship.

After the Pearl was halted, Drayton and Sayres were apprehended and brought to trial at the Historic Courthouse. Phillip Barton Key, the prosecutor, Francis Scott Key's son, charged the two men with numerous counts of larceny and illegal transportation of slaves. These Historic Courthouse trials are key events in the



story of the heroic quest for freedom on the Underground Railroad.

"The D.C. Courts are proud to have hosted this discussion which provided insight into the history of the Historic Courthouse. When we completed the renovation project of this 190-year-old structure, we not only envisioned it for use by the D.C. Courts of Appeals, but we wanted the building restored to its original, central role in our community. It is gratifying to see the courthouse used in this public capacity," said D.C. Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric T. Washington.

In her novel, Ricks spotlights the trials of the captains, and the underlying politics that shaped the fate of the key players in the story. Her frequent use of the Historic Courthouse in the novel offers a unique perspective and insight into the storylines of our nation and its capital 160 years ago, as well as providing a new appreciation for the building that now houses the District's highest court.



Original front of Historic Courthouse at time of trial.

ADOPTION DAY 2010

By Tom Feeney Jr, Communications Assistant, Executive Office

On November 20, 2010, 22 children became proud members of new families at the 24th annual Adoption Day ceremony. Hosted in the atrium of the Moultrie Courthouse, Adoption Day 2010 saw the establishment of 18 families, as children from ages 2 to 17 strolled across the stage to receive their adoption decrees which their judge had just signed.

The ceremony began with a rendition of the National Anthem by the Leslie Kids of Bowie, Maryland. Family Court Presiding Judge William Jackson kicked off the celebration by welcoming those in attendance and congratulating the new families. Marion Swingler of the Criminal Division then sang a musical selection that set a celebratory tone for the day. Six-year-old vocalist Leyia Jeffers also wowed the crowd with her talent.

Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield followed with his remarks, speaking about the joy of adoption and thanking the members of the audience for attending. An adoptive parent himself, Chief Judge Satterfield noted that at least 12 other D.C. Court judges are adoptive parents as well. Speaking on behalf of the adoptive parent judges, Chief Judge Satterfield said, "We are all proud to be here today in both capacities: in our roles at the Court and our roles as adoptive fathers and mothers." Roque Gerald, Director of the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency, and Margaret Meiers, Senior Director of the Freddie Mac Foundation, then followed with their remarks.



The talented six-year-old Leyia Jeffers stuns the crowd with her vocal talents.

Guest speaker Debra Lee, Chairman and CEO of BET Networks, inspired those in attendance with her graceful words. She detailed her career history and implored young people to believe in themselves and stay focused. She also discussed how the values and experiences of BET network's leadership dictate what type of programming they deliver.

After the keynote came the other highlight of the program, as each child was introduced by Barbara Harrison—co-anchor for WRC-TV Channel 4 and creator of the Wednesday's Child news segment. As they were introduced, the children and their families came forward individually and the judges signed the decrees making the adoptions final and official.

The ceremony ended with remarks from Judge Juliet McKenna, who handles the adoption calendar and is herself an adoptive parent. Judge McKenna honored the newly-created families, and encouraged the community to consider adopting or fostering a child. She then expressed her appreciation to the members of the Adoption Day Committee for all their work over the past six months that resulted in such a successful ceremony.

In 2010, 189 adoptions were finalized in the District. Nonetheless, CFSA is seeking adoptive parents for 160 more children in foster care. If you would like information on adoption or if you would like to become an adoptive or foster parent, please call the CFSA adoption hotline at **(202) 671-LOVE**.



Zactavia Jeannette and her sister Zhaniah Renee.

Photo by Tom Feeney, Jr.

ADOPTION DAY (Cont.)



Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, an adoptive parent himself, welcomes the crowd and speaks about the importance of adoption.



John C, now a proud adoptive parent, holds his daughter Gabrielle Grace Phillips Logan.



Debra Lee, CEO of BET Networks, offers words of inspiration for the youth in attendance by reminding them to remain self-confident in the face of adversity.



MULTI-DOOR OPENS A SATELLITE OFFICE AT CARECEN MEETING UNMET MEDIATION NEEDS IN THE LATINO COMMUNITY

By Darrell Hale, Branch Chief, Family and Community Branch

The Community Information and Referral Program (CIRP) of the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division is partnering with the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) to provide phone conciliation and information and referral services in the Latino community. CARECEN is a community-based organization, located at 1460 Columbia Rd, NW, that seeks to foster the comprehensive development of the Latino community and helps limited English speakers navigate the complex world of government agencies. CIRP helps people resolve their disputes before they escalate or become a court case.

