

Full Court Press

Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

Open To All, Trusted By All, Justice For All

December 2006

Volume XXIII Number 4

JUDGE BLACKBURNE-RIGSBY SWORN IN ON COURT OF APPEALS

By Katie Olson, Executive Office Intern



Chief Judge Washington, Judge Blackburne-Rigsby, Judge Rigsby and son Julian Rigsby.

On November 17, 2006, Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby was sworn in as an Associate Judge on the D.C. Court of Appeals. In addition to her colleagues on the Superior Court and the Court of Appeals, a number of distinguished guests attended the investiture, including Mayor-Elect Adrian Fenty, members of the D.C. Council, the executive director and members of the International Association of Women Judges, deans from several area law schools, and Julian Bond, Chairman of the NAACP.

Remarks were offered by a number of colleagues and friends in the community, including the Reverend Wallace Charles Smith of Shiloh Baptist Church, Michael Madigan of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, Professor Patricia Worthy of Howard University School of Law and John

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of Law and John

Payton, of Wilmer Hale, LLP. Everyone who spoke praised Judge Blackburne-Rigsby's commitment to the community and her involvement in civic activities, including serving as a coach and mentor for a Catholic Youth Organization girls basketball team.

Judge Blackburne-Rigsby's husband, Associate Judge Robert Rigsby of the D.C. Superior Court, and



Professor Patricia Worthy, John Payton and Mike Madigan.

their son Julian held a Bible while Chief Judge Washington administered the oath of office. Judge Blackburne-Rigsby's mother, former New York State Supreme Court Justice Laura Blackburne, and her father, District Leader Elmer Blackburne, officially robed her.

Prior to her appointment to the Court of Appeals, Judge Blackburne-Rigsby served as an Associate Judge of the D.C. Superior Court from 2000 to 2006. She attended Duke University and earned her law degree from Howard University School of Law. Judge Blackburne-Rigsby currently serves on the Board of Managerial Trustees for the International Association of Women Judges. She has received numerous awards, including the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club Meritorious Service Award.

Congratulations to Judge Blackburne-Rigsby!

ADOPTION DAY GIVES 48 CHILDREN HOMES

By Katie Olson, Executive Office Intern

On Saturday, November 18th, 2006, 48 children were adopted into 31 families as part of the Superior Court's annual celebration of National Adoption Day. Not only did the event mark the Superior Court's 20th Adoption Day, but this year's event also had the highest number of children ever adopted during the ceremony.



Senator Mary Landrieu

Nathecia Brooks, 12, helped open the Adoption Day ceremony with a reading of her poem "Don't Give Up", in which she shared the new feeling of hope she felt after being adopted by her mother. Remarks were then made by Uma Ahluwalia, Interim Director of the Child and Family Services Agency; Cheryl Clarke, Director of Foundation Giving for the Freddie Mac Foundation; and Mayor-Elect Adrian Fenty.

Family Court Presiding Judge Anita Josey-Herring introduced the 2006 Adoption Day keynote speaker – Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana. Senator Landrieu, herself an adoptive mother, stressed the importance of improving the foster care system, helping states to find permanent, loving homes for children, and providing support to foster and adoptive families.

Following the keynote address, Magistrate Judge Tara Fentress brought tears to the eyes of many in the room with her beautiful musical selection, dedicated to the new families being officially created that day.

Barbara Harrison of Channel 4 News took the stage to introduce the children and their new families as they came forward for judges from the Superior Court to sign their decrees. Many of the children excitedly rushed up to the podium; some remained bashfully holding their parents' hands. Almost all of them gave McGruff the Crime Dog a big hug and in turn received a soft stuffed animal to cuddle – including 21-year-old Yvette Jones, who was finally united with the people she has called "mom" and "dad" since she was 10.

Harrison also received some special hugs – two of the children adopted at the ceremony had been featured on her weekly TV

segment "Wednesday's Child", which introduces local children in need of a loving home. Thirteen year-old Antwan Nolen and 10-year-old Darryl Ward thanked Harrison for helping them and handed her a big bouquet of red roses.

