



Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

August 2017

Jorge Vila Sworn In as Magistrate Judge

DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin sworn in the Court's newest Magistrate Judge **Jorge M. Vila**, on Monday, June 26, 2017.



DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin (left) swearing in Magistrate Judge Jorge Vila.

Magistrate Judge Vila has been a member of the DC Bar for 9 years and a member of the Counsel for Child Abuse and Neglect panel since 2010, handling more than 90 cases in the District. Through these cases, Magistrate Judge Vila has represented parents charged with abuse and neglect, those seeking adoption, and parents involved in custody matters. Judge Vila has worked as an investigator and attorney on the Criminal Justice Agency panel as well. He received a BBA in Accounting from the University of Puerto Rico and earned his JD at InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico. He was a law clerk at the San Juan, Puerto Rico Superior Court and went on to do defense work at the Public Defender's Office in Caguas, Puerto Rico. There he represented individuals charged with felonies, litigating more than a dozen jury and bench trials and successfully negotiating hundreds of plea agreements.

Continues on page 6

Inside Full Court Press

Judge Herbert Dixon Appointed as Chair of the ABA Standing Committee on the American Judicial System

New DCCA Director of the Committee on Admissions & Unauthorized Practice of Law

International Delegations Visiting the DC Courts and the Mission of the Center for Education and Training

DC Superior Court Civil Division Names Pamela Hunter as Deputy Director

Nicole Stevens Promoted to Deputy Register of Wills

40 New Volunteer Child Advocates Sworn-In this Summer

DC Courts Community Service and Learning Program

Course Offering: Conversations at the Core

Open To All Trusted By All Justice For All



American Bar Association President Hilarie Bass has appointed Judge Herbert Dixon (Ret.) as the 2017 – 2018 chair of the ABA Standing Committee on the American Judicial System. This committee coordinates activities within the ABA and acts as a clearing-house for the Association’s activities relating to preservation and improvement of the judicial system, judicial independence, and the preservation of fair and impartial courts. The committee also supports efforts to increase public understanding of the importance of fair and impartial courts, the role of the judicial branch, and other matters related to the fair and efficient administration of justice within American judicial systems.

Judge Dixon retired from the Superior Court of DC in 2015 after thirty years of service. He was appointed to successive 15-year terms - first by President Ronald Reagan and subsequently by President William Clinton.

Judge Dixon is a former member of the ABA Board of Governors and the House of Delegates, and a former chair of the National Conference of State Trial Judges. In addition to his current service as chair of the ABA Standing Committee on the American Judicial System, Judge Dixon serves on the ABA Journal Board of Editors, The Judges’ Journal Editorial Board, and the ABA Techshow Planning Board.

Judge Dixon is the technology columnist for The Judges’ Journal magazine and senior judicial adviser to the Center for Legal and Court Technology (formerly the Courtroom 21 Project), a joint initiative of William & Mary Law School and the National Center for State Courts.

With over 400,000 members, the American Bar Association is one of the largest voluntary professional membership organizations in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.

The Jurors Call-In System is Now Operational

Petit jurors should call 202-879-4604 between 5:00pm and 12:00am (midnight) one business day before their scheduled date to determine if they are needed for service. Callers should have their nine-digit juror bar code number ready when calling, select option 5 and follow the prompts.

New DCCA Director of the Committee on Admissions & Unauthorized Practice of Law



The District of Columbia Court of Appeals is pleased to welcome Ms. Shela O. Shanks as its new Director of the Committee on Admissions & Unauthorized Practice of Law. Prior to joining the DC Courts on August 21, Ms. Shanks served as the Director of Admissions & Counsel on Unauthorized Practice of Law for the Nebraska Supreme Court in Lincoln, NE. In that capacity, Ms. Shanks managed all aspects of the attorney admissions process, including but not limited to coordinating character and fitness interviews in

preparation for hearings, and administering the bar exam. Additionally, Ms. Shanks supervised investigations of unauthorized practice of law (UPL) complaints, drafted advisory opinions, rule revisions, and negotiated consent agreements. She was also active within the legal community for purposes of educating about the need for taking preventative measures to guard against UPL.

