



# Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

April 2013

## From the DC Courts Executive Team April Update: Strategic Plan and Values

As you know, the Courts rolled out their new Strategic Plan for 2013-2017 at a lively event on Friday, March 1. The Plan serves as the Courts' blueprint for the next five years and lays out our strategic priorities, many of which will be familiar to all of you.

Under our vision of "Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All," our

first goal is to **resolve conflicts in a fair and timely manner**.

The second strategic priority is to enhance **access to justice**,

eliminating existing barriers and ensuring that court procedures do not create additional barriers. Thirdly, we want to retain and continue developing a **strong judiciary and workforce**, an essential ingredient for achieving excellence in the administration of justice and creating a Great Place to Work. Our fourth goal is to maintain a **sound infrastructure**, making sure that we have appropriate and secure physical facilities and state-of-the-art technology. Finally, our fifth goal is to strengthen **public trust and confidence** in the courts.

A new and prominent feature of our Plan is the emphasis on values: **Accountability**,



*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.*

**Excellence, Fairness, Integrity, Respect and Transparency.**

Values are core principles that underlie our behavior towards each other and the public and are thus an essential component in carrying out our vision, strengthening our organizational culture and ensuring that the Courts are a Great Place to Work!

We have asked division directors to discuss the Strategic Plan in your divisions by the end of the month. You will be hearing more about our goals and values, both in these meetings and from us. We also encourage everyone to discuss these goals and values and think of the ways in which they apply in our daily tasks at work.

Finally, we had a very successful Spring Training day on April 19. We hope that you found all the sessions productive and inspiring. We will also be holding a brown-bag lunch on Monday, April 29. The discussion will be more informal than our December townhall and we invite everyone to attend. This will be a great opportunity to interact and continue fostering our culture of communication.

Thank you for everything you do.

### 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*



#### 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.

**Open To All Trusted By All Justice For All**

## “It’s Strategic”: Strategic Plan kick-off discusses Values at Work for Justice

The DC Courts proudly announced their third strategic plan with a roll-out event for court employees. Featuring two sessions—one in the Ceremonial Courtroom of the Historic Courthouse and a subsequent session in the Juror’s Lounge of the Moultrie Courthouse—the kick-off event began with a welcome by the Strategic Planning Leadership Council’s (SPLC) co-chairs, Judge Herbert Dixon and Judge Phyllis Thompson. Joining the judges at the podium, Lisa VanDeVeer, Director of the Office of Strategic Planning, gave a word of thanks to the Chief Judges and members of the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration for their continued support for the plan.

Sabrina Belt, Deputy Clerk in the Criminal Division, then engaged the audience with “It’s Strategic”, an interactive trivia game testing employees on their knowledge of the Courts. Ten volunteers were selected, divided into two teams and asked to brainstorm team names before answering the questions. “That was the most fun we’ve had in this courtroom in a long time,” quipped Chief Judge Eric Washington.

Following the game, Chief Judge Eric Washington initiated a discussion of the strategic plan in which he addressed the reasons for the plan. “The plan will enable us to build on the successes of our previous plans as we continue to enhance our service to the community,” said Chief Judge Washington, also chair of the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration. Chief Judge Lee Satterfield then focused on the actual content of the plan. According to Chief Judge Satterfield, “The DC Courts constantly strive to improve our service to the public – through timely decision making, improved access, and fair procedures. This plan will help us take our successes to another level, as we integrate key court values throughout our processes,”

Anne Wicks, the Courts’ Executive Officer, rounded out the presentation by reviewing the values. “We are undertaking a significant management effort to more deeply ingrain the values of Accountability, Excellence, Fairness, Integrity, Respect and Transparency into our work culture. The values will enable us to continue building a Great Place to Work and strengthen our service to the public.”

Designed with input from a record 4,000 people, the new plan aims to strengthen the DC Courts’ community by enriching the workplace culture through commitment to values that facilitate justice. Intended to cover the years 2013-2017, the new plan is expected to build significantly on the progress of the past two plans.



Led by Sabrina Belt, the audience engages in “It’s Strategic.”