The judges who presided over this year's Adoption Day cases and signed the decrees included Associate Judges Ronna Beck, Michael Ryan and Lee Satterfield, and Magistrate Judges Carol Dalton, Tara Fentress, Pamela Gray, Karen Howze, John McCabe, Julie Breslow, and William Nooter.

The ceremony closed with musical selections by Deaf Dog and the Indictments, who covered such hits as Sam Cooke's "Wonderful World" while the new families embraced.

This year's new families were a special group, as 11 sibling groups were adopted – six of whom were groups of three biological siblings who will continue on as a family. In total, 244 children were adopted this year in D.C., 185 out of neglect/foster care cases.

Congratulations to this year's Adoption Day Committee (Judge Ronna Beck, Jo-Ella Brooks, Toni Gore, Sharon Grabner, Heather Greigg, Leah Gurowitz, Kenneth Haley, Judge William Jackson, William Johnson, Judge Anita Josey-Herring, Dianne King, Sharon Knight, Gwendolyn Menefee, Geneva Murphy, Barbara Nalls, Senior Judge Nan Shuker, and Paul Trudeau) for making the 20th year such a success!



Mayor-Elect Adrian Fenty.



Barbara Harrison looks on as J. Michael Ryan hands a proud mother her decree.



Magistrate Judge S. Pamela Gray and courtroom clerk Karen Gordon finalize an adoption.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH AND THE 2006 CORO AWARDS

By Katie Olson, Executive Office Intern

Thanks to an outstanding team of employees, the D.C. Courts enjoyed a culturally rich celebration of the Latino community in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month. This year's festivities included a "Celebración de Culturas Latinas" and the presentation of the 2006 CORO Awards.

Beginning in 1968, one week in September was designated Hispanic Heritage Week as a tribute to the emerging Latino culture in the U.S. In 1988, the weeklong observance turned into an entire Hispanic Heritage Month, running from September 15th – October 15th each year. The celebration begins on the 15th in honor of the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The 16th and the 18th of September also mark Mexico and Chile's independence from Spain, respectively.

The Hispanic Heritage Committee, led by Nancy Matos of the Human Resources Division, worked very hard to capture



Travel representatives talk to Chief Judge King about Latin America.

played crafts from El Salvador and her daughter spoke about her Mexican heritage. Marcela Villanueva, a local artist, exhibited beautiful Peruvian jewelry. Wilfredo Gaitán displayed breathtaking photographs from Nicaragua, and representatives from TACA Airlines answered questions about Latin American travel. As the keynote speaker, Jaime González, a senior policy advisor for Congressman Luis Fortuño, gave entertaining and informative remarks about Puerto Rico.

In addition to the fine exhibitions, those in attendance were fortunate enough to view several prints by the late artist Naul Ojeda that were on display in the Board of

Judges Conference Room. Ojeda, whose native country was Uruguay, was famous for creating "visual poetry" based on the works of Pablo Neruda, Walt Whitman, and Sylvia Plath. The strong imagery, lyricism, and exceptional printing quality of his work brought to life the Latin American spirit for everyone in the room.

Following this event, the inspiring 2006 CORO Awards Ceremony took place Friday, October 13th. Each year, the D.C. Courts hosts the CORO Awards to honor those whose outstanding service has enhanced the lives of Latinos in the greater D.C. area. "Coro," the Spanish word for "choir," stands for Community, Outreach, Recognition and Opportunity.

This year's honorees included: D.C. Bar Pro Bono Program Spanish Advice and Referral Clinic (Legal Community Award), Columbia Heights Shaw Family Support Collaborative (Community Agency Award), Judge Laura Cordero (Achievement Recognition Award), Family Court Self Help Center (Community Outreach Award) and Jorge Nava (Allan Klein Award).