Prior to her time in Nebraska, Ms. Shanks was a Staff Attorney for the New York law firm of Kasowitz Benson & Torres, LLP where her focus areas were Commercial Litigation and Pro Bono Practice. She also worked for Lawyers Without Borders, as well as the Center for Constitutional Rights. Among a vast number of boards and organizations, Ms. Shanks is a member of the National Conference of Bar Examiners Education Committee, the American Bar Association UPL School Planning Committee, Council of Bar Admissions Administrators' Program and Testing Committees.

Ms. Shanks earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (minor in Portuguese) from the University of Nebraska, and her Juris Doctor from the Brooklyn Law School. She is a member of both the Nebraska, and New York Bars. On a personal note, Ms. Shanks is a mother of four, an avid swimmer, and has a passion for art and music.

New DCSC Online Case Search Platform: eAccess

DC Superior Court is excited to announce the launch of eAccess on August 11. eAccess replaces Court Cases Online as the public's online source for court records. The system allows the public to view online the images in some non-confidential court documents. For queries about how the new system works, please contact the Executive Office at 879-1700 or the webmaster at webmaster@dcsc.gov. If you are interested in learning more about the system, here is a link to a video demonstrating how to search on the new system: <https://youtu.be/9ZihhhMLFwg>.

International Delegations Visiting the DC Courts and the Mission of the Center for Education and Training

The DC Courts have long embraced the principle of a global judicial profession through the exchange of information and ideas with courts from around the world. As a large, urban court system located within the nation's capital, the DC Courts are uniquely positioned to share best practices in the administration of justice.



DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin (center) hosting a delegation from Nepal.

Understanding the Courts' vision of a global community and shared core values, the DC Courts Center for Education and Training (CET) has provided the Courts with the highest quality training and instruction for judicial officers and court staff for more than two decades.



DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby (left) and the ambassador from the Bahamas.

As part of its mission, CET's staff design interdisciplinary courses and lead innovative educational programming in law, technology, ethics, leadership, court management and other emerging areas of education.

CET is committed to ensuring that its programs are interactive, informative and reflective of the diverse communities the Courts serve. The staff is guided by the Court's commitment to exploring new and difficult social and technical issues.

These innovations have earned the Courts recog-

nition for its leadership within the US and abroad. Last year, CET hosted over 1,500 visitors and more than 100 delegations, most from other nations, as part of its Court Visitor Program. Judicial officers from some of the world's highest courts have participated in customized tours, court observations and had opportunities to hear from our judicial officers and Administrators about court initiatives and streamlined operations.

"The Center for Education and Training is proud to support the DC Court's unique role in the international community. Sharing best practices and strengthening the rule of law and the development of justice systems across the world is an important part of our mission" CET Director Meredith Hofford noted.

So far this year, delegations arrived from: Spain, China, Russia, Japan, Brazil, Kenya, Eastern Caribbean, Korea, Egypt, Argentina, Turkey, Nigeria, Senegal, Philippines, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago, often requesting information about the Court's drug court programs, jury system, mediation services, case management system and other operational areas of the court.

Continues on page 6

DC Superior Court Civil Division Names Pamela Hunter as Deputy Director



The Civil Division is pleased to announce the promotion of Pamela Hunter to the position of Deputy Director of the Civil Division effective July 24, 2017. Ms. Hunter formerly served as the Performance Management and Employee Relations Officer for the District of Columbia Courts' Human Resources Division.

A certified professional in human resources, Pamela has over 20 years of experience working as an internal consultant in various human resources disciplines including strategic planning, training and development; organizational and employee development, performance management, and diversity and inclusion. Prior to joining the DC Courts, Pamela worked for the Chief Administrative Office of the US House of Representatives, the Circuit Executive for the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and Westover Consultants, Inc., a management consultant firm. Pamela holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Elizabeth City State University and a Master of Arts in Human Resource Development from The George Washington University in Washington DC.

Nicole Stevens Promoted to Deputy Register of Wills

Congratulations to Nicole Stevens, Esq., who has been promoted to Deputy Register of Wills in the DC Superior Court Probate Division. She had been serving as Acting Deputy Register of Wills, replacing Karla Saguil, Esq., who currently serves as the Director of the Special Operations Division. Ms. Stevens joined the DC Courts in October 2008 as a Assistant Deputy Register of Wills, and has a well-deserved reputation for her competence, fairness and drive for excellence.

