



Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

December 2012

DC Courts Employee Townhall

The DC Courts Executive Team would like to thank all the employees who attended the townhall on Thursday, December 6. We thought the time was very productive and thank all of you for your questions and participation. We are committed to making our Courts a Great Place to Work and this is a crucial step in building a culture of communication at our Courts.



of any potential model. In the meantime, we would like to remind everyone that the Courts currently allow for some work flexibility—including compressed and flexible schedules—on a case-by-case basis and based on business needs. We encourage interested employees to discuss these options with their Division Director.

Although we cannot answer every individual question submitted, some topics are very much on our minds and we want to take a moment to provide information on the central topics and questions that were raised at the townhall.



DC Courts Executive Team (from left to right): Court of Appeals Clerk Julio Castillo, Executive Officer Anne Wicks, Deputy Executive Officer Cheryl Bailey and Superior Court Clerk Duane Delaney.

Performance Evaluations

We received a significant number of questions in this area. Strengthening our performance management system is a priority and we are investing significant resources in performance management, training and evaluations. We are aware that our current system is not always implemented consistently or as designed

Telework and Alternative Work Schedules

As mentioned, this area is a challenge for us because unlike most Federal Government agencies, the DC Courts have intensive daily contact with the public, which determines our policies. We have set up a committee to explore options and the committee has thus far researched practices in other courts and Federal agencies, developed implementation guidelines, and analyzed court positions to identify potential eligibility. On that basis, a proposal was developed and we are awaiting feedback on the feasibility

(see Personnel Policy 900). We want to make sure that there's consistency, since performance is a key element in the culture of excellence, fairness and accountability that we're fostering. We have hired a new performance management specialist to focus on this issue—improvement of the system and its application—and are scheduling training for managers and employees on how to use the system to ensure consistency and fairness.

Cross-training

We also received a significant number of questions on cross-training. We will be looking at specific ways in which we could implement a cross-training program so that employees can benefit from actually spending time in different units and the Courts can benefit from a highly skilled and flexible workforce. The idea is to increase exposure to other parts of the Courts, which will create a greater appreciation for the work of the Courts, enhance teamwork and provide a better understanding



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Judge Kimberly Knowles sworn in to the Superior Court

Kimberly S. Knowles was sworn in as an Associate Judge in the DC Superior Court on Friday, November 9, 2012. She previously held positions within the court system, first as a judicial law clerk to Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric T. Washington, then Associate Judge of the Superior Court, and then as a Magistrate Judge, appointed by Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield.

The ceremony was held in the Moultrie Courthouse, as guests were welcomed by Chief Judge Satterfield, and Judge Knowles was recognized for her outstanding contributions, commendable performance, and dedication to the Courts. Chief Judge Washington gave remarks about his former law clerk, speaking about her work ethic, loyalty, and her ability to maintain a high level of excellence. He also thanked her for always having a positive and courteous attitude toward the public and staff of the legal community.

As a deputy chief of the Sex Offense/Domestic Violence Section of the US Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, Judge Knowles supervised the investigation and prosecution of cases

involving domestic violence, the sexual abuse of children and offenses committed against minors. She has always had a passion to serve the community and help children and families. Appointed to serve in the Family Court, Judge Knowles will be a tremendous asset in helping children and their families work through their challenges and come out stronger.



Judge Kimberly Knowles sworn in by Chief Judge Eric T. Washington

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of how our roles contribute to the Courts' mission. Please look for more information in the future as we work on this issue.

Finally, we want to share some thoughts on our values and culture of communication. Our values should truly underlie everything we do. Living out our values—**accountability, excellence, fairness, integrity, respect** and **transparency**—will help us all to continue building a Great Place to Work. You'll be hearing more as we roll out our new 2013-17 Strategic Plan.

We also want to encourage everyone to continue sharing their voice and strengthening our culture of communication. Making this a Great Place to Work is everyone's responsibility – we all have a role to play. And strengthening our communication will only make us stronger.

We want to wish everyone a Happy Holiday and very Happy New 2013!

DC Courts Executive Team

Anne B. Wicks, Executive Officer

Cheryl Bailey, Deputy Executive Officer

Julio Castillo, Clerk of the Court of Appeals

Duane Delaney, Clerk of the Superior Court



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CORO Awards Ceremony caps off Hispanic Heritage Month festivities

By Lisette Bonilla, Courtroom Clerk, Civil Division

On October 19, 2012, the DC Courts marked the culmination of the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month with the annual Community Outreach Recognition Opportunity (CORO) Awards to honor those who have demonstrated excellence in providing services to the Latino community in the District of Columbia.

