



DC Courts Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

By Rita Blandino

On October 10, 2014, the District of Columbia Courts concluded the Hispanic Heritage Month festivities with the annual Community Outreach Recognition Opportunity (CORO) Awards. The theme this year was “Many Backgrounds, Many Stories, ONE SPIRIT” to honor the great work that is being done by individuals serving the Latino community in Washington, DC.

The Master of Ceremonies, Wilfredo Gaitan, opened the event by inviting all in attendance to acknowledge the great work of the Hispanic Heritage Month Commit-

tee, comprised of dedicated court employees who worked tirelessly to put together a wonderful event.

Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric Washington gave opening remarks recognizing the value that diversity brings to the courts and acknowledging the many Hispanic court employees and judges. He concluded by sharing that every year, it is his pleasure to be part of an event that honors community partners who do great work in the Latino community.

Judge Marisa Demeo presented the Community Agency Award to the **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)** for promoting higher education for Hispanics and placing hundreds of students in internship positions with federal agencies and business organizations. Judge Demeo shared that it was an honor to

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Judge Demeo presenting the award to Luis Maldonado from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

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DC Courts Celebrate Thanksgiving with Annual Tradition



The DC Courts would like to thank all who contributed to our annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. For over 25 years, we have been able to serve thousands of families in the District a healthy meal! This year, we exceeded our stated goal of 100 families as we accommodated 110 resulting in over 500 people being fed. With coordination from many Court volunteers, donations of non-perishable food items, and other contributions, we were able to continue using this festive holiday of appreciation to serve families who have come in contact with our courts.

DC Family Court Handbook for Those without an Attorney

The DC Superior Court's Family Court recently published a handbook for residents who do not have an attorney representing them in divorce, custody, and child support cases. The handbook contains information on various topics such as DC laws and rules regarding divorce, custody, and child support, and what to expect before, during, and after filing such cases.

In addition, the Court has a Family Court Self Help Center to assist those without an attorney. The Center is located in room JM-570 of the Moultrie Courthouse at 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, DC, 20001.

You can access the handbook at: <http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/documents/DR-Handbook-for-Self-Represented-Parties.pdf>.

To learn about the Family Court Self-Help Center go to: http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/public/aud_family/selfhelp.jsf.

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For article submissions, please contact José Idler

Judge Melvin Wright Talks Jury Duty



On Monday, November 3, 2014, Judge Melvin Wright of the DC Superior Court was a guest panelist on WAMU's The Diane Rehm Show speaking on the topic of "Jury Duty in America Today." Judge Wright is not only the Presiding Judge of the Court's Civil Division but also serves as Chair of the Jury Committee.

The show featured legal professionals and professors including Andrew Ferguson from The University of the District of Columbia School of Law and author of "Why Jury Duty Matters: A Citizen's Guide to Constitutional Action."

The discussion began with a dialogue about the percentage of people who show up in response to a summons for jury duty, which is traditionally low in cities across the country for a number of reasons. Ms. Rehm asked Judge Wright if this left judges frustrated. Judge Wright said that the answer is "to find solutions instead of being frustrated" and suggested that more be done to educate citizens of the history of voting rights and its impact in our country. Ferguson supported the notion of better civic education by stating "...that jury duty and the jury process is [an] educative moment, where you learn the skills of democracy."

The broadcast concluded with questions from the public addressing topics such as the impact of jury duty service on those who are self-employed and the financial concerns of serving.

Feel free to listen to the "Jury Duty in America Today" podcast at: http://thedianerehmshow.org/shows/2014-11-03/jury_duty_in_america_today.

Earlier this year, Professor Ferguson published the "New Juror Orientation Video" for the DC Superior Court. The video can be found here: <http://dccourts.gov/internet/jurors/petitjury/main.jsf>.

Pakistani Prosecutors Visit Superior Court to Learn about the Domestic Violence Unit

On September 18, DC Superior Court Judge Heidi Pasichow and Willie Agosto, Director of the Domestic Violence Unit met with a delegation of women prosecutors from Pakistan's provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh.

In the absence of both a criminal and civil code tailored to address allegations of domestic violence in Pakistan, the visitors focused the discussion on how the Superior Court handles the more than 5000 civil protection order petitions and the more than 2900 DV misdemeanor cases filed annually in the DV Unit in recent years. Both sides found the information exchange fascinating. The delegation's visit was coordinated by the US Justice Department.