### Woodstream Christian Academy debate team visits the DC Courts

By Kara Hart, Monica Echols and Taylor Robinson,  
Woodstream Christian Academy students

The Woodstream Christian Academy Debate Team and their coach, Douglas Kump, embarked on a new experience Friday, February 22, 2013. The students were given the rare opportunity to tour the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and the Superior Court and interact with judges who delivered eye-opening talks that would impact the attendees’ future career choices. Absorbed in the captivating tales of the demanding yet rewarding life of a judge shared by tour guide Tracy Nutall, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Court of Appeals,

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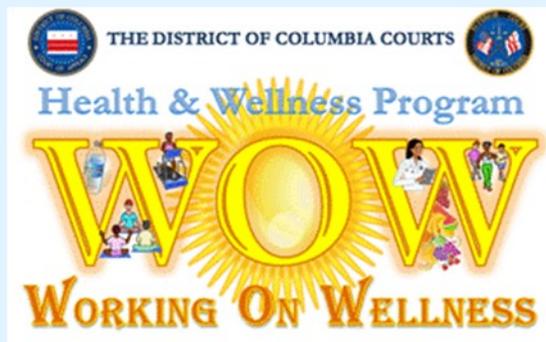
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Leah Gurowitz, Publisher

José Idler, Editor

Anita Jarman, Communications Assistant

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## We are pleased to announce the new WOW Ambassadors

### Family Court Social Services

Tiffany Tinch

### Court of Appeals

Tracy Nutall

### Center for Education and Training

Lou Shack

### Administrative Services

Donnell Davis

### Court Reporting and Recording

Margary Rogers  
Vicky Cunningham

### Special Operations

Sharon Ruiz  
Donna Little  
Sonya Pollock  
Linda Green

### Auditor Master

Sandra Arrington  
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### Family Court Operations

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Julie Bruns  
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### Civil Division

Yerelyne Betancourt  
Edward Meeks  
Tamira Roberson  
Tyvonda Downing

### Clerk of the Superior Court

Barbara Green

### Executive Office

Deborah Swingon-Stokes

### Domestic Violence

Daniel Ruto  
Davina Lloyd

## 14 weddings on the 14th



On the most celebrated day of love, February 14<sup>th</sup>, the DC Superior Court performed 14 civil ceremonies for couples from the District and as far away as Lewis Perry, PA and Roanoke, VA. Performing weddings almost every half hour from 9:30 am until well into the afternoon, the Superior Court's Marriage Bureau was filled with excited couples, warm memories, and the local news media.

On average, about six to ten civil unions are performed daily, but the Marriage Bureau was thrilled to schedule 14 couples who were excited to have their ceremonies – and from now on their anniversaries – occur on Valentine's Day. Among the couples were two Navy lieutenants, two Capitol Police Officers, and a District couple who met at a Metrobus stop. "We missed one bus, caught the next, and it was a blessing," said Nicole McCray, newly married to Eric Brooks. Michael Lausterer of Pennsylvania stated that "Everyone should have the right to marry," as he exchanged vows with spouse Stephen Jarvis.

## From Emancipation to a Dream to Yes We Can, DC Courts celebrate Black History Month 2013

This February, in honor of Black History Month, the DC Courts' hosted a series of programs under the theme: "From Emancipation to a Dream to Yes We Can." From the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Washington, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech (1963), and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Inauguration of President Barack Obama, the programs celebrated significant achievements in Black History.



*Hari Jones*

To kick-off the Black History Month celebration, the Courts hosted Dr. Hari Jones, Curator of the African American Civil War Freedom Foundation and Museum, to explain the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Dr. Jones delivered a dynamic lecture that brought the entire crowd to their feet .

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, the Black History Committee presented a documentary entitled "Choc'late Soldiers from the USA." The feature-length documentary, directed by Emmy award-winning director Noel Izon, showcased the story of 140,000 Black American soldiers during World War II and thousands of British civilians who crossed a racial divide to forge an unexpected bond. The program celebrated the contributions of the Black men and women who, while serving in a segregated military, did much of the US Army's "heavy lifting" by day and introduced the British population to jazz, jitterbugging and Black American culture by night. The second event in the Black History Month series, the documentary highlighted the first time that Black American soldiers experienced what it is like to be treated as equals and as Americans.