Prior to coming to the DC Courts, Ms. Stevens was in private practice providing legal expertise and advice in real estate, landlord/tenant, business formation, contract disputes, and most importantly, probate matters, for the firm of Loewinger and Brand, PLLC. Prior to this, she held various positions, including serving as Program Director for the Institute of African American Writing. She is admitted to practice in DC, New York and New Jersey and is a graduate of the DC Courts' Management Training Program, as well as American University (JD) and Howard University (BA). Make sure to congratulate Ms. Stevens in her new role on the Probate Division team and this well-deserved promotion.



40 New Volunteer Child Advocates Sworn-In this Summer



CASA DC is a non-profit with the mission of promoting volunteer advocacy so that every abused and neglected child in the DC foster care system can be safe, establish permanence and have the opportunity to thrive. This mission is carried out through the recruitment, training and support of volunteer advocates (CASA volunteers) who serve youth in the District. CASA volunteers provide a voice in court for young people in foster care. They establish a unique and supportive relationship with their young person to assist them in achieving safe, permanent homes and key life skills. After 30+ hours of training, CASA volunteers are sworn in by the DC Superior Court and advocate to secure critical services for the youth they are assigned, often helping them connect to jobs, educational opportunities, and housing. An Inspector General report for the U.S. Department of Justice said foster children who have CASA volunteers spend less time in long-term foster care and are less likely to be homeless. More than 90% of children with CASA volunteers never reenter the child welfare system, a significant difference compared to the general foster care population.

On June 8 and again on August 3 of this year, DC Superior Court Magistrate Judge Shelley Mulkey [*pictured, center*] swore in groups of CASAs for DC youth. We are pleased to see so many smiling faces of people who are devoting their time to improving the lives of DC children in foster care.

Jorge Vila Sworn In as Magistrate Judge — Continued from front cover

Magistrate Judge Vila has also been heavily involved with the Latin-American Youth Center, giving lectures to families from the community concerning child abuse prevention. He is also an active member of the Board of the Friends of the Superior Court, a group that supports court-involved youth, through events such as the annual Adoption Day celebration and the Back to School Bash as well as community events.

International Delegations Visit the DC Courts — Continued from page 4

Many foreign delegations are looking for a blueprint of court programs to take back home for adoption within their own courts. In addition, some are in search of concrete steps to protect growing threats to judicial independence.

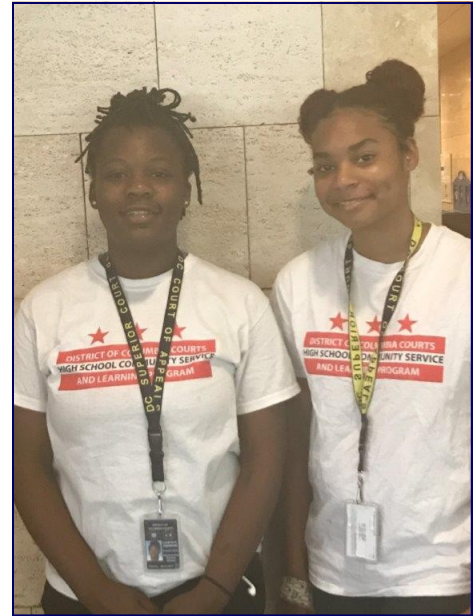
DC Courts Community Service and Learning Program

Meet the Students of the DC Courts Community Service and Learning Program for 2017. This program was implemented to provide a venue for high school students to earn community service hours at the DC Courts and to learn about the functions of the judicial system. Over the course of six weeks, the program provides students with an overview of the Court's Divisions and core operational functions and allows them to earn up to 116 community service hours.

A special thank you to:

Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo; Kinita Musnug; Thomas Hedgepeth; Cassandra Signifis; Joy Jefferson and Karla Saguil.

Princess Duffy from the Administrative Services Division serves as the Community Service & Learning Program Manager.



The **36th Annual Employee Awards Ceremony**, to honor employees for their outstanding job performance and achievements, will take place on:
Thursday, September 28, 2017.

Mark Your Calendars!

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

Inquiries and submission should be sent to the Executive Office, Room 6680

CONVERSATIONS @THE CORE



2017 - 2018 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.

September 27 and 28, 2017
October 17 and 24, 2017
November 20 and 22, 2017
December 6 and 12, 2017

February 15 and 28, 2018
March 13 and 27, 2018
April 5 and 6, 2018
May 17 and 18, 2018