The inspiration for this collaboration with CARECEN is Multi-Door's commitment to increase access to alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in underserved areas of the District. Despite the growth of the District's Latino community, Latinos continue to be less likely to use CIRP's services when compared to other minority groups. When Kitty Huggins, Community Program Manager, discussed this issue with representatives from CARECEN, she discovered that many

Latinos are apprehensive about coming to court to seek assistance.

In true mediator fashion, Kitty sought a solution that was sensitive to the concerns of the Latino community and consistent with Multi-Door's desire to increase access to ADR services for Latino families. For Kitty, the solution was obvious. Bring the service to the Latino community instead of having the Latino community come to Multi-Door. With that epiphany, the CIRP satellite office at CARECEN was conceived.

To make this vision a reality, CARECEN and the Court signed a Memorandum of Understanding that enables Multi-Door to have a satellite office within CARECEN offices. Under the MOU, Multi-Door has a bilingual Dispute Resolution Specialist on-site on the second Tuesday of every month from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Services are initially limited to assisting clients with unpaid wages, other monies owed, consumer and neighbor disputes, and housing matters relating to security deposits and repairs.

Multi-Door, continued on Page 8.

THE MISDEMEANOR MAN

By Senior Judge Bruce S. Mencher

In the early 1970's, my law firm, along with many others, answered the call from the Superior Court of the District of Columbia to provide counsel for indigent defendants. Thus, it was that I was appointed to represent a man charged with the crime of Armed Robbery along with five co-defendants.

I first met my client who I will call Daniel Travis (not his real name) in the cell block of the court. After introductions, he assured me he had a good defense to the charge--- he only committed misdemeanors; he had never committed a felony, and never would.

My mind clouded over and then I could see clearly --- my opening statement to the jury: "Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege today to represent a client, Daniel Travis, who the evidence will show is not guilty of the crime of Armed Robbery as he is , in the vernacular, "A Misdemeanor Man!"

I could also foresee my closing argument to the jury: "Ladies and Gentlemen, let this Misdemeanor Man return home without a felony blemish on the family escutcheon."

Over the next several months, I visited the scene of the alleged crime, interviewed witnesses, met with counsel for the five co-defendants, learned some ASL signs and some mime as one witness was deaf and signed, mimed and read lips, received discovery from the United States and really got to know my client, etc. In time, much to my surprise, I became convinced of his total innocence.

Plea negotiations commenced --- the Government would accept a plea to Robbery and drop the

Armed Robbery charge. Of course, I confidently rejected such an offer for, after all, my client was "A Misdemeanor Man." Later the Government offered Assault with Intent to Commit Robbery then Attempted Robbery. Again, we turned these offers down.

Finally on the morning of the trial, an offer to Simple Assault was tendered --- a Misdemeanor! We turned the offer down to the shock of the Assistant United States Attorney. "I thought you said your client was a Misdemeanor Man," he said. I replied "He is, but not THAT misdemeanor!" He will not be entering a plea to anything as he is not guilty --- this time." The somewhat upset and frustrated prosecutor told me he had never met a defendant and counsel like the two of us.

As the jury panel was being assembled, the prosecutor advised he was dismissing the case against my client in its entirety. He did. The case then proceeded to trial against the five remaining co-defendants who were all convicted of some crime.

My client was ecstatic as was his family. They asked me to become "the Travis family lawyer" and handle all of their cases. (Rumpole of the Bailey representing the Timson Clan flashed before my mind's eye.) I told the family I would not be able to represent them. Indeed, having taken this case pro bono, I just didn't have that much free time.

I wished them good luck and told Mr. Travis I would always remember him and the rare privilege it had been for me to represent a true (or should I have said truthful) Misdemeanor Man!

Multi-Door, continued from Page 7.

Debora Pecorelli, a native of Argentina, has joined the Multi-Door staff to serve as the first bilingual dispute resolution specialist working in the Latino community. Before moving to the United States, Debora was an educator specializing in social sciences and Spanish language studies. She spent the last 10 years of her career as a principal in elementary and secondary schools. When Debora is not at the satellite office, she will be available to Spanish-speaking ADR clients at the courthouse.

Multi-Door's goal is to offer the Latino community the same ADR options as other residents of the District by increasing awareness, convenience and accessibility to a dedicated ADR professional. The Multi-Door/CARECEN partnership achieves that goal by bringing ADR to the heart of Adams Morgan.