The third event in the Black History Month 2013 series featured local author Rachel Swarns in a discussion of her book *American Tapestry*, about the ancestry of First Lady Michelle Obama. A *New York Times* reporter, Swarns spoke about becoming interested in the project after being assigned to cover the first African-American First Lady, Michelle Obama, after her husband's 2009 inauguration. For her book, Swarns traveled around the country speaking with Mrs. Obama's family members and studying historical re-



*Rachel Swarns*

cords. Through detailed research and DNA testing technology, she managed to trace Mrs. Obama's lineage, finding that she was descended from both slaves and slave-owners. Swarns stated that the story she found "...was really a story of the country itself." Her book has led to a reunion between the descendants of slaves and slave-owners in Mrs. Obama's family tree, as well as the erection of a monument in honor of one of Mrs. Obama's ancestors, a slave girl named Melvinia Shields.



*Omega Psi Phi Fraternity*

In the finale to the Black History Month festivities, the DC Courts honored the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated with its annual "Stepping into Black History" step show. The event included performances from five exhibition teams representing three fraternities and two sororities, including Iota Phi Theta, Omega Psi Phi and Phi Beta Sigma, and Sigma Gamma Rho and Delta Sigma Theta respectively. The Phi Beta Sigma team was noted for its recent win of a regional competition, which qualified it to represent the eastern region at the fraternity's international conclave, where the team will have a chance to compete for recognition as the best Sigma team in the world. The final performance paid tribute to the centennial anniversary of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, bringing together two dynamic generations of Deltas. Originally founded by 22 women dedicated to "promoting academic excellence and providing assistance to persons in need," the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority has grown to include 300,000 members worldwide.

In addition to the Black History Committee's programs, the Courts' communication team brought the celebration to the Intranet, publishing, alongside event coverage, daily information on key events in Black History.

*Continued from p. 2*

the excitement and curiosity was visible on all of the faces of the sixth through twelfth grade students. Not only did the students tour many of the public spaces of newly restored Historic Courthouse, the students were also able to take a rare behind the scene look at the judges' robing and conference areas, as well as the chambers of Chief Judge Eric Washington.

From there, the Debate Team was properly escorted across the street to the Superior Court for a tour led by Crystal Banks, Deputy Director of the Center for Education and Training. During the walk through the Family Court level of the building, Ms. Banks emphasized the importance of discernment and wisdom when it comes to making decisions about life, people, and friendships. Finally, after receiving life-changing advice and intriguing information about the courts, the students were sobered by the reality of two motions hearings before Judge-Heidi Pasichow. Seeing firsthand how a court session flows, the students walked away with a deeper respect for and appreciation of the law.

As the trip came to a close, the students were given the singular opportunity to have a lunch time discussion with Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby, Associate Judge, Court of Appeals, and Judge Robert Rigsby, Associate Judge, Superior Court. During the discussion, the students were focused on the importance of knowing who they are, encouraged to believe in themselves, and were advised to always walk with their heads held high. Judges Blackburne-Rigsby and Rigsby left a lasting impression on each student, emphasizing the following words as guiding their daily activities: Manhood, Womanhood, Scholarship, Uplift, and Perseverance, Faith, Family, and Fortitude.



*The Woodstream Christian Academy debate team*

## DC Courts welcome national conference on fairness in the courts

The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts recently took place in Washington DC. Under the theme of "Remembering the past as we envision and embrace the future," the 3-day conference examined new challenges that have emerged in the justice system.



