

Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

December 2015

29th Annual DC Adoption Day



On Saturday, November 21st, the DC Superior Court celebrated its 29th Annual Adoption Day with DC's Child and Family Services Agency.

Twenty-five adoption decrees were signed, creating 18 new families just in time for the holiday season. "This is always such a wonderful event. To see children who might otherwise have been in foster care for a number of years, or possibly aged out of the system, be officially united with their 'forever family' is a very moving experience," said Family Court Presiding Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo. The adopted children range in age from 11 months to 22 years, and several families adopted siblings. For the Tyler family (pictured above) it was five biological siblings, all under the age of 8!

The event was hosted by NBC4 anchor Barbara Harrison, who is creator of the feature Wednesday's Child, which introduces the DC-area television audience to a different child each week who is in need of an adoptive home.

November is National Adoption Month. Currently, 1,074 DC children are in foster care with 86 seeking adoptive homes.

See page 4 for pictures from the ceremony



Public Tunes in as DC Court of Appeals Expands Video-Streaming

The DC Court of Appeals began video-streaming oral arguments in *en banc* cases in 2014 [*en banc* cases are heard by all nine judges of the Court; not a panel of three, as is the case in most appellate arguments]. This fall the effort was expanded to include cases other than *en bancs*, specifically those in which there was a high level of public interest. Just last month, the Court video-streamed two cases that attracted more than 1,000 viewers.

"I am pleased that we have been able to expand public access to our court proceedings," said Chief Judge Eric T. Washington. "Arguments in the Court of Appeals are generally well-attended; however video-streaming allows hundreds, potentially even thousands, more people to witness oral arguments as they happen in cases that impact the lives of DC residents in myriad ways."

Open To All Trusted By All Justice For All

DC Courts Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month through CORO Awards



On October 2, 2015, the DC Courts celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month by hosting the annual Community, Outreach, Recognition, and Opportunity Awards (CORO) ceremony. The annual awards recognize those who have dedicated their work

to Latino residents in and around the DC community.

DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric T. Washington opened the ceremony with welcoming remarks and thanked the Hispanic Heritage Month Committee for all their efforts. After Chief Judge Washington's remarks was a musical selection by Natalie Guerra (Bilingual Deputy Clerk, Family Court), James Plunkett III (Coordinator, Office of Court Interpreting Services and Language Access Program), and Yere lyne Betancourt (Case Processing Supervisor, Civil Division). Presentations at the CORO Awards followed.



Magistrate Judge Kenia Seoane-Lopez presented the Community Award to Dahlia Aguilar, principal of the Mundo Verde Bilingual Public Charter School. In this role, Ms. Aguilar has successfully transitioned what was a traditional foreign language program to an immersion program in 2010.



Judge Laura Cordero presented the Legal Community Award to James Montana of Catholic Charities' Immigration Legal Services. Mr. Montana provides deportation defense in Arlington, Baltimore, New York and the Board of Immigration Appeals.



Judge Marisa Demeo presented the Allan Klein Award to Oscar Claros of the DC Superior Court's Family Court Social Services Division for his sustained commitment to serving the people of the District of Columbia. Mr. Claros has served the community as a Juvenile Probation Officer since 2001.

What is Mediation? Celebrating Conflict Resolution Week

The DC Courts' Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division (MultiDoor) staff joined their conflict resolution colleagues around the country, and around the world, in celebrating ABA Mediation Week and Conflict Resolution Day this past October. MultiDoor staff often gets questions like "What is mediation?" and "What does the MultiDoor Dispute Resolution Division do?" Below are a few answers to common frequently asked questions.

What is mediation?

Mediation is an informal, collaborative, and confidential dispute resolution process, which is facilitated by a neutral third party (the mediator). The goal of mediation is to help parties clarify the facts, issues, and each party's interests in the case; understand different perspectives; explore and evaluate various options for resolving the case; and, if possible, generate a mutually acceptable agreement.

What is the MultiDoor Dispute Resolution Division?

Multi-Door's mission is to facilitate the fast, efficient, and fair settlement of disputes through the use of alternative dispute resolution. The name "Multi-Door" comes from the multi-door courthouse concept, which envisions one courthouse with multiple dispute resolution "doors" or options. The goals of the multi-door approach are to provide easy access to justice, reduce delay, and provide links to related services.