Debora Pecorelli will be key in offering the District's Latino community alternative dispute resolution options.

TOWN HALL MEETING HELD IN WARD 8

By Michael Brown, Community Court Case Manager

On Tuesday November 16, 2010, the D.C. Superior Court, Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD) Seventh District, MPD Seventh District Citizens Advisory Council, and the Anacostia Coordinating Council hosted a Town Hall Meeting at Matthews Memorial Baptist Church in Southeast Washington, D.C.

The theme of the Town Hall Meeting was "Making Positive Changes" and the purpose of the event was to give Ward 8 residents an opportunity to find out what their government and some non-profit organizations are doing to prevent crime in their communities, provide services, and/or enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods. In addition, community members were given the opportunity to ask questions, express their views on different issues relating to crime, criminal justice and other community concerns.

The welcome and opening remarks were extended by Lendia Johnson, Community Outreach Coordinator, MPD Seventh District, and Michael Francis, Community Court Coordinator. James Bunn, President of MPD's Seventh District Citizens Advisory Council introduced the evening's facilitator, Phillip Pannell, Executive Director, Anacostia Coordinating Council. The invocation was delivered by Minister Greg Williams of St. John CME Church. Bishop Matthew Hudson extended a warm welcome to the attendees and expressed his joy over hosting this event at his church. Further remarks were made by Police Chief Cathy Lanier and Mark Timberlake, Reentry Outreach Specialist, as well as Chris Varner and Jermaine Hailes, Poets in Residence with the Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop.

Mr. Pannell moderated a panel that included Judge Robert Morin, Deputy Presiding Judge, Criminal Division; Judge Robert Rigsby, who presides over the East of the River Community Court; Ward 8 Councilmember Marion Barry; Commander Joel Maupin, MPD Seventh District; Cliff Keenan, Deputy Director, Pretrial Services Agency; Dionne Reeder, Director of Community Engagement, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative; and Rev. Donald Isaac, Executive Director, East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership.



Community Court Coordinator Michael Francis (second from left) engages attendees of the town hall meeting.

Representing the Superior Court, Judge Morin expressed his appreciation to everyone who organized the meeting and then introduced Judge Melvin Wright, Deputy Presiding Judge of the Civil Division; Judge Zoe Bush, Deputy Presiding Judge of the Family Court; and Terri Odom, Director of the Family Court Social Services Division. Judge Morin

informed the audience that there are 25,000-30,000 criminal cases filed annually in DC Superior Court. He emphasized how the Criminal Division has several special problem-solving courts. These courts include the DC Misdemeanor and Traffic Community Court, East of the River Community Court, Mental Health Diversion Court, Drug Court and the Prostitution Calendar. All of these specialty courts focus on holding defendants accountable, providing treatment and social services, providing diversion opportunities, helping defendants make lifestyle changes and curtail criminal behavior. Judge Morin stressed how he and the other court officials were at the Town Hall meeting to listen and learn from the community, and that they appreciated all the residents who came to the event to share their concerns and provide input.

Judge Rigsby said he felt privileged to preside over the East of the River Community Court (ERCC). He described how the ERCC is dedicated to addressing misdemeanor crimes that occur east of the Anacostia River, to assisting the community. In addition to holding individuals accountable for their decisions and actions, the ERCC tries to help people get the social services they may need. Judge Rigsby invited attendees to come to Courtroom 221 anytime and observe how the ERCC operates.

Judge Zoe Bush also fielded a question regarding truancy. She informed the audience that the D.C. Public Schools monitor the attendance and report excessive nonattendance and truancy to the Family Court Social Services Division, and that the Family Court has a truancy calendar for children and adults with children who are not attending school. There is a holistic approach utilized to determine what challenges families are facing that interfere with the educational process.

Kabe Reviews



Ms. Taylor-Godwin:

I am writing this email to comment on your **Civil Division** "file room" clerk, **Sasha Vance**. My firm mostly represents national automobile finance companies in a large number of cases in the Superior Court. Unfortunately, a number of judgments obtained on behalf of my clients are not satisfied and therefore renewed after 12 years. Obtaining these older files from storage to file garnishments has proven to be difficult in the past, creating a logjam of garnishments in my office. I addressed this situation with Ms. Vance and completed a new request for the individual old files needed at the court for various filings. In my estimation, I submitted 60-80 old file requests to Ms. Vance. I recognized this was a large number of requests to be submitted at one time and told Ms. Vance to take her time and I would check back periodically to see if any of the files were available. Ms. Vance was very courteous and polite in accepting my large number of old file requests and apparently went to work right away as most of the old files were at the court within a few weeks allowing me to submit my garnishments to the judgment office for processing (and in turn keep my clients happy that I am properly working their accounts). Ms. Vance personally called me to advise when files were available. I have regularly practiced in the Superior Court for approximately 8 years and in my opinion the manner in which Ms. Vance handled my numerous file requests and her follow up to ensure the files were properly requested and received from storage goes above and beyond what I have experienced in the past. I wanted you to be aware of this great customer service. Ms. Vance is an asset to the Superior Court.

