

# Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

August 2014

## HEAR, HEAR TO HEROES AMONG US

By Helena Moore

**Hero.** A simple four-letter word that is powerful enough to evoke strong emotions or images of someone who exemplifies courage, bravery and self-sacrifice. Whether they emerge on a hometown or homeland level, they are always a comforting presence during a time of crisis. On the afternoon of June 6, 2014, five unsuspected heroes emerged from the throngs of people in front of the Moultrie Courthouse who witnessed a horrific accident scene involving a DC Courts employee.

The victim was critically injured after being struck by a dump truck in the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> and Indiana Ave – directly in front of the courthouse. It was at best a terrifying

and ghastly scene, especially to those closest to the impact zone. Among the bystanders were four United States Deputy Marshals and a Deputy Clerk who, upon **H**earing the commotion and instantly evaluating the ensuing mayhem, did not panic.

They instantly relied on their collective experience and superb training to contain the crowd and offer critical life-saving first aid to the victim. **Deputy US Marshal (DUSM) Matt Barger, DUSM Mike Cifu, DUSM Andrew Kottke,**

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## Community Service Clean-Up Days: Community Service Program and DC Department of Public Works Special Operations Division

By Anntinette D. Williams

The Community Service Program (CSP) in the DC Superior Court's Criminal Division, in conjunction with the DC Department of Public Works (DPW), Special Operations Division coordinated two successful Community Service Clean-Up Days on May 31 and July 5, 2014. The Community Service Program has worked with the Department of Public Works, Special Operations Division over the last three years as a site for misdemeanor defendants to complete community service hours. Under the supervision



*Community Service Clean-Up Day*

of Nevelion Williams, DPW Special Operations Manager, the two clean-up days occurred at Marvin Gaye Park (formerly Watts Branch Park) located at Foote and Division Avenues, NE and at Oxon Run Park located at Mississippi and Southern Avenues, SE.

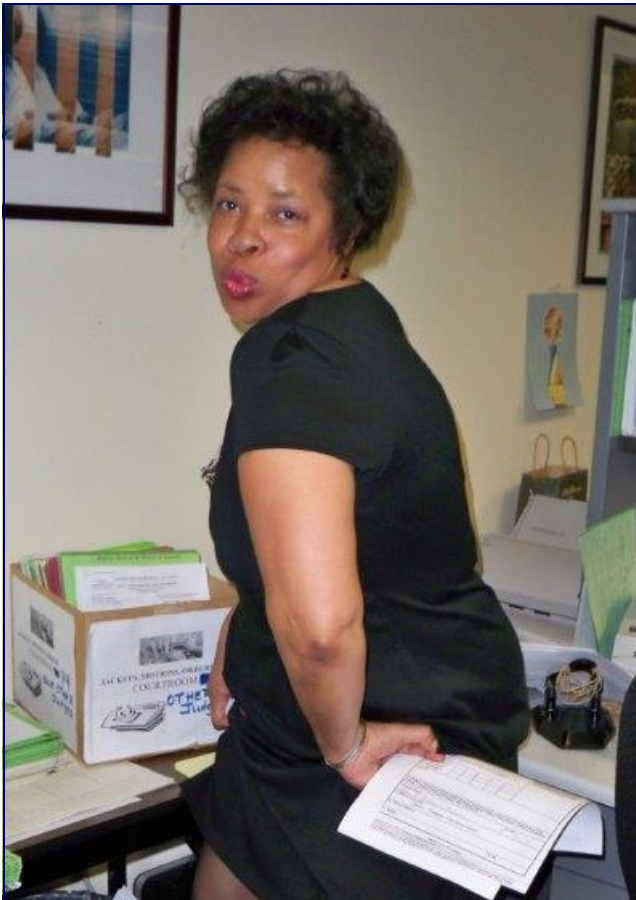
On Saturday, May 31, twenty-four community service volunteers from the Community Service Program and several DPW staff met at Marvin Gaye Park

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# Remembering Gale

By Raquel Trabal

Gale Aretta Gresham-Williams was called home on Sunday, May 25th, 2014. Three months have passed since Gale's sudden departure from cancer. We still think of her fondly and often as the dedicated, hard worker that she was, not only in our office but in all aspects of her life. Here we want, in some small way, to pay tribute to her memory and to the many years she was with the Court.