What kind of disputes does MultiDoor mediate?

Multi-Door mediates a wide variety of cases through its seven mediation programs. It also offers other alternative dispute resolution services, including the Community Information and Referral Program

For more information see:

http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/superior/org_multidoor/main.jsf

DC Courts Wellness Committee Hosts Breast Cancer Awareness Program



On October 26, 2015, the District of Columbia Courts' Working on Wellness Committee, WOW, hosted its first breast cancer awareness event for court employees. Breast cancer is nationally

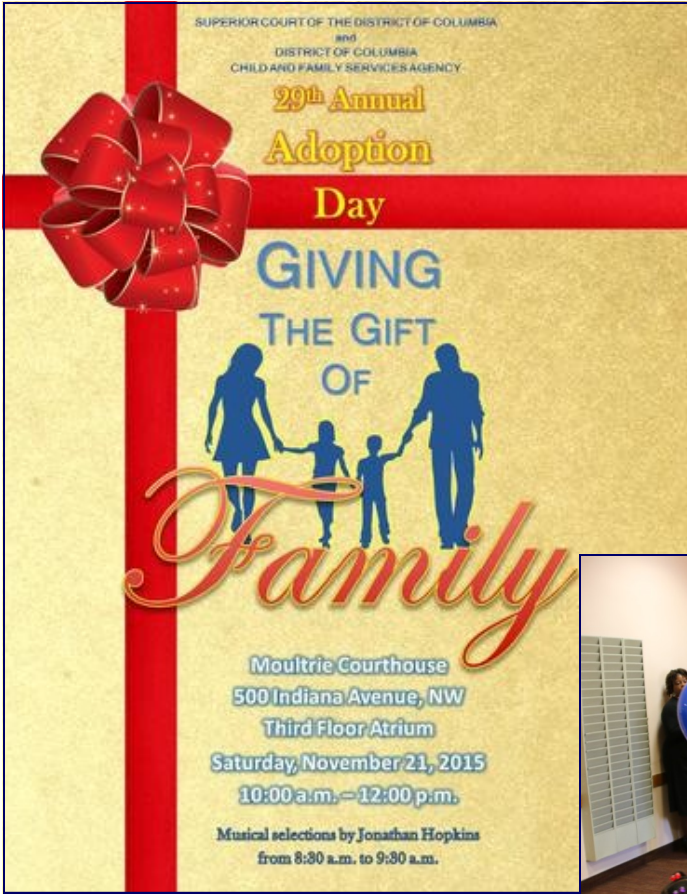
recognized during the month of October and according to the National Breast Cancer Foundation is the second leading cause of death among women. *Breast Cancer: the Risk, the Cause, the Cure* delivered an engaging, educational, and inspirational program for attendees.

The program began with a warm-up with 'Quick-fit' exercise bands, led by WOW, and was followed by a presentation from Jeanette Jeffery of Kaiser Permanente. Ms. Jeffery explained the importance of early detection, including the proper way to perform self exams, how the disease develops, its stages, the effect on the lymph node system and the range of treatments.

The program continued with a personal story of overcoming breast cancer by Edith Clipper (pictured), a Family Court employee. Ms. Clipper was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010 and her story of survival has given her the determination to live each day to the fullest. Trenton Robinson of the Washington Redskins personally thanked her for sharing her story and remarked on her strength, saying her battle took so much more than anything he and his teammates have to face on the field. He then explained to the audience how much pride he takes in wearing pink during October. Robinson concluded the program stating, "If you are dealing with breast cancer, the NFL is supporting you, my teammates are supporting you, and we love to throw on our pink for this cause."

29th Annual DC Adoption Day

See story on front cover



SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
and
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY

**29th Annual
Adoption
Day**

**GIVING
THE GIFT
OF**

Family

Moultrie Courthouse
500 Indiana Avenue, NW
Third Floor Atrium
Saturday, November 21, 2015
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Musical selections by Jonathan Hopkins
from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.



For more information about Adoption Day see:
<http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/media/adoptionday/main.jsf>

Chief Judge Washington Receives Ollie May Cooper Award

On October 22, 2015, DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric T. Washington was recognized with the Ollie May Cooper Award, which is presented annually to a member of the Washington Bar Association who has given outstanding service to the bar or whose leadership and organizational efforts have enhanced the image of the Washington Bar Association.