Hispanic Heritage Month Kick-Off: Coffee and Dazatone

By Raquel Trabal

On October 3, 2014, the smell of coffee brewing drew people to the Juror's Lounge, where employees had a chance to warm up with a cup of coffee, provided by Karlacá Coffee Company, before exercising with Danzatone. Court employee Marlena Otlans prepared a display of how coffee makes its way from the farm to the table and provided samples of freshly harvested and locally roasted, organic Colombian coffee. Employees were able to enjoy a cup of hot or iced coffee while they learned more about where coffee comes from and waited for the Danzatone to kick off.

The court's Hispanic Heritage Month committee kicked off the month-long celebration in a healthy way, with a group exercise class. However, this was not your average class but one with four instructors leading a brave group of individuals which included Avrom Sickel, Jo-Ella Brooks, James Plunkett, Magistrate Judge Kenia Seoane-Lopez, myself and several others through a high impact dance routine that required us to move every muscle to the rhythm of fast paced Latin music. Much to everyone's surprise, we all survived and even had a great time. The instructors got everyone in attendance to participate in some manner, even if they were only sitting in their chairs moving their hands and cheering the participants on.

Danzatone is the creation of Family Court's William Sanchez and four other very well-toned individuals. Participants were so enthused that there was even talk of adding the fitness class to the WOW schedule. After the exercise portion was completed, attendees were able to indulge in a variety of Latin snacks and sweet treats accompanied with a nice warm cup of organic Colombian coffee.



Danzatone in action



Sampling Colombian coffee

Hispanic Heritage Month: continued from front page

present the award to Mr. Luis Maldonado, a former colleague of hers when she worked at the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF).

Judge José López presented the Legal Community Award to **James Freg-Cadima, DC Regional Director, Mexican Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF)** for his great work as Director of the Southeast region in the areas of education, employment, immigration, and voting rights.

Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo presented the Allen Klein Distinguished Service Award to **Monica Palacios** for her work as Director of the Office for Human Rights whose mission is to investigate and eradicate discrimination for the residents of the District of Columbia. The award was received by Diana Godoy on behalf of Ms. Palacios who could not attend the ceremony.

Committee member James Plunkett made a grand entrance in an authentic mariachi ensemble and sombrero in tow and performed a couple of classic "rancheras" engaging the crowd in a sing-along.

The ceremony ended on a high-note, with closing remarks from the Court of Appeals Clerk Julio Castillo, who congratulated the awardees and thanked them for their service to the community. He also asked the audience to join him in applauding the committee and urged everyone to get in line for some food with a resounding "Buen Provecho!"

A special thanks 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.

DC Superior Court and the DC Child and Family Services Agency Co-Hosted the 28th Annual Adoption Day



New families introduced by Barbara Harrison.

On Saturday, November 22nd, DC Superior Court's Family Court and the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) co-hosted the 28th Annual Adoption Day ceremony, an event designed to celebrate the joy of adoption. The well-known news anchor Barbara Harrison emceed the ceremony. In addition to her news anchor duties, she reports a weekly segment, "Wednesday's Child," featuring children available for adoption.

Thirty-eight adoptions were finalized as the new families were introduced and their respective judges signed the adoption decrees.

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Mayor Vincent Gray, and CFSA Director Brenda Donald gave special remarks underscoring the importance of adoption in the District. Congresswoman Norton congratulated CFSA as the number of children in DC foster care has been reduced significantly

Click on the courts' website at <http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/media/adoptionday/main.jsf> for full coverage of the Adoption Day celebration.



Nineteen year old Jamie was the oldest adoptee.



New dad with two of his four children.

Superior Court Offers New Civil Handbook for Parties without Attorneys

The DC Superior Court's Civil Division has prepared a 20 page handbook for civil litigants who are representing themselves. The handbook, designed for those without legal training, explains court processes, refers litigants to relevant court rules, and explains how to best utilize court services.

"Over the past several years, we have expanded the number of Resource Centers available at the courthouse to assist those parties who are representing themselves, offered Live Chat features on our website to help answer questions from those who prefer on-line questions to phone calls, and worked with the bar to increase the number of pro bono hours local attorneys are serving. This handbook is the latest step in our efforts to assist those who cannot afford an attorney or who prefer to represent themselves in court," said Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield. "I am grateful to those who worked diligently to make this document of great practical use to DC residents. It is easily readable for those without legal training, giving guidance about how the court system works, so that access to justice can be real for all seeking it in our courthouse, he added.

