

# Full Court Press

Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

December 2011

*Open To All, Trusted By All, Justice For All*

## THE PASSING OF FORMER DC SUPERIOR COURT CHIEF JUDGE EUGENE NOLAN HAMILTON

By Leah Gurowitz, Executive Office

Senior Judge Eugene Hamilton passed away on Saturday, November 19, 2011 at the age of 78. Judge Hamilton served as Chief Judge of the DC Superior Court from 1993 to 2000. He was known not only for his intellect and leadership, but also for his commitment to foster children, as he and his wife opened their home to numerous children over the years.

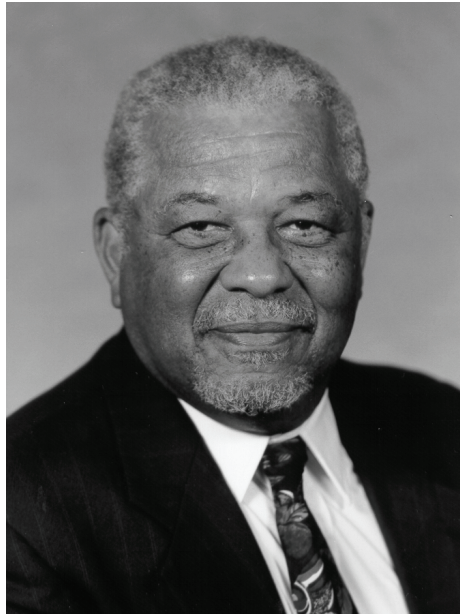
For his former colleagues and those who knew him, the loss of Judge Hamilton brings a period of mourning and reflection.

"He was a man of many talents, who led our court during the crucial years of revitalization," said Chief Judge Lee Satterfield. "His commitment to the children of DC was evident in his final days, as he ruled on a case involving a child abandoned at Children's National Medical Center, ensuring he got the treatment he needs."

"Judge Hamilton worked tirelessly for this Court almost daily up to the day before he died," said Judge Wendell Gardner. "He was never too busy or too important to assist a colleague. He was a mentor to a number of our current judges."

Judge Erik Christian also spoke highly of Judge Hamilton: "He was deeply loved by court colleagues, administrators, and courthouse staff and highly respected by those who appeared before him in the

courtroom because he was always polite, cordial and assured the fair administration of justice. Others in the city, including various Mayors and the City Council sought and relied upon his input, assistance and guidance over many years on matters that affected the well-being and safety of our entire community. The city



will miss a champion of justice and a great and genuine friend of mine."

Judge Hamilton was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1933. He attended public schools in Memphis, LeMoyne College and then the University of Illinois, where he received both his B.A. and L.L.B. degrees.

After receiving his law degree, Judge Hamilton served on active duty in the United States Army as a Judge Advocate General Officer. Following his military service, he joined the Civil Division of the US Department of Justice as a trial attorney, and worked there until his appointment to the Superior Court in 1970.

Judge Hamilton served in all of the divisions of the Superior Court and was a member of the DC Courts' Joint Committee for Judicial Administration from 1991 to 2000. In 1993, Judge Hamilton was designated as Chief Judge of the Superior Court, becoming the second African American to hold that office. He served as Chief Judge until the fall of 2000.

Judge Hamilton was a former member of the Executive Committee of the National Conference of State Trial Judges of the Judicial Administration Division of the American Bar Association. He served as the former Chairperson of the Continuing Legal Education Advisory Board, Georgetown University Law Center, and was on the faculty at the Harvard Law School as a Lecturer on Law.

Judge Hamilton was the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Law Degree from the David A. Clarke District of Columbia School of Law. He was active in the American, Washington and National Bar Associations.

Judge Hamilton was the recipient of many awards and recognitions, including the United Black Fund's Calvin W. Rolark 2000 Humanitarian Award, the University of Illinois' Liberal Arts and Sciences' Alumni Award, the Washington Bar Association's Charles Hamilton Houston Medallion of Merit, and the Greater Washington Urban League, Whitney M. Young, Jr. Community Service Award.

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# INVESTITURE OF JUDGE JENNIFER DI TORO

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

The newest member of the District of Columbia Superior Court bench, Associate Judge Jennifer Di Toro, was sworn in on October 14, 2011 at the Moultrie Courthouse. Judge Di Toro's friends and family filled the front rows of the third floor atrium, and watched with pride as Judge Di Toro's colleagues, both old and new, offered words of praise and appreciation.