Congratulations to Nancy and the members of the Hispanic Heritage Committee (Willie Agosto, Fetneh Fleischmann, Leah Gurowitz, Sandra Gustave, Jorge Nava, Lula Raye, Ana Roque, and Martha Shepard) for creating such a meaningful observation of this important month. Through festivities both entertaining and enlightening, the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month truly came alive for the Court.



Wilfredo Gaitan talks about his native country, Nicaragua.

the spirit of this month. First, the committee hosted an afternoon of immersion in Hispanic cultures on Wednesday, October 4th. The "Celebración de Culturas Latinas" featured performances and presentations by court employees, friends, and neighbors from a number of Latin American countries. Ana Roque dis-

The Full Court Press is published by the District of Columbia Courts to provide information about the D.C. Courts. Inquiries should be submitted to Room 1500.

*Leah Gurowitz, Editor
Dennis Shipley, Creative Director*



Nancy Matos explains one of Naul Ojeda's paintings.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS CEREMONY

By Katie Olson, Executive Office Intern

The D.C. Courts held their annual Employee Recognition and Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, September 27, 2006. The ceremony recognized court employees for their work performance and honored individuals who demonstrated achievement in areas such as public service and management, as well as a recent award for a contribution that benefits the entire court system, the Enterprise Award.

The ceremony began with a stunning rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” by Marion Swinger of the Civil Division. Chief Judge Eric T. Washington of the Court of Appeals and Chief Judge Rufus G. King, III, of the Superior Court then gave brief remarks before presenting special employee awards.



Marion Swinger dazzles the audience with the National Anthem.

James Plunkett, Foreign Language Coordinator in the Office of Court Interpreting Services, was awarded the “Unsung Hero Award” for his attentive nature, ability to problem-solve, and his willingness to go above and beyond what is expected of him. Mr. Plunkett was recognized also for the weekly Spanish lessons he teaches to children at the Courts’ Child Care Center and his efforts to educate the public on the use of interpreters.

The “Management Achievement Award” was given to Terry Lambert to acknowledge his key role in the successful implementation of the Integrated Justice Information System. Mr. Lambert’s design of step-by-step directions for data input and incorporation of business processes in the Landlord Tenant Branch was noted as a model example for the rest of Court in technological innovation.

The individual “Public Service” Award was given to Hillist L. Mearse of the Criminal Division for his excellence in customer service. Mr. Mearse was described as a hard worker, courteous and professional to everyone he encounters, and respected by attorneys and law firms.

The Intake and C-10 Staff in the Criminal Division

received the “Public Service Award” for their team. They were commended for learning the new CourtView software and implementing it efficiently despite a very busy courtroom and numerous agencies with whom they coordinate. The staff worked extra hours, including weekends and holidays, to ensure the courtroom ran smoothly



The Web Kiosk MAP Team receives the Enterprise Service Award.

despite the new system and high volume of cases.

Executive Officer Anne B. Wicks presented the Web Kiosk MAP Team with the “Enterprise Service Award” in recognition for their hard work developing the Courts’ website (www.dccourts.gov) to provide the public with more user-friendly access to information. The team was acknowledged for developing a D.C. Courts’ website that was recently named one of the Top 10 Court Websites in the World.

Court clerks Garland Pinkston (Court of Appeals)

and Duane Delaney (Superior Court) presented “Length of Service Awards” to those employed at the Court for 10, 20 and 30 years. Ms. Vergia M. Fitch of the Administrative Services Division and Ms. Mary Moore of the Criminal Division received bouquets of flowers in appreciation for an exceptional amount of time with the Courts – 40 years each.

In addition to the musical styling of Ms. Swinger, Debra Swinson-Stokes performed throughout the

ceremony, lending her beautiful voice for the enjoyment of the audience.

After the ceremony, court employees were treated to hearty refreshments by Randy’s Ribs & BBQ, which included a lunch spread of ribs, greens, and chocolate cake.



Chief Judges Washington and King honor Vergia M. Fitch for 40 years of service with the Courts.