Superior Court Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield and the Clerk of the Court of Appeals, Julio Castillo, kicked-off the ceremony with opening remarks noting that the DC Courts are stronger for the diversity of the bench and the staff. They both spoke highly of the CORO winners and turned the ceremony over to the Master of Ceremonies, Wilfredo Gaitan.

Judge Marisa Demeo presented the *Community Agency Award* to **The George Washington University Law School Immigration Clinic**, for its commitment to defending the rights of Latino immigrants and educating members of the Latino community on their rights in the U.S. legal system. Judge José López presented the *Legal Community Award* to **Eric Unternahrer, Accredited Representative at AYUDA**, for assisting hundreds of immigrants navigate the bureaucratic maze



Judge Jose Lopez (left) presenting award.



Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo (left) presenting award.



Judge Marisa Demeo (left) presenting award.

of the US immigration legal system. Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo presented the *Allan Klein Distinguished Service Award* to **Midiala Aponte**,

President/CEO Sanchez-Ricardo, for empowering the Latino community with knowledge in advocacy, digital media, public affairs, and public relations.

The recipients of the CORO Awards gave their warmest thanks to members of their support team, who were also present in the audience. The ceremony was not just awards, however; entertainment was provided by the DC Courts' very own *Trio Caliente* (consisting of José Idler, Pablo Pineda, and James Plunkett) who performed classics, such as "El Reloj" and "Rayito de Luna".

The ceremony ended on a high-note, with closing remarks from Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric T. Washington. The Chief Judge thanked the winners for their contributions, the committee for putting the events together, and bilingual employees for making the "open to all" part of the Courts' vision statement a reality for non-English speaking members of our community.

Special thanks go to the DC Courts' Hispanic Heritage Committee, the judicial officers, and all of the DC Courts' staff who made the CORO Awards a special day, capping off our Hispanic

Heritage Month festivities.



Traditional boleros

Language access at the DC Courts

One of the strategic goals of the DC Courts is to enhance access to justice by implementing ongoing language access initiatives geared toward individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). In this vein, a team of court leaders participated in the National Summit on Language Access in the Courts, where leaders from across the country gathered on October 1-2 in Houston, Texas, to share language-access best practices. The Courts representatives at the summit were: Eric Washington,

the DC Courts' Language Access Program Coordinator James Plunkett.

The Summit, hosted by Chief Judge Washington as president of the Conference of Chief Justices, was designed to call attention to the challenges of access to justice for the LEP population. The Summit was also designed to provide an opportunity for state courts and other stakeholders to share evidence-based practices and success strategies, and to develop state action plans for system improvements. The DC Courts have a long history of providing interpretation and translation services. The DC Courts, for instance, are staffed with bilingual employees in all divisions and ensure that all public counters are staffed with bilingual speakers. As such, the Courts were well represented at the Summit and well positioned to share information about our high level of service, our success in enhancing access for all LEP individuals, and our plans to further ensure full language access to the public we serve.



Chief Judge Eric Washington speaks at the 2012 National Summit on Language Access

Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals; Lee Satterfield, Chief Judge of the Superior Court; Executive Officer Anne Wicks; Duane Delaney, Clerk of the Superior Court; and

The Office of Court Interpreting Services in a nutshell

What does the Office of Court Interpreting Services do?

The Office of Court Interpreting Services (OCIS) provides interpreting services for the entire gamut of court proceedings and related services—from a “walk-in” seeking information on the Courts to competency evaluations at St. Elizabeths to a major felony trial involving multiple defendants.

Who are the interpreters?

OCIS has three full-time staff members—James Plunkett (coordinator), Karima Azzouz and Sharon Ruiz (staff interpreters)—and works with external contractors to provide qualified professional interpreting services for virtually any language. Court interpreters are experts in language and trained to render linguistically equivalent interpretation from one language to another. Interpreters are not parties to a case, have no interest in the outcome of any case, and remain completely neutral in all matters. Court interpreters work solely for the court and their single responsibility is to bridge the communication barrier necessitating their presence.

What are the languages most often used at the court besides English?

In FY12, OCIS served close to 10,000 cases covering 42 languages. Spanish was in high demand at the Courts with close to 7000 cases requiring Spanish-language interpretation. There were 871 cases requiring American Sign Language and 436 cases requiring Amharic interpretation. The office also coordinates with the Court Reporters Division to provide “real-time” captioning services for deaf or hearing-impaired persons needing that service.



From left to right: Sharon Ruiz, James Plunkett and Karima Azzouz

How can I request interpreting services?

OCIS asks that court employees enter the language request in Courtview under the party’s “Special Requirements.” Once the request has been entered, OCIS’ scheduling calendar will be automatically updated. Requests only need to be entered once and will remain there for the life of the case.