The ceremony began with opening remarks from Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield. Chief Judge Satterfield spoke highly of his new colleague, and welcomed her to the Superior Court bench.

Barbara Butterworth of Finnegan LLP followed with revered remarks for her former colleague. Kathleen Hartnett, Associate Counsel to President Obama, then presented and read the Presidential Commission. Judge Todd Edelman administered the oath of office. Judge Di Toro's spouse held the bible and her parents robed the new judge.

Judge Di Toro was nominated by President Barack Obama in February 2011, and was confirmed by the United States Senate in September 2011. During her 15 years of practice, Judge Di Toro has worked in government, private practice, and a variety of other legal services.

"She is an outstanding and incisive lawyer," said Judge Edelman, a former colleague of Judge Di Toro at the Public Defender Service and now a colleague of hers at the court. "The breadth of her experience – as someone who has practiced civil, criminal, and family law, and who has done everything from litigation to policy work – will be a tremendous asset to the court for many years."

Just prior to her appointment to the bench, Judge Di Toro worked at the D.C. Children's Law Center, serving for seven years as the organization's Legal Director. She oversaw the work of nearly 50 lawyers, and was responsible for hiring, training, and supervising attorneys. She was also responsible for assisting families seeking custody, guardianship, adoption, landlord-tenant, access to health care and special education services.



DC Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield introduces Associate Judge Jennifer Di Toro to the bench.

*Photo by Tom Feeney Jr.*

Judge Di Toro worked in private practice as an associate at the law firm Zuckerman Spaeder LLP, practicing white-collar criminal defense and complex litigation.

Judge Di Toro holds a Bachelor's Degree from Wesleyan University, a Master's Degree from the University of Oxford and a Masters in Advocacy from Georgetown University Law Center. After graduating from Stanford Law School, she received a Pretty-

man Fellowship to work in the Georgetown University Law Center's Criminal Justice Clinic, representing low-income residents in the District of Columbia. Judge Di Toro then joined the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia as a staff attorney, practicing law in the same courtrooms where she now presides as a judge.

Judge Di Toro has practiced law for 15 years and has handled all of her cases at the Superior Court. At her U.S. Senate confirmation hearing in June 2011, Judge Di Toro said that her time at the Superior Court taught her much of what she knows "about the law, about ensuring access to justice, fairness, and the demands and rewards of public service." She also said she attended law school "to work on behalf of the people who needed it most because they are living in poverty, facing the loss of liberty or property, or because they are children who require safety, stability and health to live productive lives."

Judge Di Toro's experience, coupled with her engaging spirit and demanding work ethic has her on the fast track to becoming a successful DC Superior Court Judge.

The *Full Court Press* is published by the District of Columbia Courts.

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# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH: THE 2011 CORO AWARDS

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

On October 21, 2011, the DC Courts marked the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month with the Community Outreach Recognition Opportunity awards ceremony, or the “CORO awards.” The ceremony honors those who dedicate their work to the Latino residents of the District, and in turn enrich our community.

DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric T. Washington opened the ceremony with welcoming remarks. He thanked the Hispanic Heritage Month Committee for their month-long efforts, and also spoke highly of the CORO award winners. “The honorees we recognize today have effectively combined the components of CORO to make meaningful differences in our community,” said Chief Judge Washington. “Today we take a moment to express our gratitude and acknowledge their accomplishments.”

Master of Ceremony Wilfredo Gaitan followed with the introduction of the awards portion of the ceremony. Magistrate Judge Aida Melendez presented the Legal Community Award to Fernando Rivero, Assistant Attorney General for the District of Columbia. Fernando received the award for his sustained commitment and demonstrated excellence in providing legal services to the Latino community.

Judge Marissa Demeo presented the Community Agency Award to Maria Tukeva, principal of the Columbia Heights Educational Campus/Bell Multicultural High School. Principal Tukeva received the award



Magistrate Judge Aida Melendez (left) presents the Legal Community Award to Fernando Rivero (right).

*Photos by Tom Feeney Jr*



Julio Castillo (right) presents the Allan Klein Special Achievement Award to Roxanna Olivas (left).



for her commitment to Latino students. Her school saw huge gains in student test scores during the 2010-2011 school year, going up nearly 15 percent in math and 12 percent in reading.