NEW MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAM AT THE COURTS

By Katie Olson, Executive Office Intern

Twenty-two D.C. Court employees were chosen for a new Management Training Program designed to focus on professional development, strategic planning, and leadership.

The program, created by the Courts' Center for Education and Training, is a yearlong series of courses that meets each month for two consecutive days. In addition to classes, participants will complete outside assignments, journal entries, and a team project. Merry Hofford, the Director of the Center for Education and Training (CET), emphasized that the purpose of the Management Training Program is to help court employees develop skills that will "enrich their career and their life."

In order to be chosen for the program, applicants had to have a minimum of three years' experience at the Courts and have achieved a rating of 3



Participants listen to an introduction of the program at the first class.

or higher on the most recent Performance Evaluation. Participants submitted applications and were chosen by their respective division directors.

The program was modeled after the Institute for Court Management (ICM) at the National Center for State Courts – a internationally recognized organization dedicated to improvement in the administration of justice. Using the ICM's educational programs as a prototype, the Courts' Management Training Committee tailored the program specifically for the D.C. Court

system. The committee, chaired by Laura Reed (Director of the Crime Victims Compensation Program), carefully designed the program's curriculum to focus on expanding participants' knowledge of the courts, as well as management and personal effectiveness. "Participants will learn the background of the court system, the history of the D.C. Courts, and the nuts and bolts of Human Resources," said Ms. Reed, "in addition to group and individual leadership skills."

Besides constructing curriculum, the Management Training Committee was responsible for choosing the program's faculty. Ms. Hofford said the committee worked to incorporate both experts within the D.C. Courts as well as from outside the courts – such as Terry Curry, the director of Michigan State University's Graduate School of Labor and Industrial

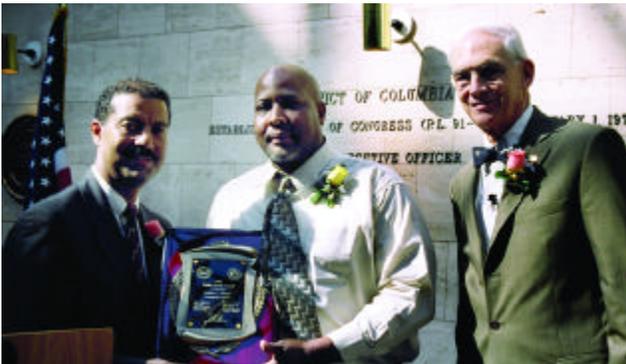
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Chief Judge King Washington and Chief Judge Washington present James Plunkett with his award.



Chief Judge King Washington and Chief Judge Washington present Terry Lambert with his award.



Chief Judge King Washington and Chief Judge Washington present Hillist Mearse with his award.



Chief Judge King Washington and Chief Judge Washington present the Criminal Division Intake and C-10 Staff with their award.

COMMUNITY COURTS FORUM HELD

By Michael O. Francis, Community Courts Coordinator, Criminal Division and Anne Schmidt, Community Court Researcher, Criminal Division

On Thursday, September 21, 2006 the Superior Court hosted a Community Courts Forum at Savoy Elementary School located in southeast Washington, D.C. (Ward 8). The forum was part of the Community Courts' ongoing effort to engage the D.C. community in dialogue, to solicit feedback, and to increase public awareness of the Community Courts. In March the Superior Court hosted a Community Courts Forum at the Kelly Miller Middle School located in northeast Washington, D.C. (Ward 7).

The forum at Savoy provided an opportunity for community residents from Wards 7 and 8 to: 1) learn about both the D.C. Misdemeanor and Traffic Community Court and the East of the River Community Court (ERCC) and 2) ask questions and make comments regarding the District's criminal justice system, crime, and quality of life issues.

The evening forum began with the most impressive Mia Brown, a fifth grader at Savoy, who captivated everyone with her wonderful smile and remarkable and inspiring opening remarks welcoming the forum to her school. The next speaker was Chief Judge Rufus King who began by saying "If schools could do for all students what they have obviously done for Mia Brown, we wouldn't need to be here." He went on to discuss the Community Courts

and their efforts to connect with the community and to work on issues that bring people to Court.