*Gale Aretta Gresham-Williams*

For the last 23 years, Gale worked for the DC Superior Court in the child support division and most recently, and the majority of her time with the court, for the Domestic Violence Unit as an Administrative Assistant. Gale could be found during any given lunchtime working on her class work for a master's program. She received a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and was working on her masters in Human Resources from the University of Maryland University College.

Gale loved all things plants. She was always spreading a part of her plants to different areas of the office, always in

the pursuit of making the office greener. For many years, Gale had one of the most challenging jobs in the court, receptionist in the DV Unit. Day in and day out she answered customer phone calls, questions, pleas for assistance, and complaints. She treated the victims, crying children, screaming and irate individuals all the same. She always did so with a smile and a lot of patience. Her computer had the phrase, "If impatient words are spoken to you, never reply in the same spirit."

Gale worked tirelessly to provide a better life for herself but most of all for her children and grandchildren. She leaves behind three daughters, LaRese, Latoya and Ivory Desirea and six grandchildren, Tyteanna, Niya, Tristen, Johnathan, Makenzie & Jeremiah. We at the DV Unit miss her and always remember her famous, "Dag, Nabbit" and her very familiar response to everything as, "Okaaaay."

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# Employee Evaluation and Performance Management

By Chelsea Brown, Executive Office Intern

Since coming on board with DC Courts in November of 2012, Performance and Employee Relations Manager Pamela Hunter has taken a critical look at the employee evaluation system. Pam and her dynamic team have developed a detailed plan to enhance the area of employee evaluation and performance management.



Supervisor-employee relationships are the focus of the plan for improved performance management. The foundation of a fair evaluation and effective management lies in the relationship between supervisor and employee. Pam strives to create an atmosphere of clear and open channels of communication in the workplace.

Training sessions for both supervisors and employees are one tool being implemented to improve this vital relationship. These training sessions assist supervisors with writing effective performance plans and provide help for dealing with employee performance issues. Pam welcomes ideas for new training sessions and also makes herself available to meet with employees and supervisors for one-on-one support to

address different needs and concerns as they arise.

In addition to training sessions, performance plans are another tool being used to improve communication and overall attitudes towards employee evaluation and performance management. Pam and her team are currently working with supervisors across the Courts to modify

plans to make them more effective. Newly-revised plans will provide a more detailed explanation of performance expectations, better alignment of goals with job duties, and utilization of more valid metrics for measuring performance.

As Performance and Employee Relations Manager, Pam expects to see more positive feedback in the area of employee evaluation and the performance management process, fewer performance related issues, and fewer employee improvement plans as the new system for employee evaluation and performance management is implemented. Pam is confident that the creation of a great place to work is not a far off dream, but a short-term and realistic goal.

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## HR Welcomes a New Staff Member



*Tiffany Adams-Moore*

The Human Resources Division (HRD) is pleased to announce the addition of Tiffany Adams-Moore to the Human Resource Management Team. Tiffany will serve as the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer. As the EEO Officer Tiffany will promote and champion the policies of the District of Columbia Courts that provide for a workplace where every Court employee has

a work environment that is free of discrimination, harassment and bullying.

Ms. Adams-Moore is a credentialed professional. She has a Bachelors of Science degree in International Studies from Spring Hill College and a Juris Doctorate degree from Howard University School of Law. She is a member of the District of Columbia Bar Association. Ms. Adams-Moore served as a student attorney with the Immigration Law Clinic of The George Washington School of Law and she also served with the District of Columbia's Commission on Human Rights.

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## HEAR, HEAR TO HEROES AMONG US

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**DUSM Frank Morales** and **Deputy Clerk Brisa Valentin** were the faces of heroism in that moment. Generally, it isn't until a crisis appears that the fortitude and spirit of a person or a community is challenged and on that day, it was clear that these individuals presented themselves as fearless, ready, willing and able. By now, most DC Courts employees have undergone training for the un-

thinkable – active shooters, building fires or possible explosives. It's not something comfortable to consider or to make ready for but our environment is constantly changing and we are all being forced into an awareness of the potential dangers each day holds. Many of our Deputy US Marshals are former military soldiers and during an ordinary day, they do not need to activate their expert-level preparation and training to handle a grave situation here at the DC Courts.