Julio Castillo, Clerk of the DC Court of Appeals, presented the Allan Klein Special Recognition Award to Roxana Olivas, representing the Executive Office of the Mayor, Office of Latino Affairs. Roxana has 20 years of experience serving the Latino community through private industry, nonprofit and local government management.

Oliver Hignett, Deputy Clerk from the Criminal Division, performed “No Me Digas,” a song he composed. The song translates to “Don’t Tell Me” in English, and was a modern salsa song. Oliver sang while playing the guitar and the keyboard.

Judge José López gave closing remarks, ending both the ceremony and the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month at the DC Courts. Judge López pointed out the incredible talents and dedication of the award recipients, and also praised the members of the Hispanic Heritage Month Committee for their passion as advocates of Hispanic Heritage Month, both inside and outside the courthouse.

Associate Judge Marissa Demeo (left) presented the Community Agency Award to Maria Tukeva (right).



# ADOPTION DAY 2011

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

Children from 10-months-old to 20-years-old walked across the stage to receive their adoption decrees at the 25th Annual DC Adoption Day Ceremony, held on November 19, 2011. Adoption Day 2011 saw the establishment of 20 families, as 28 children became proud members of new families.

Hosted in the atrium of the Moultrie Courthouse, the ceremony began with the presentation of the colors by the U.S. Young Marines, and a rendition of the National Anthem by the Leslie Kids of Bowie, Maryland. Family Court Presiding Judge Zoe Bush kicked off the celebration by welcoming those in attendance and congratulating the new families. Seven-year-old vocalist Leyia Jeffers then wowed the crowd with a talented performance.

Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield followed with opening 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 over a dozen DC Courts judges are adoptive parents as well.

Beatriz Otero, Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services, Debra Porchia-Usher, Interim Director of the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), and Renette Olcewicz from the Freddie Mac Foundation each spoke about the importance of adoption, highlighting the important steps taken over 25 years of Adoption Day in the District of Columbia.

Malik Arnette followed the dignitaries with a mime performance, which was an individual theatrical selection filled with uplifting music. Tayia Jeffers, older sister to Leyia, followed Malik with a performance of her own.

After the performances, a montage was played on the multiple screens that lined aisles of the atrium. The mon-



Heaven Patricia (left) and Isaiah Duane (right) share the joy of adoption day with their new mother Katrice Heath.



Stephanie middle) shows off her decree, signed by Judge Juliet McKenna (right). She is adopted by her maternal great-aunt Sheila (left).

Photos by Tom Feeney Jr.

tage featured footage from past adoption days, beginning with the first decree signed at the 1st Dec Adoption Day, 25 years ago .

Barbara Harrison—creator of the *Wednesday's Child* news segment and mainstay at DC Adoption Day, followed the montage. After being introduced by Barbara, the children and their families came forward to the stage. Then each family's presiding judge signed their decree making each adoption final and official. After the final adoption, the Maya Angelou Public Charter Middle School Chorus serenaded the adopted children with a dedicated song.

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.

Before the conclusion of the ceremony, Judge



## ADOPTION DAY 2011 continued

McKenna called Debra Swingon-Stokes of the Executive Office to the stage for a surprise performance of Happy Birthday to Barbara Harrison. The crowd sang along, appreciative of Barbara's tireless efforts to increase adoption awareness.

Before Judge McKenna could conclude the ceremony, she was presented with an award for a decade of service on the Family Court Calendar, as well as for presiding over the adoption calendar and chairing the Adoption Day Committee.

In 2011, there were 180 adoptions finalized in DC. CFSA is currently seeking adoptive parents for 163 children in foster care. If you would like to find out more 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**.



Above: Leyia Jeffers sings for the Adoption Day audience.



Shyheim and Sade smile as their names are announced on Adoption Day.



Left: DeWhite looks up at the audience as his adoption is applauded.



Jeremiah Sebastian looks on as his name is announced and his decree is signed.

Below: Four year old Cy'mia in the hands of Barbara Harrison (right).



Photos by Tom Feeney Jr.

# PROBATE DIVISION AUDITING CONFERENCE

By Anne Meister, Register of Wills and Clerk of the Probate Division

On September 28, 2011, the Superior Court's Probate Division hosted the second Auditing Conference at DC Courts' Gallery Place offices. Approximately 110 registrants, lay-persons and attorneys serving as court-appointed fiduciaries or counsel for fiduciaries, attended the half-day session. Opening remarks were made by Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, followed by remarks from Judge Rhonda Reid Winston, Presiding Judge of the Probate Division, Anne Meister, Register of Wills and Clerk of the Probate Division and Allen Butler, III, Auditing Branch Manager.