*Ernest Green delivers the keynote speech.*

With the nation this year celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Washington, the conference addressed topics related to demographic changes, new linguistic minorities, new patterns and forms of discrimination and access-to-justice barriers. DC Court of Appeals Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby served as the conference chair. "The historical backdrop provided a highly significant setting for discussions on ethnic and

racial fairness," noted Eric Washington, Chief Judge of the DC Court of Appeals. The opening session at the DC Historic Courthouse, home to the DC Court of Appeals, reflected on the history of the National Consortium and featured an excerpt from the Legacy of Oral History Project documentary film. In collaboration with the US National Holocaust Museum, the conference devoted its second day to examining the failure of the judicial system in Nazi Germany and ensuring that courts remain open, fair and accessible to all.

The final day of the conference began with a townhall-style plenary session examining how access to the justice system is affected by poverty, race, ethnicity, and language. Participants also attended panels on topics such as the civil right to representation by counsel, the roles of stakeholders in the criminal justice system, implicit bias, new immigrants, language access, and human trafficking. The "Report of the States," a National Consortium tradition, concluded the conference by showcasing innovative programs and initiatives promoting racial and ethnic fairness in the courts. A closing luncheon featured keynote speaker Ernest Green, one of the famed Little Rock Nine. The National Consortium was created to enhance communication and cooperation in promoting racial and ethnic fairness in court system across the nation. For more information on the *National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts*, see: <http://www.national-consortium.org/>.

# DC Superior Court Invited to Present at “Innovations in Criminal Justice Summit II”

*By Tashiana Hudson, Executive Office Intern*

DC’s Community Courts are a new and innovative way of attempting to reduce recidivism for nonviolent misdemeanors, and people are starting to take notice. The Superior Court was recently invited to speak at the Innovations in Criminal Justice Summit II, sponsored by the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, in partnership with the US Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Center for Court Innovation.

DC’s community courts were featured as one of the best court innovations in the country. Criminal Division Presiding Judge Robert Morin, former Presiding Judge Russell Canan and Division Director Dan Cipullo participated in the conference and were part of a panel presentation on the Superior Court’s citywide Community Courts.

We spoke with Judge Canan and asked him a few questions about DC’s Community Courts.

## **Where did the idea for the DC Community Courts come from?**

The idea for problem solving courts started 20 years ago with drug courts, which were put in place to reduce drug usage and crime using rehabilitative measures, rather than just a punitive approach. Eleven years ago, the Superior Court initiated its East of the River Community Court after we saw how well community courts were working in New York’s Midtown Manhattan and Redhook neighborhoods.

The DC East of the River Community Court focused on community service as a rehabilitative measure and social services like education and employment for those charged with crimes. One judge heard all misdemeanor cases from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> police districts, thus becoming familiar with the neighborhood and its crime problems.

In 2012, Westat, an independent research organization, evaluated the East of the River Community Court. Westat found that, “During the first follow-up period recidivism was 68.5% lower among [East of the River Community Court] defendants than among [Police District 5] defendants 360 days after the trigger case filing dates.” In 2012, Chief Judge Satterfield expanded the community court concept to all police districts of the city so that all misdemeanor defendants could benefit from the offered programs.

## **Why have the Community Courts been so effective?**

All of the offenders in community court are low-level, nonviolent offenders. The community courts help offenders before they get too far along. There is a lot of personal interaction with judges and a focus on community service. There are diversion programs, which allow those charged to complete community service instead of going to trial.

## **Will other courts adopt the Community Court system?**

Many other courts are already adopting the community courts idea. New York City and San Francisco have already had positive results with community courts.

## **What other innovative ideas from the Miami conference might the DC Courts consider?**

The DC Courts are already expanding probation reviews in community courts, and the courts are considering expanding probation review in Mental Health Community Court and Drug Court, as well. Probation review involves regular monitoring of probationers by judges. Instead of coming to court and seeing a judge only when they fail to meet the requirements of their probation, probationers would have regularly set reviews with judges. When offenders know they are going to be seeing the judge more frequently, the number of failed probations decreases.



*Judge Russell F. Canan*

# Kave Reviews

Good Afternoon,

What a joy it has been for me as COTR and your colleague to work with Ms. **Callie Byrd-Williams** [Administrative Services] in setting up and kicking off the Courts' two Criminal Program Evaluations.