The handbook can be found here: <http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/documents/Handbook-for-Self-Represented-Parties.pdf>

Information about Resource Centers and other information for unrepresented parties can be found here: <http://www.dccourts.gov/internet/public/prose.jsf>



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Key Themes

Compensation

State compensation programs are continually finding ways to reach more victims, determine claims more efficiently, gain information from law enforcement, and expand benefits to eligible victims.

Program Spotlight

Delaware

Delaware processes compensation claims quickly. Compensation investigators can retrieve information instantly from police reports in DELJIS, the information system used by all law enforcement, justice, and corrections agencies across the state's three counties. If the relevant information is available, urgent matters, including requests for funeral and burial benefits, are decided in hours rather than days.

Also in Delaware, the **Child Counseling and Assessment Program** offers up to \$1,200 toward the cost of psychological assessments and short-term outpatient therapy to meet the mental health needs of child victims younger than age 18 at the time of the crime. A police report is not required for program eligibility. This benefit helps—

- Reduce the long-term traumatic impact of crime for child victims.
- Identify symptoms of trauma that might not be recognized by family members.
- Potentially reduce the need for mental health care and other social services later in life.

District of Columbia

The District of Columbia Compensation Program works in an urban, high-crime, high-population-density jurisdiction. In the District, victims can meet with officers at one of two separate locations for personalized assistance with filing a claim or to pick up a check. The one-to-one assistance helps ensure that victims receive all applicable benefits and reduces errors that can slow down processing time. A satellite office is located in a hospital in a section of the District.

Crime Victims Compensation Program Highlighted in Department of Justice Report

The Superior Court's Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP) was one of five nationwide programs highlighted by the US Department of Justice in its *Innovative Practices for Victim Services - Report from the Field*.

The report notes that CVCP has two locations and provides one-on-one assistance, which helps ensure that victims receive all applicable benefits and reduces errors that can slow down the time it takes for victims to be compensated. The report also highlights the agreements CVCP has with pharmacies and the provision of food cards as conveniences that help the program better serve crime victims in DC.

See the Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime's Report on Innovation at: <http://ovc.gov/pubs/InnovativePractices/compensation.html>

Leading the Courts: A Call to Action

Remarks by Executive Officer Anne Wicks at the DC Courts Leadership Conference

Today we are holding our first-ever leadership conference for managers and supervisors at **all** levels in the DC Courts. I believe it is important for us to **truly** be a leadership team – to work as a team, to think as a team, and to function as a team. And to me that means, among other things, working collaboratively, having one another's backs, listening to and sharing ideas, and fostering camaraderie.

Over the past several years Cheryl Bailey (Acting Clerk of the Superior Court), Julio Castillo (Clerk of the Court of Appeals) and I have spent a good deal of time creating our Executive or E-Team. It has taken a lot of work. It has required that we share ourselves and our vulnerabilities with one another in order to build trust. In the end it has been rewarding and fulfilling. Because it helps to feel connected to and supported by the people with whom you work. **Each day we spend more time here – at the courthouse – than we do at home with our loved ones. And that is why it is so important that we make the DC Courts a Great Place to Work!!**

How we feel at work -- how we are treated everyday and how we treat others – is at the core of whether or not the Courts are a great place to work. **It is really pretty simple: the more satisfied and happy we are at work, the more engaged we are....and the more engaged we are - the more productive we are. Which means that we do our jobs better and provide better service to the public. After all, we are public servants and we have a responsibility to fulfill the Court's mission to provide justice to our city's residents.**

Employee Viewpoint Survey results since 2009 have found that we are proud to work for the DC Courts and are committed to ensuring justice for all. We are mission driven! And we believe our mission is of great benefit to our community.

But I can tell you from personal experience that believing in a just and good mission is not enough. My first job out of grad school was with a national support center of the Legal Services Corporation. We conducted research and policy analysis for attorneys representing the poor, and our work supported class action litigation to right societal wrongs.