Conference speakers included members of the Bar, a representative from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and Office of Tax and Revenue, an expert in preparing fiduciary accountings, the Auditor Master for the Superior Court and audit and legal staff members of the Probate Division. Session topics included: Intervention Estates and Special Needs and Pooled Income Trusts, Inventory and Accounting Preparation, Advanced Accounting Preparation, Fee Petition Preparation and a special session geared to-



From Left to Right: Herbert Files, Bonita G. Lilly, Louis Jenkins, Patsy Spratley, Anne Meister, Erick Jackson, Jacqueline Hayman, Joyce Ferguson, Maria Kancev, Prince Allen Butler III.

wards finding solutions for closing complex decedents' estates titled "Last Century Estates".

Participants were near unanimous in their positive assessment of the conference, with 98% indicating overall approval. The conference was a collaborative effort by many and the Probate Division would like to thank the participating judges, speakers, and those key staff members of the DC Courts' Center for Education and Training Division, Court Reporting and Recording Division, Information Technology Division, Administrative Services Division and Capital Projects and Facilities Management Division for their contributions.

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## COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING: THE HELPING HANDS PROJECT

By Nicole McGee, Executive Office Intern

For the graduates and mentors of the annual Management Training Program, often times the most rewarding aspect of the program is seeing the implementation of an idea thought of nearly a year before. "The Community Service Learning Program: The Helping Hands Project" is a product of the 2011 Management Training Program developed by program graduates Patrice Brady, Charmaine Koo, Jeremie Johnson, Milind Panwalkar and Nicole Stevens.

The original idea was to create a venue for DC students to partake in community service at the courts. Geared towards high school juniors and seniors, the program seeks 15 students who are interested in community service as well as learning about the inner workings of the judicial system.

The community service aspect of the program calls for students to participate in safe and constructive projects primarily assisting senior citizens and challenged *pro se* filers to fully utilize court

services, i.e., navigating the DC Courts campus and using information services. The educational aspect will provide students with a deeper understanding of the court system through seminars and projects in an effort to dispel common misunderstandings regarding the court system and promote civic awareness. Additionally the program has partnered with other community-based organizations like the Mayor's Youth Initiative and hopes to incorporate past project winner "Honor in Service," a jurors program for students.

Judge Zoe Bush, Presiding Judge of the Family Court, is the team's judicial sponsor. The Administrative Services Division is implementing the program and Nicole Farrar, Office Service Specialist, will be the Community Service Coordinator and began recruiting students for the program. The program will begin in the spring.



# ELECTRONIC OFFICIAL PERSONNEL FOLDER: Personnel Records at your Convenience

By Mercedes Johnson, Human Resources Division

Imagine that you need to provide very specific job information to fill out forms for an application, or you want to double check insurance information for retirement planning. Where once you had to make an appointment with a Human Resource Specialist to access your records, it will soon be as easy as a click on your computer.

The DC Courts will soon deploy the electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF) for all employees, bringing your Official Personnel Folder (OPF) to your desktop. Using the eOPF to manage your personnel records can be compared to using online banking for money management. With an online bank account you don't have to receive paper copies of bank statements or go to a physical bank location to review your account information. With eOPF, you will have comparable, secured ease of access to your Official Personnel Records. Instead of having to review your folder through your HR office, or travel to another location, or receive paper copies of personnel actions to create your own duplicate folder, you can electronically review your folder and save content electronically at your convenience through eOPF.

## Why is eOPF important to you?

An immediate and very personal benefit is having more control in viewing your personnel folder. Other benefits include:

- Options to view or print your OPF online
- Immediate access to your files – you no longer need to make appointments with HR in order to view your personnel folder

- Email notifications when documents are added to your file
- Enhanced accuracy, portability, and security of official personnel records
- Faster and more efficient records transfer within other agencies
- Timely and accurate data for retirement claims processing

Additionally, with an electronic record as the OPF rather than paper, HR personnel can more efficiently do their jobs. This can mean reducing the time it takes to record promotions, employee transfers, and retirements from weeks and months to near real-time.

