



# Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

August 2015

## The Story of an Unsung Greeter at DC Superior Court

By Edward Harding

On Wednesday, June 24, 2015, DC Superior Court greeter Donald Tillery was featured in the TV ONE series *Unsung*, which documents lesser-known musical artists who contributed to Billboard hits and classic tunes.



An original member of Chuck Brown's band The Soul Searchers, Tillery, now 68, began playing trumpet in grade school. He had formed his own band, "The Epsilons," before meeting Brown in 10<sup>th</sup> grade at

Dunbar High School. In his interview, Tillery recalled the night that Brown attended one of his shows at a hotel on 13<sup>th</sup> Street, NW in DC. After attending some of The Soul Searchers' rehearsals, Brown asked him to join the band, specializing in trumpet and vocals.

When he first received the call from the network, Tillery thought he was speaking to a bill collector. He was surprised when they said "we know a lot about you" and asked him to interview for *Unsung*. That

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## The DC Superior Court Community Information & Referral Program: Public Service without a Case Filed

For disputing parties looking to reach an agreement without having to file a case with the court, the DC Courts recommend checking out the Community Information and Referral Program (CIRP) of the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division (Multi-Door), which provides DC residents with the tools necessary to reach a resolution efficiently and free of charge. In the last four years, CIRP has assisted over 6,500 DC residents, maintaining a yearly satisfaction rate of 95-97%.

Multi-Door uses several methods of alternative dispute resolution, but the most common by far is the use of mediation to guide disputing parties toward a mutually acceptable com-

promise. To this end, Multi-Door employs professionals trained in dispute resolution as impartial mediators in order to achieve an agreement acceptable to both parties. The program is readily available and parties do not need to hire a lawyer. Everything discussed in the process of mediation is kept confidential with the necessary exceptions of abuse and credible threats of violence. In order to qualify for the program, one of the parties involved must be a DC resident.

What types of disagreements are best suited to the mediation process? CIRP currently services several different

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*Open To All Trusted By All Justice For All*

# New Civil Division Deputy Director



Lori Gunn has been promoted to the position of Deputy Director of the DC Superior Court's Civil Division effective Monday, August 10, 2015. Ms. Gunn was appointed as Acting Branch Chief in the Small Claims and Conciliation Branch in 2009, and has officially served as Branch Chief since 2010. She began her career with the Courts in the Civil Division as the Branch Supervisor in the Small Claims Branch in 2006.

Ms. Gunn received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Management with a minor in Criminal Justice from National Louis University in Chicago, Illinois. She plans to complete the MBA program at the University of Maryland, University College in 2016. Ms. Gunn brings over 25 years of management, budget and customer service experience to the Deputy Director position, including 15 years of human resource experience from private industry. She exhibits the leadership skills and values necessary to meet organizational goals. She was the recipient of the DC Courts Management Achievement Award in 2014 for leading division projects and providing exceptional service to Small Claims customers. Ms. Gunn fosters team commitment and motivates others to produce high-quality results.

## DC Superior Court's Drug Intervention Program Featured at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals' Conference

*By Edward Harding*

On Wednesday, July 29, 2015, the DC Superior Court's Drug Intervention Program (SCDIP), also known as Drug Court, was featured at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals' annual conference.

Held at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, the conference featured a mock hearing of the Superior Court's Drug Court program. Hosted by the presiding judge of SCDIP, Judge Gregory Jackson, and the Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia (PSA), the session covered an array of different aspects of the SCDIP program, such as daily activities, incentives and sanctions, progression through the program, and graduation.

The session began with introductions and an overview of the program including the roles of the PSA case managers, toxicologists, and attorneys. A mock hearing session followed, in which representatives from PSA and the U.S. Attorney's Office enacted a scene from a typical drug



court hearing. During the session, the audience was first shown a demonstration of a morning staffing session, during which a team of drug court professionals meets and discusses each drug court participant's progress on a case-by-case basis. The session then covered a variety of types of drug court hearings, including a status hearing, a challenge hearing, and a sanction hearing.

As Judge Jackson noted: "the Superior Court Drug Intervention Program is very honored to have had the opportunity to conduct a mock court hearing at the 2015 NADCP conference. DC Drug Court partners have implemented a number of changes to the program that we believe have greatly enhanced our ability to deliver treatment services to our program participants. We are very proud to have shared a view of our program with other drug court professionals and we hope that they found the experience enlightening and helpful."