The award is named in honor of Ollie May Cooper who graduated from the Howard University School of Law, magna cum laude with an L.L.B. in 1921 and who, along with Isadore Letcher, was the first African-American woman in the United States to form a law partnership owned and operated by women.

Over the years, Ms. Cooper served in various capacities at the Howard University Law School including: teaching a course, serving as the law school's law clerk, and serving as the secretary to at least 10 of the deans. She was the found-

der of the Epsilon Sigma Iota Legal Sorority and touched the lives of countless students and lawyers during her 43 year association with her alma mater.

(Source: Washingtonbar.org)



From left to right: *Chief Judge Eric Washington; Karen Evans, President of the Washington Bar Association; Claudia Crichlow, Administrative Law Judge in the DC Office of Administrative Hearings.*

Annual DC Superior Court Family Court Conference Analyzes the Impacts of Trauma

On Friday, October 30, 2015, the DC Superior Court's Family Court held its 13th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference. This year's focus was on "Trauma-Informed Practice." Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo, Presiding Judge of Family Court, welcomed attendees to a day full of workshops, panel discussions, and seminars centered on the effect of childhood trauma and how it can influence relationships, productivity in school, incidences with the justice system, and poor health habits.

"Changing schools is equivalent to the stress of an adult recovering from death in the family," explained Dr. Nathaniel Beers as he began a morning session, which addressed the effects of chronic and toxic stress exposure to the brain. Dr. Beers is the Chief Operating Officer of the District of Columbia Public Schools and a volunteer developmental behavioral pediatrician at Children's National Medical Center. To visualize the dynamics of toxic stress, Dr.

Beers diagramed the relationship between epigenetics and neuroscience.

Epigenetics essentially defines how situations that occur during childhood could affect future generations, genetically. "Prenatal stress impacts a child's later response to stress but also future generations," Dr. Beers said while explaining the impact of toxic stress on the amygdala, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex in the brain. Subsequently, behavioral outcomes will regulate how the child is feeling, increasing the possibility of depression, anxiety, self-medication, or even early death.

Dr. Beers correlated the impacts of toxic stress on the brain to behavioral traits that judges, law enforcement agents, educators, social workers, and parents witness as a response to traumatic situations.

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DC Superior Court's Annual Domestic Violence Conference Focuses on Elder Abuse

The DC Superior Court's Domestic Violence Unit held its annual conference on Friday, October 30, 2015. This year's topic was how to assist the elderly if they are being abused or taken advantage of, and what services are available to them.

Held in the DC Court of Appeals' Ceremonial Courtroom, the event entitled "*Domestic Violence, the Elderly and the City: Is it Different for Them? What Services are Available in DC?*" covered a range of topics, including a panel presentation including the DC Office of Attorney General, Adult Protective Services, Office of Aging, the DC Superior Court's Guardianship Program and Crime Victims Compensation Program, and Legal Counsel for the Elderly, on the services available to elders in DC who are being abused. In addition, attendees heard from representatives from the Milwaukee Women's Center Division of Community Advocates, and the Safe Horizon Bronx Family Court program.

The conference began with a discussion of approaches in two other jurisdictions: Milwaukee and the Bronx. Latrice Hogan, Director of Community Advocates for Milwaukee's Women Center Division, a shelter that provides mental health and substance abuse treatment to women, spoke about how Milwaukee uses a holistic approach to serve elderly victims of domestic violence. Ms. Hogan gave an in depth view of the dynamics of elder abuse and the different ways in which the elderly can fall prey to abusers in the different kinds of domestic relationships from caregiver-patient to spouses who are struggling with dementia and are now facing abuse as a result.

Furthermore, Ms. Hogan shared how the agencies in Milwaukee collaborate to initiate programs that can better serve

this population, such as the development of a 211 call line or a strategic approach to serving victims that includes site visits to the victim's homes to bring the services to the victims.

Donald Younger (pictured), a Legal Claims Examiner with the DC Court's Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP), spoke about the numerous expenses that CVCP can cover for those victimized by domestic violence – from emergency housing, to moving expenses, to medical and mental health expenses. He also discussed the outreach that the program does to make sure DC residents are aware of their services, and the outreach that he personally does, seeing his role as not just 40 hours a week while he's at work.