For more information on OCIS or if you have any questions please contact the office at 1-4828.

DC Superior Court celebrates Adoption Day, new families created

In an event designed to celebrate the joy of adoption, the DC Superior Court and the DC Child and Family Services Agency co-hosted the 26th Annual Adoption Day ceremony on Saturday, November 17. Thirty-four adoptions were finalized during a ceremony in which the new families were introduced and came forward as their judges signed the adoption decrees.



Mayor Vincent Gray (right) and Magistrate Judge William Nooter (center) greet a new family.

Reese Hoffa, shot put bronze medalist at the 2012 London Olympics, was the guest speaker and shared with the audience his own experience growing up as an adopted child and what it meant for him to have a home. "Home is where I learned how to read, where I learned boundaries" said Reese. Home "was a place where I knew I'd always be loved."

For these new homes to be created incredible sacrifices had to be made. Recognizing these sacrifices, Reese congratulated all the new families being created in a special way. Speaking to the adoptive parents he said: "you're going to be adopting some incredible kids today."



Olympic shot put bronze medalist Reese Hoffa.

NBC 4 news anchor Barbara Harrison acted as the Mistress of Ceremonies, introducing all the children along with their new families while the adoption decrees were being signed by a judge. "It's going to touch your heart," said Barbara speaking

of the special moments that would be witnessed by all. She predicted the event would "put a smile on your face."



NBC4 anchor and Adoption Day emcee Barbara Harrison

She then introduced the children amidst smiles, tears, cheers and the sense that a journey was being completed while a new one began.

Many of the children, covering a broad range of ages, took to the podium, as Barbara introduced them, to share their thoughts, poems and the joy of being adopted.

Several DC Superior Court judges and other leaders gave remarks highlighting the special moment shared by the new families. "Adoption is a gift that lasts a lifetime," said Family Court Presiding Judge Zoe Bush in her opening remarks, speaking as a judge and adoptive mom. DC Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, an adoptive parent himself, thanked all the attorneys and social workers involved in the process. "Today 34 children are being adopted. I'm looking forward to watching the adoptions," said the Chief Judge. Mayor Vincent Gray spoke about the foster care system in DC and the progress on the number of children being adopted. "Adoption has become an important part of life," said the Mayor.

In a ceremony full of joy and celebration, Barbara Harrison captured the significance of the moment as she brought the event to a close: "it's been a special time to watch the miracle of adoption take place."



And addressing the audience directly earlier in the ceremony, one of the children being adopted summed up the spirit of the event: "I'm home. Mission accomplished."

Musical selection

Family Court — 11th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference

The Family Court's annual conference, entitled "Opening Minds...Opening Doors for LGBTQ Youth in Family Court" was held on October 4, 2012 at the Washington Convention Center. Focused on the theme of acceptance, a variety of speakers presented attendees with a wealth of information to raise awareness of the challenges faced by LGBTQ youth in the court system, as well as best practices tailored to meet those children's particular needs.

The day started with an interactive exercise to help audience members step into the shoes of young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning. A panel of youth who identify as LGBTQ spoke candidly about their personal experiences in the foster care system and in their contacts with the Court. Keynote speaker Dr. Caitlin



Ryan, Director of the Family Acceptance project in San Francisco, presented the results of research on the issue of acceptance and how that research has shaped approaches to family intervention and provision of services to children in an effort to provide support and decrease risk for LGBTQ youth.

Workshops featured panel presentations on best practices, health-related challenges, bullying, parent and foster parent acceptance and education, custody issues, and D.C.'s services and strategies. A lunchtime speaker examined the topic of diversity within the LGBTQ community. This year's conference addressed acceptance, a topic of great importance that will undoubtedly benefit many court-involved youth.

Superior Court's Criminal Division hosted 3rd Annual Criminal Justice Conference

The Criminal Division hosted its 3rd Annual Criminal Justice Conference on November 2, focusing on how treatment of mental illness has evolved. With the theme of *Mental Illness and Treatment: Past, Present, and Future*, the conference featured guest speakers and academics from prominent medical schools in the country, as well as representatives from the Metropolitan Police Department and the DC Department of Health. Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, Criminal Division Presiding Judge Russell Canan, Deputy Presiding Judge Robert Morin, Judge Michael Ryan, Judge Lynn Leibovitz and Judge Ann O'Regan Keary of the Mental Health Community Court were also part of the program.



