

I would like to thank Mr. Cafritz and the Cafritz Foundation for this award and the wonderful work they have done for the city for so many years. I'd like to thank Mr. James Robinson, the George Washington University Center for Excellence and of course Kate and Jason, who guided us winners through 3 months of interviews, videotaping and photoshoots that made us look and feel like movie stars. I'd also like to congratulate the other winners and finalists, many of whom we have partnered with in the Court Social Services Division in tackling the issue of truancy in the District of Columbia. We have worked with APRA for substance abuse, Department of Behavioral Health for mental health services, and one of our closest stakeholders in the Court's Status Offender Unit, someone who could very easily be behind this podium now for all her hard work and leadership, Ms. Hilary Cairns. Ms. Cairns and the Court Social Services Division have partnered for many years in diverting many of our youth out of the juvenile justice system and to her program, ACE. I also would like to recognize another finalist, Franklyn Malone, who is a retiree of Court Social Services Division and continues his phenomenal work with his 100 Fathers Program.

And of course, my Superior Court and Court Social Services Division Family. What a wonderful place to work. I'd like to thank our Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, whose leadership over the years has resulted in our Court receiving national recognition for our innovative programming and customer service. Ms. Terri Odom, our Director of Court Social Services Division who allowed me to take risks and chances, and even in those instances where I fell short, would refer to them as "teachable moments." Thank God for "teachable moments." The Honorable Hiram Puig-Lugo, our Presiding Judge of Family Court; along with Fannie Barksdale, Steven Dean, Lydia Curtis, Jennifer Snow, Cheryl Rogers Brown and Lawrence Weaver – thank you for your recommendations and participation in my portfolio. And last but by no means least, I want to thank my family and friends and colleagues from the DC Courts and Superior Court's Family Court Social Services Division for all your congratulatory wishes over the past few months.

A truancy referral form involves some 40 pages from the school system detailing a child's issues as they pertain to school attendance. Last academic year my team, the SOJBDP, received well over 1,000 of these, resulting in sky-rocketing caseloads. Each one of these referrals not only represents a child who is truant, but a child in need, an angry child, sometimes a child being bullied or a family, poor or in crisis. PUT PEOPLE FIRST.

These kids and families don't come to us willingly, they are sometimes resistant or maybe they have been involved in numerous systems that have failed them in the past. Or maybe they have just given up. Those of you who work in the human services field can identify with this. There's a saying, that "kids put up walls, not to keep people out, but to see who cares enough to break them down." PUT PEOPLE FIRST.

The successes are sometimes rare, they may come immediately or years later when the case has been long gone, but when it works, particularly in the case of a child, it is one of the most rewarding experiences you can ever have. When you have changed an individual's life course based on the interventions you have put in place, a referral that you submitted, or how you counseled them, there's no feeling like it in the world... to change someone's life for the better. When you run into that child years later as an adult, maybe they have graduated from college, maybe they are married and they remember your name with a smile....you've done it. You did it because YOU PUT PEOPLE FIRST....You put the paper down, you opened your door, you didn't have them waiting while you were on the phone, you may have greeted with a smile...it is often times the small things we do in this field that make the difference.

This has been my goal with every family and child I have worked with in my 25 year career and what I encourage the teams I have managed over the past 12 years to do. PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST I learned this at an early age from my mother, Ms. Audrey Simmons, who is here. Mom, I thank you for the guidance, the work ethic and setting the foundation. I saw my mom take in neighbors,

relatives, people who were not well or who needed assistance...and ask for nothing in return...and she is still doing it to this day. As a manager in the postal service for many years, she also taught me to be good to my staff. PUT PEOPLE FIRST.

I STAND TRUE TO THIS...putting others first as much as I possibly can, making them a priority, promoting their growth and professional development, SHARING WITH THEM, coaching them and laughing with them. And with this in mind, I'd like lastly to thank my dynamic team from the SOJBDP: Jeryl McTootle, Venitta McCrea, Kenrick Goulbourne, Twanna Blocker, Steven Dean, Robert Bacon, Alandia Bass, Cecil Batts, Tiffany McKoy, Labanuel Guy, Morella Houwen and our Program Manager Shelia Roberson-Adams.

In closing, I'd like to believe that I am receiving this prestigious award because I CHOSE TO PUT PEOPLE FIRST, sometimes it is not easy and the benefits may not come right away, but in the long run, when you put people first, OFTEN TIMES, IN RETURN, THEY'LL PUT YOU FIRST.

Thank you