



Full Court Press



Celebrating the District of Columbia's 30th Annual Adoption Day

The District of Columbia Superior Court along with the District's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) co-hosted the 30th Annual DC Adoption Day ceremony on Saturday, November 19, 2016. Children and their new "forever families," alongside judges and social workers, gathered together to celebrate this joyous occasion. To add to the festivities, comedian star of *Young & Hungry* and adoptive mom Kym Whitley was the special guest speaker.



The keynote speaker of the 30th annual DC Adoption Day ceremony was Kym Whitley—actress, comedian and proud adoptive mom.

"This is always such a wonderful event—for the families adopting today, for those who have adopted over the past year, and indeed the past 30 years of DC Adoption Days," said Family Court Presiding Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo. "To see children who might otherwise have been in foster care for a number of years, or possibly aged out of the system when they turn 21 without a family, legally become part of their 'forever family,' is heartwarming."

The ceremony is designed to celebrate the joys of adoption and encourage area residents to consider adopting or fostering District of Columbia children. Twenty-nine children, ranging in ages one to nineteen years old, had their final decrees signed by their fam-

ily court judge at the ceremony. A number of the children were even able to experience being adopted alongside their biological siblings.

As the 23 new families were called, each child was introduced to the audience by NBC 4 news anchor Barbara Harrison, who shared fun facts about the children with the audience, bringing laughs and even a few tears to those in the audience.

"This is just a wonderful occasion and I get a little emotional," said Barbara Nalls, who is on the CFSA adoption committee. She said she loved seeing teenagers among the adoptees.

"I'm just hoping more people will come and open their hearts for the older youth."

Guest speaker Kym Whitley unexpectedly became a mom in 2011 in under an hour, when a social worker called and asked if she would be willing to take the newborn baby of a young woman she had been mentoring. Whitley accepted. Suddenly a single parent, she asked her friends to help her raise Joshua. "I can name all the movies and all the TV shows I've done, but the day Joshua came into my life—it

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Two new Magistrate Judges Sworn-in

DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin administered the oath of office in his chambers to Tyrona DeWitt and Shelly Mulkey, both former DC Assistant Attorneys General. The new magistrate judges were surrounded by family and close friends..



Tyrona Ties'e DeWitt is sworn-in by Chief Judge Robert Morin.

Tyrona Ties'e DeWitt was an Assistant Attorney General in the Child Protection Section of the Family Services Division of the DC Office of the Attorney General (OAG) since 2004. She litigated cases concerning the abuse and neglect of children with related adoptions, termination proceedings and guardianship matters. In 2012, she completed a six-month rotation in the Mental Health Section of OAG. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rutgers University and graduated summa cum laude from the University of the District of Columbia, David A. Clarke School of Law. She clerked for the Honorable Judith Bartnoff of the District of Columbia Superior Court from 2002 to 2003.

Shelly Ava Mulkey was an Assistant Attorney General in the Child Support Services Division of the OAG, where she represented DC in child support cases and mentored new attorneys and



She participated in the DC Superior Court Paternity & Support Subcommittee tasked with improving court function and creating a centralized location to post and retrieve information about employment, education, and training opportunities in the District. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Tulane University and her law degree from the American University, Washington College of Law. Following law school, Ms. Mulkey clerked for the Honorable Eric M. Johnson at the Sixth Judicial Circuit of Maryland.

Shelly Ava Mulkey is sworn-in by Chief Judge Robert Morin.

She participated in the DC Superior Court Paternity & Support Subcommittee tasked with improving court function and creating a centralized location to post and retrieve information about employment, education, and training opportunities in the District. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Tulane University and her law degree from the American University, Washington College of Law. Following law school, Ms. Mulkey clerked for the Honorable Eric M. Johnson at the Sixth Judicial Circuit of Maryland.

Welcome Judges DeWitt & Mulkey!



CORO Awards at the DC Courts Cap off Hispanic Heritage Month



From left to right: Ana Corina "Cori" Alonso-Yoder, Marta Palacios and Yanira Cruz.