However, it is clear that the DC Courts community can take comfort that they are well-prepared, well-trained and stand

ready for whatever comes their way. If you ask any of these men about their actions on June 6th, you will hear deflective comments like "I just did what needed to be done" or "I really didn't think about it." As for Ms. Valentin, who is not weapons-equipped or battle trained for the unthinkable, she says she "just turned around and went toward the scene." She was simply there and did not shy away from the task at hand. Ms. Valentin



*Deputy US Marshals recognized at an appreciation ceremony in the Criminal Division. From left to right: Frank Morales, Matt Barger, Mike Cifu and Andrew Kottke.*

forgot about herself and focused on the victim to provide a much needed source of comfort throughout the whole ordeal. You might say that for Ms. Valentin, being a hero was instinctive.

The Criminal Division held an appreciation ceremony for these five champions to thank them for their efforts and

honor their deeds. While they were receptive of the overflowing gratitude, it was easy to see that they were humbled by the fuss. For these public servants who are equally as humble as they are brave, skilled and willing, the extreme of saving a life on a random day is no big deal and they would not hesitate before doing it again. For those whom they would selflessly rush to help or rescue, they are no less than

***The Criminal Division held an appreciation ceremony for these five champions to thank them for their efforts and honor their deeds.***

angels in disguise or just plain heroes among us and we sincerely thank them for their service.



*Deputy Clerk Brisa Valentin*



## Community Service Clean-Up Days

*Continued from front cover*



*Clean-Up Day in action.*

where participants removed debris, raked, pruned bushes and cleaned the park of any discarded items that may have caused harm to the residents. The Community Service Program volunteers were at Marvin Gaye Park from 8:00am-4:00pm. The results of the volunteers' work was noticed by the residents and received comments from Ward 7 Council member, Yvette Alexander, about the overall esthetic of the park. The residents appreciated the efforts of the Community Service Program volunteers and the DPW staff.

The second clean-up day project occurred on Saturday, July 5, 2014 from 8:00am-4:00pm at Oxon Run Park located in the Anacostia area of the city. The Community Service Program had 24 volunteers for that project along with the DPW staff who cleaned-up debris, trash and other unwanted items such as old tires and unused household items. Though the day was

quite hot, the volunteers and DPW staff worked diligently to improve the overall appearance of the park. Again the residents of the community were very appreciative of the activity to beautify their neighborhood park.

Through the joint collaboration between the Community Service Program and the DPW Special Operations Division two of the city's parks are cleaner and safer for residents to enjoy.

The Community Service Program appreciates the support of the DPW Special Operations Division, under the supervision of Nevelion Williams and his

staff in supporting our efforts to provide tangible services to the community. We look forward in the upcoming months of collaborating with the DPW Special Operations Division on other community projects.

**Through the joint collaboration between the Community Service Program and the DPW Special Operations Division two of the city's parks are cleaner and safer for residents to enjoy**

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## *HR welcomes new staff member*

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In 2002, Ms. Adams-Moore began her distinguished career with the District of Columbia Courts as a Civil Division Law Clerk to the Honorable Anna Blackburne-Rigsby. After her clerkship, Ms. Adams-Moore served as a legal claims examiner with the District of Columbia Superior Court's Crime Victims Compensation Program. Since 2008, Ms. Adams-Moore served as chief of the Landlord and Tenant Branch of the Civil Division. She is a graduate of the Courts' first Man-

agement Training Program and has exemplified professional excellence and legal prowess in the challenging and demanding Landlord and Tenant Branch. Mrs. Adams-Moore professional demeanor, engaging personality, formal education, and court experience applying the law identified her as the right and qualified person to serve as the next EEO Officer for the Courts.

# COURT LAUNCHES LIVE-CHAT FOR SMALL CLAIMS, LANDLORD-TENANT AND CIVIL CASES

*Superior Court's Civil Division implements online service to answer public inquiries real-time*

DC Superior Court's Civil Division now offers a customized chat line aimed at providing "answers at your fingertips." Representatives from all of the Civil Division Branches: Small Claims (cases involving disputes over less than \$5000), Landlord and Tenant, Civil Actions (cases involving disputes over more than \$5000), and the Quality Review Branch will be available to respond to questions from the public on-line in real time.

The Live Chat feature is one more step the DC Superior Court has made in an effort to be more responsive to the public, especially those without an attorney who seek to utilize court services. The Civil Division has the two branches of the court that have the highest volume of cases, and the highest number of people who are not represented by attorneys – Small Claims and Landlord Tenant. In both of those branches, members of the public will now be able to get assistance (though not legal advice) instantly through the live chat feature. The new feature makes receiving answers to commonly asked questions concerning civil cases more convenient than ever. (The court has resource centers in the Small Claims and Landlord Tenant Branches for those who need help relating to legal representation.) "The court strives to ensure access to justice for all in our



community, to make our services as convenient and accessible as possible. The Live Chat feature that our high-volume Civil Division is adding is just the most recent step in many efforts we are making to help the public, especially those who come to the court without representation by an attorney," said Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield.