Dan Cipullo, Director of the Criminal Division, then provided a brief history of the Community Courts and pointed out that judges have made an effort to get out into the community to learn what the



Judge Keary, Mike Francis and Chief Judge King look on as Mia Brown welcomes the crowd.

problems and issues are. He then led the audience through a survey/questionnaire using 'OptionFinder' – electronic voting devices that transmit responses anonymously so that the group's responses can be tallied and displayed immediately.

Mike Francis, Community Courts Coordinator, then moderated a panel with Judge Cushenberry, Presiding Judge, Criminal Division; Judge Keary, Deputy Presiding Judge, Criminal Division and Presiding Judge of the East of the River Community Court; Magistrate Judge McCarthy, Presiding Judge, D.C. Misdemeanor and Traffic Community Court; and Magistrate Judge Lee, representing the Family Court.

Mr. Francis asked each judge to respond to a particular question that he posed. He asked

Judge Cushenberry, "How do you see the role of the Community Courts fitting into the overall role of the Courts?" Among several comments, Judge Cushenberry said that Community Courts are trying to give people the opportunity to reclaim their lives, not acting upon them but giving them the chance to act. He said that this is done by providing tools to help people take control of their lives and to deal with the problems that bring them into the criminal justice system. Judge Cushenberry emphasized "judges care."

Mr. Francis asked Judge Keary, "What are the issues and challenges you see as the Presiding Judge of the East of the River Community Court?" Judge Keary gave a detailed description of how the ERCC works. She stated that the

ERCC has issues and challenges with a large volume of drug possession cases, as well as prostitution cases, but there are also gun charges, assault charges and marijuana distribution charges. Judge Keary mentioned that the goal of the ERCC is restorative justice, with community service and giving back an important part of that. She pointed out that she does her own arraignments and follows the cases all the way through their time in the ERCC.

Mr. Francis asked Magistrate Judge McCarthy, "How do you use Community Court principles in the D.C. Misdemeanor and Traffic Community Court?" First, Judge McCarthy described the variety of cases in the D.C. Misdemeanor and Traffic Community Court, including speeding, drunk driving, no permit, possession of an open con-

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NEW EMPLOYEE AT THE COURTS

By Katie Olson, Executive Office Intern

Julie Klier

Even though Julie Klier was only recently hired by the Research and Development Division, she has been working at the D.C. Courts for a several years.

“I interned in the Juvenile and Neglect Branch during my junior year of college, and I interned in this division during my senior year,” she said.

Julie graduated from American University in May 2006 with a degree in Political Science and Justice. While at AU, she participated on the crew team and ran



Julie Klier

competitively – activities she continues when she’s not at the Courts.

Julie is also busy studying

for her LSATs, which she will take in February. She plans on attending law school in the D.C. area.

Currently, Julie is working in Research and Development as a research assistant. She said that her time at the Courts has provided “good background knowledge” which has been extremely valuable to her. Julie also noted she would like to keep working at the Courts in the future, practicing juvenile law or pursuing other Family Court-related work. “It’s been a positive experience that I hope to continue,” she said.

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tainer of alcohol, public urination, and drinking in public. He then talked about how, in some cases, defendants are given time to address their problems. Judge McCarthy also discussed the new next-day community service which is available for quality of life offense cases, and he listed the social services that are available to defendants.

Mr. Francis asked Magistrate Judge Lee, “Would you please talk about the Family Court’s problem solving approach to Family Court matters?” Judge Lee said that abuse and neglect of children is often related to drug addiction and the Family Court created the Family Treatment Court, in which mothers can stay with their children in a dorm-like setting while they receive drug treatment as well as parenting classes. Both children and mothers do better when not separated for the length of time that effective drug treatment takes. He also talked about the Family Court Juvenile Drug Court and youth peer courts.