Ms. Byrd-Williams willingly took it upon herself to develop complete agendas for these meetings for my review, assemble needed supportive documentation (e.g., clearance forms) for contractor team members to complete, manage logistics, including the use of videoconferencing for one of the meetings (as our contractor is located on the West Coast) and to convene and chair both meetings. I was both relieved and delighted to have her support in these ways. Moreover, it was clear that she sees these activities as a part of her responsibilities to the contract, the Courts and the COTR.

In conducting herself with the contract's principals, she has been exceptionally well informed about the contract provisions and contracting procedures, insightful about project implementation, resourceful in obtaining and distributing information necessary to proceed and reliable and calm in managing logistics and other aspects of our project launching efforts.

In just the short time that we have been working on these two new projects for the Courts, I have come to rely on Ms. Byrd-Williams' steady guidance and professionalism and look forward to our continued collaboration.

Best,  
**Joanne F. Pozzo**



*Callie Byrd-Williams*  
*Senior Contract Specialist*

This is to advise you that I visited the Probate Office on January 30, 2013 in reference to the death of my Mother which has been stressful along with a great lost.

I encountered Ms. **Autumn Burrows** who assisted me with professionalism, enthusiasm, immeasurable unparalleled input of the system with a spirit of excellence.

I would like to commend Ms. Burrows as I found her to be an exceptional employee. Please extend my thank you to her for her exceptional service she provided me and at the appointed time for her advancement please consider this letter of commendation.



*Patricia Edwards*  
*Transcript Records Clerk, Court Reporting and Recording*

Thanks so much for your help and the good news. As you say, you may be doing your job, however, you always do it with a great big smile, and a very pleasant attitude that conveys you wouldn't want to be anywhere else or doing anything else. ... You should know that your attitude is noticed and appreciated. Thanks you again for your kindness and professionalism.

# Rave Reviews



Carolyn  
Sargent-Burns

To: Carolyn Sargent-Burns

I just wanted to extend a note of thanks to you and the **Court Reporting Team** for accommodating two Deaf/Hard of Hearing jurors with CART on the same day.

It has been a long standing practice for the Jurors' Office to provide the Court Reporting Division with as much lead time as possible when requesting CART. We are also careful to schedule only one Deaf/HH juror needing CART per day. Yesterday, however, an empanelled juror who was being accommodated with contract interpreters unexpectedly decided she needed CART midway through the trial. Since she was already empanelled, her request took precedence over the juror who was reporting on the first day.

Fearing that we would have to reschedule the potential juror a second time in order to accommodate the empanelled juror, we prepared for the worst. We were pleasantly surprised when you were able to provide CART reporters for both jurors; even though you received the request last-minute.

Kudos, Carolyn, to you and your reporters for a great effort. You are an awesome team.

Dear Mr. Poss:

I am writing to share with you our appreciation for the work and efforts of Norma Thompson and her team (Courtroom Technology) . Over the past few months Ms. Thompson and her team have been very instrumental in helping us better utilize available technology....

More recently Ms. Thompson and her team have been responsive and available to provide the technology required to conduct presentations before senior and mid-level managers. She and her team set-up the available equipment and loaded our presentation on the equipment in the Board of Judges Conference Room. Again, her and her team's responsiveness, suggestions, and recommendations rendered have proven to be beneficial, and we appreciate all their work and efforts.

As we continue to transition to the use of more technology ... we are confident in knowing that Courtroom Technology, Ms. Thompson, her team, and the Courtroom Technology team are available to us along the way.



Courtroom Technology Team (from left to right): Alvin Milton, Norma Thompson, Jakeila Rice and Michael Simms.



Maynard Minor

just had the pleasure of speaking with Mr. **Maynard Minor** at the Small Claims Court. I was so impressed with his professionalism that I requested the contact information for his supervisor so that I could convey my appreciation for his assistance.

am a retired attorney and am assisting a young woman who has been sued in small claims court with navigating her way through the small claims system. I had a number of questions and concerns. Mr. Minor was very forthcoming with information and thoroughly explained the process. He is an articulate young man and readily answered my questions; he is obviously a well-informed employee.