"We still answer questions by phone, of course, but some people prefer to email questions and get a quick answer that way, so we thought this approach would be a good addition."

The new live chat feature allows members of the public to submit questions to specific branches of the Civil Division and receive an immediate response. The link to this new feature can be found in the upper left hand corner of each of the pages\* for the four branches of the Civil Division. Representatives are available online to respond to questions through the live chat Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for all branches, other than Civil Actions, which will have morning hours only, 8:30 to 11:00.



Callie Coffman

## **Congratulations to 2 Members of the Executive Office Team**

*Congratulations to Callie Coffman who recently finished third in her class in the hardcore Tough Mudder military-style obstacle race in Maryland.*

*Congratulations to José Idler who recently won the 3-mile run at the annual National Association for Court Management conference in Scottsdale, Arizona.*



José Idler

## Superior Court Program Receives Award for Assistance during Navy Yard Shooting

On Monday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Navy bestowed an Award of Merit for Group Achievement on the Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP) for its immediate response to victims and families of victims affected by the Navy Yard shooting last September.

CVCP Director Laura Banks-Reed accepted the award at the naval base in Southwest DC. Reed was accompanied by two members of her staff, Donald Younger and Carmella Gonzalez, along with the Executive Officer of the DC Courts Anne Wicks and Clerk of the Superior Court Duane Delaney.



*From left to right: Donald Younger, Laura Banks-Reed and Carmella Gonzalez.*

Hearing news of the award, Superior Court Chief Judge Satterfield said: "I was especially proud when I heard about the quick action of the Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP) staff on September 16, 2013, when a gunman terrorized our community by shooting those arriving for work at the Navy Yard. Of course we must first recognize the police and the EMTs who addressed the crime scene and who helped rescue and treat the victims. But the secondary responders, such as CVCP, are essential, as we as a community work to help those who survive to try to live with the psychological scars that

they bear as well as the physical injuries."

"CVCP was on the scene within hours to help provide support and reassure those affected. So my sincerest congratulations to the staff of the CVCP for receiving this prestigious award from the Secretary of the Navy for the work they did that day. And of course we are all proud of the work they do every day to help those in their hours of need, whether here at Court Building A or across town, when such a need arises."

*The DC Superior Court Crime Victims Compensation Program assists innocent victims of violent crime and their families with crime-related expenses. Through the services of a victim advocate, crime victims receive assistance in filing applications; locating victim service programs, support groups, or mental health counselors; and handling quality of life issues that arise after victimization. The Program is funded by fines and fees paid to the DC Courts. For more information, visit <http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/superior/crimevictim/main.jsf>.*

## DC Courts in the Community

**Would you like to join in the engaging and educational experience of being a Court volunteer at any of our outreach events? Do you know of any community festivals/events that would be beneficial for the Courts to participate in? Reach out to Anita Jarman at [anita.jarman@dcsc.gov](mailto:anita.jarman@dcsc.gov).**

*See back-cover to learn about recent events*

# DC Courts in the Community

By Anita Jarman

## Community Day at THE ARC

On Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, the DC Courts joined in the festivities of Community Day hosted by the Federal City Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated at THE ARC in Southeast, DC. This annual event allowed our Court volunteers to inform over 60 District residents about the Superior Court's self-help resource centers while answering questions about jury duty as well as other services and initiatives.



*Court employees (left to right): Aaron Tinch, Stephanie Harper, Geneva Murphy and her son, and Tiffany Tinch with their baby girl!*

## June Family & Community Health Fair



*Court employees (left to right): Tyesha Kornegay, Anita Jarman, Aaron and Tiffany Tinch.*

On Saturday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, the DC Courts participated in the Annual June Family and Community Health Fair in DC's Michigan Park neighborhood. Volunteers from our Court staff informed District residents about court services, initiatives and events.

Hosted by the HSC Health Care System, the June Fair was organized to assist families and educate communities about resources and organizations assisting children with special needs. The Fair entertained children and families with exercise demonstrations, interactive healthy eating presentations, and dance contests. There were also dental and other health screenings for children.