The DC Courts hosted the CORO Awards on Friday, October 14 as part of the month-long Hispanic Heritage Month celebration. Coro, in Spanish, means "choir" but the acronym has meaning as well, standing for "Community, Outreach, Recognition, Opportunity." Three awards were presented at the ceremony: The Allan Klein Award, presented to an individual or agency in recognition of exemplary and sustained commitment to serving the people of the District of Columbia. The Legal Community Award, presented to

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Judges Talk about Community Court at Public Safety Symposium in Ward 8



Judge Lynn Leibovitz

DC Superior Court judges Lynn Leibovitz and Steven Berk participated in an Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC)-sponsored Public Safety/ Crime Symposium on October 20, at the R.I.S.E. Demonstration Center on MLK Avenue, SE, in Ward 8 (the 7th Police District).

indicated that they had learned a great deal from the discussion. Topics included: de-escalation training, programs for youth, which agency has jurisdiction over which issues (so people know who to call), the need for better lighting and cleaning up area parks, appropriate ways to access treatment for the mentally ill. The event was organized by ANC Commissioners and former ANC Com-



Judge Steven Berk

The audience - and it was virtually standing room only - had submitted questions in advance and at the end

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Living Our Values

As part of the Living Our Values initiative, approximately 170 managers (from division directors to front-line supervisors) have participated in a mandatory nine-module management development program launched in 2015. In October, the last two cohorts of the QuickStart program completed the series. During the ninth and final session in each training group, a graphic artist attended the session to record the participant's program experiences and document their commitments and hopes in their future management roles.

See below one of the images from the various cohorts.

See pages 4-5 for more information on Living Our Values.



Living our Values Initiative in Numbers

As we enter the final weeks of the year, it is important to slow down and take stock of all the progress relative to the Living our Values initiative. The purpose of this article is to provide a year-in-review glance at where we've been in 2016 and provide associated key statistics.

550. The number of DC Courts employees who participated in the **Pulse Check** survey.

220+. The number of hours employees in the **Values Leadership Council** spent supporting the Living the Values initiative.

170. The number of division directors, branch managers, supervisors who participated in **QuickStart**.

105. The number of leaders who participated or are currently participating in the **360 degree feedback** process.

104. The number of staff members who participated in **Conversations@Core** training.

6. The number of divisions that have a **divisional values team**.

Key 2016 Highlights

Pulse Check

In 2016, the DC Courts launched a pulse check designed to capture feedback about the extent to which the values were being **demonstrated**. **Results revealed significant progress has been made against values demonstration since 2014.**

At the same time, there is still ample room for continued improvement.

QuickStart for Managers

Since QuickStart's launch in 2015, approximately 170 managers (from division directors to front-line supervisors) have participated in this mandatory nine-module management development program. In October, the last two cohorts completed the training series. During the ninth and final session in each training group, a graphic artist attended the session to record the participant's program experiences and document their commitments and hopes in their future management roles. **See page 3 for one of the images from the various cohorts.**

Divisional Values Teams



While much activity has occurred at the court-wide level, several divisions have begun to focus efforts on bringing the values to life in the division more fully. In 2016, six divisions

launched divisional values teams comprised of staff, and in some cases, supervisors and managers. These divisions include:

- Administrative Services
- Budget & Finance
- Court Reporting & Recording
- Information Technology
- Probate
- Multi-Door

While the overall goal of each of these teams is to support divisional staff in living the values more fully, each team is honed in on their own division-specific needs as articulated by staff. The work of the divisional values teams will continue in 2017.

Values Update

Further Activities and Ways to Get Involved in 2017

New Manager Forums

In 2017, Manager Forums will be introduced. The target audience for these forums will be those managers and supervisors who followed and successfully completed QuickStart. Forums will be 90 minutes in length and conversations will build on concepts introduced and discussed within the QuickStart classroom. Stay tuned for more information about these forums and registration links at the end of January.

Conversations@Core

Conversations@Core will return in 2017 due to overwhelmingly positive feedback and popular demand. Sessions will be offered in February, March, April and May. If you have not already taken this interactive two-day course, please go to the Center for Education and Training's intranet calendar and sign up for a session soon. **See the back-cover for more information on Conversations@Core.**

Leadership 360

Divisions that have not yet participated in the leadership 360 process will launch in the first quarter of 2017. If you are asked to participate in the 360 by completing the online assessment, please do take the time to provide thoughtful and candid feedback.

Values Teams

In 2017, the Court of Appeals and several divisions will launch divisional values teams. The Court of Appeals and the Civil and Criminal divisions are all in planning stages to launch their teams in early 2017.



ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our conduct and are answerable for our performance.

EXCELLENCE

We provide the highest quality of service in everything we do.

FAIRNESS

We are impartial in our actions, decisions and treatment of others.

INTEGRITY

We demonstrate the highest standards of ethical behavior.

RESPECT

We treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and understanding.

TRANSPARENCY

We are open in our processes and communicate our actions and decisions clearly.

Hispanic Heritage Month: CORO Awards—continued from page 2

an individual for sustained commitment and demonstrated excellence providing **legal services** to the Latino community. And the Community Agency Award, presented to a **community agency** demonstrating commitment to providing services to the Latino community.