Photos by Tom Feeney, Jr.

From: Wynne, Debra Louise
Sent: December 22, 2010

Mr. **[Leo] Pomier**,
Multi-Door Division

As I told you last Thursday when I was there: you are doing a great job & I much appreciate your hard work & dedication. I truly appreciate that you are always so polite & helpful.



Sent: December 02, 2010
To: WebMaster
Subject: thank you

Hello,

I served **jury duty** for the first time yesterday - December 1st - at the Moultrie Courthouse - and I just wanted to write a quick note to say how **impressed I was with the staff, facilities, and process**. My number was never called, so maybe my experience would have been different if I had actually had to "serve", but in my 15 years or so of dealing with the District's government offices I have never been so pleasantly surprised. The building is clean, updated (the free WiFi was amazing), comfortable - even the bathrooms were nice. While professional, the jury staff (and even the security guards) had an unbelievable sense of humor that kept the hundred or so people, that would have otherwise been aggravated to be "wasting their time", a reason to smile and relax.

My thanks and appreciation to a government office that is clearly spending taxpayer dollars to hire the right people and create a comfortable environment for its constituents.

I am writing today to extend my compliments to the **staff of the Landlord and Tenant Court** of the Superior Court of the District. These employees were extremely helpful, knowledgeable and patient as I experienced my first, and hopefully last, eviction process as a landlord in Washington, DC.

I believe I visited the office weekly for at least a year as I learned my way through the legal process of an eviction. During each and every visit I interacted with an employee who willingly gave time, accurate information and clear explanations to me. The entire process is generally an unpleasant one, made much more tolerable due to the professionalism of these employees. Congratulations for having a staff that represent your office well.

*Superior Court of the District of Columbia
Civil Division*

*Small Claims and Conciliation Branch
Bldg. B, 510 4th Street, N.W., RM - 120
Washington, D.C. 20001*

Deputy Clerk:

*This letter is to request cancellation of the Claim filed September 28, 2010:
The plaintiff and defendant have reached a satisfactory agreement.
I was greatly impressed with the professionalism, kindness and
assistance received in the office.*

*Sincere thanks to the Deputy Clerk and Cashier for the very kind
assistance.*

From: Bonnie Andrews
Sent: November 02, 2010
To: Laura Banks Reed
Crime Victims Compensation Program

Hi Ms. Reed,

I just wanted to send a special "Thank You" to **Donald Younger** for assisting Teicia Guy and her elderly mother. They called me this morning and were so excited about the outcome of their case. Donald did an outstanding job with this family and provided them with the respect and professionalism they truly deserved.



From: Vaughan, Veronica A. (USADC)
Sent: Monday, January 10, 2011
To: Laura Banks Reed, Director, Crime Victims Compensation Program
Subject: Recognition of Marlena Otlans' Invaluable Assistance

Laura,

I am writing to inform you of **Marlena Otlans'** invaluable assistance in addressing a victim's crisis, after normal business hours, on December 30, 2010. During the late afternoon of December 30, 2010, I received a return call from a colleague's victim, who was in desperate need of emergency lodging. The victim's recovery from injuries that he sustained as a result of an assault had prevented him from meeting with his assigned USAO Advocate and reporting to the Crime Victims Compensation Program, earlier in the week, to apply for assistance. Due to his medical needs, the victim was being cared for by his girlfriend, who was residing with him at the time of the crime. Reportedly, family and friend resources had been exhausted. The rooming house that they previously resided in was not an option because it was the scene of the crime and the residence of the defendant. My efforts in contacting other agencies for assistance yielded negative results and I was relieved to make contact with Marlena. It is important to note that Marlena was still in the office after normal business hours. She willingly sacrificed leaving her office in a timely manner to meet with people who were waiting for her in preparation for a trip out of the county. She afforded me enough time to obtain a copy of the police report and the pertinent information needed to successfully complete the referral form. Upon receipt of the referral, Marlena made arrangements for the victim and his caretaker to obtain emergency lodging and scheduled for them to report to **Crime Victims Compensation Program** on January 3, 2011. Due to Marlena's willingness to assist, despite the potential inconvenience it created for her, the victim was able to receive secure and safe lodging at the start of a holiday period where many offices would not reopen until Monday, January 3, 2011. The victim and his girlfriend contacted me later that night to express their gratitude for the assistance they received.