## Is eOPF Secure?

Within the eOPF application, strict adherence to privacy rules via a multi-level user security structure is followed. Users are only able to view their own eOPFs. Only specific, designated users (primarily HR Specialists) are able to review and perform actions for other employee folders. No matter what a user's role, the system records the user's ID and reason for each and every person who accesses your eOPF, including every time you access your own record.

To learn more about eOPF contact Ms. Mercedes Johnson and/or visit the DC Courts' Intranet. **Email updates will be sent as the DC Courts move closer to eOPF rollout.** Once available, you will receive notification of your eOPF user ID and password and instructions for accessing your eOPF.

We thank you for your participation in this court-wide initiative.

## Congratulations to the Thanksgiving Day Food Drive Volunteer Team!

*A special thank you from the entire DC Courts family to all who contributed and helped with the Thanksgiving Food Drive. Thanks to your contributions, the Thanksgiving Food Drive Team was able to serve **115 families** on Thanksgiving Day!*

*Iris Reeder, Beverly Gibbs, and Yasmine Ali organizing food to distribute to families.*



# THE OPENING OF THE NORTHEAST BARJ CENTER

By Tom Feeney Jr., Communications Assistant, Executive Office

On October 13, 2011, the DC Courts celebrated the opening of the Northeast BARJ Drop-In Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The Balanced and Restorative Justice Center, or BARJ, is a facility designed to provide services to youth on probation. It is a multi-faceted facility that includes a satellite probation supervision office, a learning lab, and a host of activities that focus on the strengths of youth.

Numerous District of Columbia leaders came to the ceremony in support of the Northeast BARJ Center. Present was DC Attorney General Irving Nathan, Councilmembers Jim Graham and Harry Thomas Jr., Metropolitan Police Department Commander Andy Solberg, and Mannone Butler, Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Representing the DC Superior Court was Chief Judge Lee Satterfield; Presiding Judge of Family Court, Zoe Bush; Deputy Presiding Judge of Family Court, Hiram Puig-Lugo; and Terri Odom, Director of the Family Court Social Services Division.

Youth who live in the Northeast quadrant of the city who are awaiting trial and would otherwise be detained, or youth facing probation revocation because of non-compliance will participate in programs at the Northeast BARJ Center. Participating youth will be able to take advantage of a number of activities including: tutoring, mentoring, education and prevention groups, life-skills, peer mediation, recreation, and field trips.



From Left to Right: Councilmember Jim Graham, Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo, Chief Judge Satterfield, Terri Odom, Judge Zoe Bush, and Councilmember Harry Thomas Jr. cut the ribbon at the opening of the Northeast BARJ Center.

Photo by Tom Feeney Jr.

## NEW EMPLOYEES

By Nicole McGee, Executive Office Intern



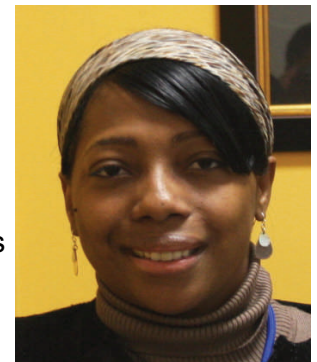
**Derrick Dias** is a Washington, DC native. He attended Shaw University, where he majored in Computer Science and graduated *cum laude* with his B.A. in May 2011.

Derrick interned at the DC Courts during the summers of 2009 and 2010. He interned in both the warrant office and in the IT Division where he assisted with the Courts' new website. There

he gained hands-on experience with database structure, learning to upload information onto the new website.

Derrick Dias officially joined the DC Court staff as a Deputy Clerk in September 2011. Derrick plans on attending Bowie State in the spring of 2012 to pursue his Masters Degree. As he is working towards becoming a computer scientist, Derrick aspires to work as an Information Technician here at the DC Courts. Derrick also serves on the DC Courts' Social Media Committee.

**Takima Davis** joined the DC Courts in August 2011. Born in Long Island, NY, Takima graduated from Longwood High School. She attended Howard University and received her B.A. in Political Science. Takima now works as a Civil ADR (Alternate Dispute Resolution) Case Manager and hopes to one day work to become a branch chief.



As proud parents of two, Takima and her husband moved here from New York and she plans to remain here in DC. Takima received her MBA from Keller Graduate School of Management. She worked as a paralegal for 13 years in both New York and DC. In DC, Takima worked as a Paralegal/Mediation Coordinator/Liaison to the Metropolitan Police Department. From there she came to the DC Courts working as a Civil ADR Case Manager.