Judge Russell Canan (left) and Chief Judge Lee Satterfield (right)

Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and author of *An Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of*

Moods and Madness, gave a keynote address sharing her own personal experience with mood disorders. George Woods from the Morehouse School of Medicine and Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, spoke about the neurobiological effects of trauma and the relevance of traumatic stress conditions to the courts. Other speakers included James Fallon from the UC Irvine School of Medicine, who addressed the genetic basis of self and identity and the ques-

tion of whether genes can make someone murder; and William Carpenter, Director of the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, who gave a presentation on the history of mental illness.



NEW SPECIAL OPERATIONS DIVISION DIRECTOR



Herbert Rouson

Mr. Herbert Rouson, Jr. was appointed to the position of Director of the Special Operations Division effective, November 19, 2012. Mr. Rouson comes to the Special Operations Division following six years of service in the Budget & Finance Division working as a Systems Accountant in the Defender Services Branch. He has been instrumental in managing and administering an annual

budget appropriation of \$55 million. He also developed numerous enterprise-wide solutions that have augmented the efficiency and effectiveness of the Budget and Finance Division.

Mr. Rouson served as the Project Manager for the implementation of the Courts' automated federal financial business solutions. In this capacity he worked collaboratively with the Courts'

Chief Internal Auditor to ensure that internal controls are strengthened and sustained. He led the Budget and Finance Division's contribution to the Court-wide "Building a Great Place to Work" initiative. Mr. Rouson has also chaired numerous business process exploratory committees that have worked across Division lines to ensure that branch operations and business relationships with third-party vendors adequately leverage the use of appropriated funds.

Mr. Rouson serves as a valued member of the Courts' Strategic Planning Leadership Council (SPLC), helping to shape the Courts' vision and direction for the next 5-years. He is a graduate of the DC Courts' Management Training Program.

Mr. Rouson graduated from Hampton University, where he earned his BS degree in Accounting, and American University, where he earned his JD degree. Mr. Rouson previously worked for the Washington Gas & Light Company, holding a wide range of positions with increasing levels of responsibility over 13 years.

Mr. Rouson currently resides in Accokeek, Maryland with his wife and two children. Please join us in welcoming Mr. Rouson to his new position.

DC Courts Thanksgiving Food Drive

Thank you to the committee members and all who contributed!

- More than 140 baskets prepared
- Nearly 800 people served
- More than \$3000 collected



Court of Appeals Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby and staff



The Committee chairs (left to right): Verna Smith, Renee Broom and Brenda Clarke



Ready to Go!

Rave Reviews



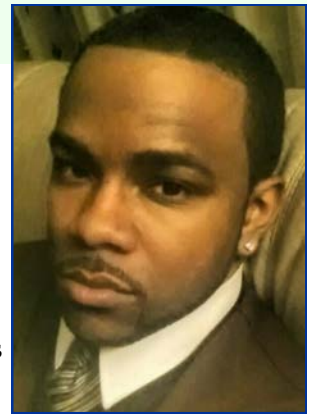
Rosangela Peralta

I am sending this letter to express my appreciation and sincere gratitude in regards to Customer Service received by your employee **Ms. Rosangela Peralta** (Civil Division).

... Ms. Peralta is the kindness of strangers that you hear about but seldom experience... She was calm in a sea of chaos (even when adults were acting unruly in line about who was next) and as I completed my paperwork for the 2nd time, I listened and observed, every single person and observed that she dealt with... ALL in the same professional, and pleasant manner.

THANK YOU!!!! A job well done!!

... I was absolutely blown away by the professionalism and courteousness of your staff- especially Mr. **Lawrence Valentine** (Civil Division), who took time to help me fill out paperwork, to explain the process to me (and I'm pretty sure he had a monstrous task there), to make sure everything looked good, and to answer any and all questions I had. It was like I had a personal concierge at the clerk's office! My experience with Mr. Valentine, who aside from being helpful was also friendly and kind, actually *brightened my day*. I was thoroughly impressed by Mr. Valentine's knowledge and personal service, and I wanted to pass that along to you, since he deserves to be commended. Thank you, and thank you to Mr. Valentine!



Lawrence Valentine



Denise Johnson

I'm writing a quick note to thank one of your employees, Ms. **Denise Johnson** (Marriage Bureau) on a well-done job...Ms. Johnson was very professional, courteous and very kind! Sometimes we the public are very quick to criticize others when they are trying to do their jobs in dealing with the public, but are not so quick to compliment on a job well done! Thank you very much!

US Marshals Hockey Team



The US Marshals Service recently established its own hockey team. The players come from up and down the East Coast. from Buffalo to the Carolinas and West Virginia. Several of the Superior Court's Deputy Marshals are on the team including Steve Solomon, who is the team's Captain, and Matt Kiely, who serves as the Assistant Captain. **Magistrate Judge Frederick Sullivan** (far left) is a player and the coach.