I must also note that there have been instances when I have been working late and successfully contacted Marlena in her office, after 5:00 p.m., to follow-up on services for victims on my caseload.

In closing, the services provided by your office are essential to the recovery and healing of crime victims. It is a pleasure to work jointly with you and members of your dedicated staff such as Marlena in successfully assisting victims of crime in the District of Columbia.



Kabe Reviews, cont.

Dear Mr. Delaney,

I am writing you this letter about **Monica Slade, of the Crime Victims Compensation Program**, she is the most kind and gracious person I have ever met. I have known a lot of people in my life, but she takes the cake. When I came to your office the first time my life was turned around backward and I was so afraid. After talking to Ms. Slade, she turned my life around, after all the pain and suffering I was going through. She showed me some one cared and showed me respect Whenever I called her or come to her office she was always there for me, no matter how many phone calls she had or how many people she had to see. I was afraid and frightened, she always had some encouraging words to make me feel better. I have never seen a person work so hard. She have helped me in so many ways, when I was afraid of [name redacted] and did not know what to do, she would always give me some good advice. Mr. Delaney, the last time I was in her office I was so afraid, she told me everything would be alright, she told me if I need someone to talk to she will be there for me and if I did not have any place to stay, she would make some arrangements to get someplace for me. After going through all this with me, she was on the phone trying to help someone else by her self, These are the kind of people that someone should lend a helping hand to.



Roy S. Wynn, Jr.
October 12, 2010

Dear Mr. Wynn:

I would like to commend a member of the DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT SYSTEM, Ms. **Natalie Byrd, Courtroom Clerk**, for outstanding customer service. For some time, my wife and I WORKED with THE District's court system TO secure corrected birth certificate information. Throughout our contact with the Superior Court, Ms. Byrd provided guidance and instruction. She was professional and courteous; and was most patient in assisting us with needed direction. Her helpfulness and POSITIVE ATTITUDE made a big difference, and was much appreciated. The Superior Court is very fortunate to have such an outstanding public official representing the DC court system, and district government employees.

Please extend our sincere appreciation to Ms. Byrd for her outstanding performance and customer service. Efforts such as those exhibited by Ms. Byrd are exemplary. I do hope the District COURT SYSTEM has a means to recognize its outstanding employees.



From: Bailey-Jones, Suzanne M.
To: Brown, Lawrence
Subject: Kudos to Lisette Bonilla

Mr. Brown:

I am writing to commend a staff person in the **Civil Division** whose actions during the recent ice storm went above and beyond the realm of her normal responsibilities as a courtroom clerk.

As court operations began at 10:00 on Tuesday morning due to inclement weather conditions, all Court business was off to a late start. Shortly after 10:00, Judge Zeldon, whose courtroom is located two blocks from the Moultrie Courthouse, requested a civil jury panel as the jury enrollment was beginning. The Jurors' Office, working with an unusually short staff, was in the process of checking-in a long line of jurors. To say that the office was busy at that point in time would be an understatement.

As the jury panel was being assembled and instructed to gather their belongings for a journey back out into the cold, Judge Zeldon's courtroom clerk, **Lisette Bonilla**, graciously offered to come over to the Moultrie Courthouse to escort the jury panel to her courtroom in Court Building A. In doing so, Ms. Bonilla allowed the Jurors' Office to continue the check-in process without interruption. As luck would have it, one of the jurors on the panel required the use of an assisted listening device. This accommodation is provided by the Central Recording Office for jurors who are hard-of-hearing. Ms. Bonilla waited for the technician from Central Recording to bring the listening equipment to the Jurors' Office; only then did she proceed back to her courtroom on 5th Street with jurors and listening device in hand. Ms. Bonilla saved both the Jurors' Office and the Central Recording Office an incredible amount of time in terms of not having to travel to her courtroom. She also provided a valuable service to her jurors by shepherding them safely to their destination.

On behalf of the Jurors' Office, kudos, and thank you for a job well-done, Ms. Bonilla!

With regards-
Sue Bailey-Jones, Jurors' Office