After the panel, the final segment of the forum was a period where the audience could address questions and comments to the judges. People asked questions about and commented on the use of deadly force in self-defense, defendants who were arrested one day and not held pre-trial, the need for methadone clinics in neighborhoods, expungement of criminal records, jobs and training for youth and adults, prosecution of

large-scale drug suppliers, and parents. Interestingly, the comments on parents, highlighted the need for better parenting, the challenges and impact on families of sending convicted offenders outside the area, and the extent of family members being involved in crime.

The Court personnel felt that the forum had gone very well and community residents in attendance expressed the view that the forum was very informative and helpful.

The forum was also attended by Judge Rhonda Winston, Judge Wendell Gardner, Judge Erik Christian, Magistrate Judge Richard Ringell, Court Social Services Division Director Terri Odom, Criminal Division Deputy Director Yvonne Martinez-Vega and representatives from the Pretrial Services Agency, U.S. Attorney’s Office, Office of the Attorney General, Metropolitan Police Department, Department of Mental Health, Superior Court Trial Lawyers Association, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, who were introduced to the community attendees during the forum.

The forum organizers would like especially to thank Savoy Elementary School, the Metropolitan Police Department’s Seventh District, and the United States Marshal Service, as well as D.C. Courts staff for their contributions to the success of the forum.

September 8, 2006

Ms. Lori Edley
Office of the Court Reporters
D.C. Superior Court

Dear Ms. Edley,

I wanted to let you know that **Mr. Damon Wright** of your office is a pleasure to do business with. He is knowledgeable, helpful, and smart. He is an asset to your office.

Ms. Karla Spottiswood, Acting
Register of Wills, D.C.
5th Floor, 500 Indiana Ave. N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Ms. Spottiswood:

It is the purpose of this letter to compliment you and your staff for the expeditious manner in which the opening of the above-mentioned estate occurred.

As the attorney for this estate, I presented the petition for probate and related documents to Assistant Deputy Register **Elaine Kennell** on Friday, July 21, 2006. On the following business day, Judge Ronald P. Wertheim signed the Order admitting the Will to probate and appointing the Personal Representatives. **The very next day**, I received a copy of the Order and copies of Letters of Administration, together with copies of the Will, in the mail! This is incredible speed!



Congratulations to the **COURT-WIDE TOY DRIVE** committee for a very successful toy drive!

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Relations who is a nationally known leader in the field of management development.

The Management Training Committee also chose Keith Robinson and Wanda Starke as program facilitators. Mr. Robinson described his role as being “a liaison between faculty and participants,” working to ensure collaboration between the two groups from beginning to end.

The vision for the Management Training Program is “Building a national model for court leadership.” The D.C. Court system is the only court system to have such a program, and CET hopes that it will become an example to other states. Mr. Robinson said that as a facilitator, he will encourage participants to keep detailed journals of their experience so the courts can develop “best practice” methods. He also said that CET will track the participants after they complete the program in order to measure its effects on their career

and personal success.

But the most important thing, said Ms. Reed, is that participants gain greater confidence in their abilities, develop a new set of skills, and increase their awareness of the issues surrounding the Courts. She also noted that developing the leadership and management potential of court employees is essential to improving the Courts’ overall effectiveness. “When you have employees that understand the bigger picture,” said Reed, “everybody benefits.”

Congratulations to Thomas Abraham, Tiffany Adams Moore, Corenthia Patterson-Adams, Norman Barrett, Damaris Arroyo-Brown, Belinda Carr, Pamela Cary, Edith Clipper, Sharon Holliday, Rhonda Horton, Kevin Hurd, Suzanne Bailey-Jones, John King, Tonya Coleman-Lee, Nancy Matos, Janice McDowell, Tamika O’Neal, Alicia Shephard, Sokoyama Songu-Mbriwa, Debra Swingon Stokes, Cory Thompson, Brenda Young for being chosen to participate!