The conference was a comprehensive overview of DC services and agencies, along with several innovative approaches to consider. Congratulations to the Superior Court's Domestic Violence Unit staff, and our gratitude to the US Department of Justice's Violence Against Women Office, which provided a Court Training and Improvements Grant that underwrote the conference.



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Historic Courthouse Turns 195

Earlier this year, the beautiful Historic Courthouse turned 195! The cornerstone was laid on August 22, 1820, with a mayoral proclamation stating that the building "is to be the seat of legislation and of the administration of justice for this metropolis." The Register said that the building would serve as a "temple of concord and wisdom." In June 1822, the Mayor, Register and City Council moved in to what was then known as City Hall.

The city has gone through many changes while this building has stood tall as a 'Temple on a Green Hill,' envisioned as the cornerstone of Judiciary Square by Pierre L'Enfant. The building was restored in 2009, bringing the space back into use after almost a decade, to serve as home of the DC Court of Appeals.



For more information about the Historic Courthouse see:

<http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/media/historiccourt/main.jsf>

Family Court Conference—continued from page 5



These traits can be related to the rates of teen pregnancy, human trafficking victimization, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, and other health issues such as obesity. It became clear how childhood trauma not only impacts our education and judicial systems, but also health care.

Dr. Beers described preemptive measures and proactive preparation that could be "levers of change." These levers ranged from policy to health, but also described the influence of the community with regard to caregiver capacity as a lever of change.

The conference continued throughout the day with panelists and moderators from a wide variety of local and national legal, community service and child and family development organizations.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PUBLIC

All persons who conduct business in court buildings are expected to behave and dress in a manner that reflects the seriousness of and respect for judicial proceedings. Persons exhibiting behavior or attire that distracts from the orderliness of court proceedings or that is threatening or contrary to the civility and dignity of the D.C. Courts and their work, may be excluded from the courthouse and its courtrooms.

DRESS

The D.C. Courts respect individual styles and fashion. However, certain attire is not suitable when conducting business or visiting the court because it distracts from the orderliness of court proceedings, is threatening, or is contrary to the civility and dignity of the judicial branch. Persons wearing inappropriate attire may be excluded from the courthouse and its courtrooms. Inappropriate attire includes, but is not limited to: gang paraphernalia and insignia; exposed undergarments; clothing with words, depictions, or messages that are intimidating or obscene; clothing with sexual or drug references; and sheer, see through, or provocative clothing.

FOOD

Eating is prohibited in all courtrooms, corridors, and public areas of court buildings. Persons wishing to consume food may do so in the Courts' Café, located on the C Street level of the Moultrie Courthouse, or in vending rooms. Jurors may eat in the Jurors Lounge on the 3rd floor of the Courthouse.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

The use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco products or electronic smoking devices is strictly prohibited inside any court building. Smoking tobacco products or electronic smoking devices is permitted outside D.C. Courts' buildings, at least 25 feet from building entrances.

SOLICITATION

Solicitation (selling items) and collection (retrieval of cash in exchange for items) are prohibited on court property and within court buildings, with the exception of any activities authorized in writing by the D.C. Courts' Executive Officer.

BEHAVIOR, DECORUM AND CIVILITY

Court participants are expected to be civil to all. The following behavior is inappropriate in the D.C. Courts' buildings:

- Disorderly, disruptive or indecent conduct;
- Shouting, arguing, or abusive or aggressive language;
- Obscene or offensive gestures or taunting of others, including horseplay or fighting;
- Running, loitering, or defacing court property, including spitting or littering.

ELECTRONICS

Electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, iPads, computers) may not be used in any courtroom. Taking photographs or making audio recordings is prohibited inside all D.C. Courts' buildings. In certain instances, these activities may be permitted with written approval of the Courts' Executive Officer.

WEAPONS

No weapons of any kind are permitted in D.C. Courts' buildings. This includes firearms, tasers, mace, pepper spray, knives, scissors or any item that may be used as a weapon. Without exception, Court Security Officers will confiscate all illegal items and they will not be returned. The Courts' Weapons Policy is posted at the entrances to all D.C. Courts' buildings and is online at www.dccourts.gov.

ANIMALS

Animals are not allowed in any court building, with the exception of service animals as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and D.C. law.

POTENTIAL PENALTIES

Persons who violate these provisions may be subject to arrest, expulsion or may be banned from entering D.C. Courts' buildings.