We were all young and idealistic, and we believed in our mission. But the Director of the Center – my boss – was

completely dysfunctional. On a personal level he ignored his staff, usually arriving at work hours after the rest of us, without a hello or any acknowledgement that we existed. He seemed disinterested in the work – never reviewing reports or engaging staff in discussions. He didn't coach us, he didn't support us, he didn't care about us. And in the end he lost every one of us. Mission does not trump leadership. What we do seldom outweighs how we feel.

As you know, we have learned a lot from the recently completed Values Assessment and from listening to our employees. Their perspective is really no different than ours: we must live our values in order to truly make the DC Courts a great place to work. Our current court culture is described **by all of us** in ways that are not consistent with our values. We must change our culture. We must work, talk, and behave in ways that reflect our values.

Leadership is critical to making this happen, in two ways. First, it is our job to set the culture, define expectations, model appropriate behavior, and ensure accountability. Second, it is our responsibility to lead consistently. Inconsistency on our part creates perceptions of unfairness and favoritism, and it leads to a lack of trust.

Everyone in this room is a leader. If you manage a division, if you manage a branch, if you manage a unit...a major part of your job is leadership.

A consistent leadership approach is critical to creating a great place to work. Today is intended to be a starting point in building a shared leadership approach.

The E-Team has begun the process by articulating what leaders will be responsible for as the Courts continue to evolve and strive to be a workplace we are proud of. To date we have identified five principles that we feel are key to great leadership at the Courts (see article on back cover).

These leadership principles are important because they embody behaviors that I believe create an environment that will give us the best results. And that's **an environment where staff are empowered to make decisions and to develop creative and innovative solutions. That's an environment where staff are encouraged to work collaboratively, across bureaucratic and divisional lines, and to act with**

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DC Courts Values Leadership Conference

More than 150 court leaders and managers gathered on Friday, December 5 for the first Leadership Conference at the DC Courts. The goal of the conference was to bring together not only senior leaders, such as a Division Directors, but also managers at all levels to discuss what it means to be a leader and exemplify our values of *Accountability, Excellence, Fairness, Integrity, Respect and Transparency* at the DC Courts.

“Everyone in this room is a leader. If you manage a division, if you manage a branch, if you manage a unit...a major part of your job is leadership,” said Executive Officer Anne Wicks.

The training day started with a discussion of what the current culture of the DC Courts looks like, and as the sessions progressed the discussion turned to what the future culture should look like and what steps need to be taken to achieve such a culture. Phrases and words such as “working together,” “empowerment,” and “more communication,” were used to describe the desired court culture.

Anne Wicks delivered a call to action, asking leaders and managers to help define the courts leadership philosophy and lead the change process underway at the courts (*full remarks are printed on pages 7 and 8*).

The task is to identify what it means to be a leader and create change. As a first step in this process, the Executive Team—

comprised of Anne Wicks, Acting Clerk of the Superior Court Cheryl Bailey and Court of Appeals Clerk Julio Castillo, identified five principles that will ideally shape the DC Courts leadership philosophy.

The five principles of leadership at the DC Courts:

- *Create an environment that is a Great Place to Work*
- *Promote excellence in service and the administration of justice*
- *Develop employees to contribute their full potential*
- *Collaborate across the organization and encourage innovation*
- *Establish a vision and goals for the future*



Leading the Courts: A Call to Action—Anne Wicks Remarks (continued from page 7)

reciprocity, and to recognize their role as a member of a team. And, that’s an environment where we, as managers, lead by example, build relationships, support and develop others, are open to diverse perspectives, and where we recognize our impact on others.

We cannot change our culture, we cannot create a great place to work, and we cannot ensure that we live our values without the commitment and assistance of **all** leaders, **at all levels**, throughout the Courts. That is why we are here today. To begin the journey. To begin the discussion. To begin to make the change required.

Change is a process, and it is often slow and plodding. It can be frightening and it can be exhilarating. We will experience progress and we will experience backsliding. We will be challenged by fear and we will be motivated by

courage. But, ultimately, we will change. Because change is inevitable.

I am asking you to commit to being a part of the change. During the afternoon we will begin this important leadership journey in earnest. We will get real about the barriers we think stand between us and our desired culture. And we will take the first of many small steps that will lead us to big change.

I hope that by the end of today we will have gotten things off our chests, gotten a clearer understanding of our role as leaders, and gained an appreciation for our similarities, rather than our differences. **Today is only the beginning, but it can lead us down the path to greater satisfaction, greater engagement, and greater achievement.**