The awardees this year were: Dr. Marta Palacios, recipient of the Allen Klein award, who obtained a doctorate and is the first Salvadoran to serve as the principal of a school in the District of Columbia; Yanira Cruz, President & CEO of the National Hispanic Council on Aging, who received the Community Agency Award; and Ana Corina "Cori" Alonso-Yoder, recipient of the Legal Community Award due to her efforts in representing hundreds of immigrants in humanitarian-based immigration law and spearheading the founding of Project END—a service aimed at addressing immigrant consultant fraud.

The Allen Klein award was presented by Court of Appeals judge Vanessa Ruiz. The Community Agency and Legal Community awards were presented respectively by Superior Court judges José López and Laura Cordero.

Hispanic Heritage Month was established in 1988 to recognize and celebrate the contributions, heritage and cultures of Hispanic/Latino Americans. Running from September 15 to October 15, the month-long celebration recognizes and commemorates the traditions of US residents who trace their roots to Latin countries and the Caribbean.

September 15 was chosen as the starting date for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively.

Adoption Day—continued from front cover



NBC 4 news anchor Barbara Harrison introduces new families.

changed my life forever," said Whitley. "One thing I realized after doing a show about adoption is that a lot of people have fear. She continues: "I remember when a Nigerian woman came up to me and she said, 'Thank you, thank you.' I said, for what? She said, 'you made it ok for African women to adopt children.'"

"We were very pleased to have Kym Whitley share her story of adopting her son, and the joy it has brought to her life," said DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin. "As we see every year at these ceremonies, the parents are at least as excited, as joyful and as proud as the children about having their adoption finalized and officially becoming a family."

Social workers were present and available to both celebrate and inform those who were curious about fostering or adopting a child. Those who were unable to attend, but are interested or have questions, should call the CFSA Adoption Hotline 202/671-LOVE. There are still 86 children, of the 1,004 children currently in foster care, available to be adopted.

Landlord Tenant Branch team attended DC Housing Authority Symposium



On October 7th, four members of the DC Superior Court's Civil Division Landlord Tenant Branch (LTB) had the pleasure of attending the Third Annual Landlord Symposium sponsored by the District of Columbia Housing Authority. Those who attended for the Court found it a wonderful opportunity to learn, participate, and be empowered about some of the collaborative efforts, partnerships, and programs that provide incentives for DC landlords to help reduce homelessness in the city. The seminar was attended by over 80 landlords and various agencies throughout the Washington, DC area. Participating agencies included: DC Department of Human Services; DC Department of Energy and Environment; and DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

The LTB team members who attended the symposium were: Patricia Glover, Quality Assurance Supervisor; Lawrence Brown, Acting Branch Supervisor; LaShaye White, Branch Chief; and Hilda Espino-Palma, Deputy Clerk.

Judges Talk about Community Court—continued from page 3

missioners from the area, as well as the Anacostia Coordinating Council, DC Young Farmer Coalition and Missing & Exploited East of the River. Along with the Courts, there were representatives from DC Office of the Attorney General, the Department of Behavioral Health, Housing Authority Police, Metro Transit Police, DC Council, Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services, DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), Office of Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs, US Park Police, US Attorney's Office, DC Public Schools and the Court Services & Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA).

Longtime Mediator Lester Schlitz Passed Away



In 1997, as a retired judge from the Virginia Circuit Court, Lester Schlitz began serving as a mediator in the DC Superior Court. He brought with him a wealth of knowledge, mediator and arbitrator skills, and case-evaluation techniques. Judge Schlitz was known for his remarkable patience and his ability to creatively encourage parties to think outside of the box for possible solutions. He was trusted and well-respected by many, especially the members of the bar; attorneys often would request him as a mediator. His great passion for people, mediation, and the legal process, along with his experience and expertise, aided him in settling many cases. Judge Schlitz passed away on November 2, a few weeks short of his 100th birthday. To read the obituary, click [here](http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?n=lester-schlitz&pid=182316403) [http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?n=lester-schlitz&pid=182316403]

CONVERSATIONS @THE CORE



2017 COURSE OFFERING

DC Courts' Center for Education and Training invites you to enrich and change your conversations and your results. We invite you to step into the unknown and discover a new way of dialogue. Join us and engage in the conversation.

ABOUT THE TRAINING

In this session, participants will learn tools and techniques to support values adoption through building better relationships at all levels by engaging in conversations focused on sharing diverse perspectives and improving outcomes. We will practice conversations through role-play to improve capability and comfort in sharing perspective, giving and receiving effective feedback, and reduce stress associated with having difficult conversations.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

All non-managerial / non-supervisor staff

DATE & WHERE TO REGISTER

REGISTER TODAY. Go to CET's online registration calendar on the intranet.

- February 8 & 15
- March 7 - 8
- April 11 & 18
- May 16 - 17