## Introducing the DC Courts Toastmasters International Club



The DC Courts Toastmasters Club was officially chartered earlier this year. When the Center for Education and Training (CET) asked if employees would be interested in mastering the art of communication in a supportive and productive environment, surrounded by like-minded professionals, they received a resounding “YES” from over 100 employees. As a result, CET initiated the club as part of District 36 under the mentorship of Mr. Arthur Sidney, Lt. Governor for Marketing for Toastmasters International. The club began meeting in January 2015 and meets weekly following a strict agenda with

many roles for club members to fill. There are up to 6-8 speeches per meeting and all speakers are evaluated by assigned members. Currently, the club is full to capacity with 50 members and will be open for new members in the fall. However, employees are welcome to come and observe how members are not only becoming competent communicators by following a rigorous curriculum and honing in on their leadership skills, but also how they are having a great time in the process. The club meets Tuesdays at noon in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Historic Courthouse.



### Summer in the Community

Attending neighborhood events in the District is a prime opportunity for the DC Courts to ensure residents are aware of the Courts’ many resources and programs. The summer season began with two events in June, the HSC Health Fair for Children with Special Needs in Michigan Park and the Safe Summer Kickoff hosted by the Metropolitan Police Department in Ward 8.

Approximately 100 DC residents and members of the community, including health care providers, neighborhood advisors, and non-profits, interacted with Court staff.

The DC Courts’ booth is full of information regarding the free self-help resource centers, questions about serving as a juror including the new debit card provision, and general information about each division of the Courts.

## The Story of an Unsung Greeter at DC Superior Court

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was two years ago. Today, Tillery recalls the interview with nonchalance. The questions covered a wide range of topics, from his time in The Soul Searchers to some of the behind-the-scene issues bands and musicians faced in the 70's. Tillery recalls his time playing with bandmembers Harris Brock on the keyboard, John Buchanan on trombone (writer of the 70's hit, "Bustin' Loose"), Lloyd Pinchback on the tenor sax, and Billie Stewart (composer and writer).

One of the most interesting facts that Tillery disclosed was how go-go music was actually created. Tillery recalls an instance where the band was called to perform at the

Masonic Temple on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW. The band was setting up and everyone was there, with the exception of the lead singer Chuck Brown. While the band waited for Brown, Tillery recalls the band "playing a syncopated beat" with some tunes to pass the time. The crowd enjoyed the music so much that when Brown finally arrived, the crowd asked for the same syncopation, dubbing it the "go-go" we know and love today.

Though the episode didn't include this story about the birth of go-go, of which the legendary Chuck Brown is "The Godfather," Tillery's feature on *Unsung* shows that Brown was in good company.

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## Supervisory Probation Officer Mark Jackson Receives Cafritz Award



Mark Jackson, Supervisory Probation Officer at the DC Superior Court's Family Court Social Services Division, received one of the 2015 Cafritz awards granted by the George Washington University Center for Excellence in Public Leadership.

The Cafritz awards are bestowed upon individuals whose hard work, dedication and commitment to public service have made a difference. According to the Cafritz Awards website [<http://cepl.cps.gwu.edu/about-awards>], the awards are presented to "five individuals who play a critical, yet in many cases unseen, role in providing outstanding service to the residents of Washington, DC." Furthermore, the awards recognize individuals "whose contributions have been exceptional and whose commitment and professionalism demonstrate the best in public service."

At the ceremony on May 27, Mark received his award. Below is an excerpt from his speech:

"Last academic year, my team... received well over 1,000 of these [truancy cases], resulting in caseloads sky rocket-

ing. 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 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 service 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..."

## The DCSC Community Information & Referral Program: Public Services without a Case Filed

*Continued from front cover*



parts of the Courts, but currently one of the program's most significant areas of support is in Domestic Relations Branch cases involving family disputes, which generally entail situations related to parental custody and visitation, child support, and property division. These sorts of cases are mostly court-filed but also include families that voluntarily select mediation in order to resolve issues concerning children and/or marriage without filing in court. In order to support parties, staff will assess the appropriateness of the case for mediation and then refer the case to the Family Mediation Program. The entire process is quick and efficient, generally lasting a week or two.

The mediation process lends itself to seemingly minor but valid complaints that are worth resolving for the sake of order and peace of mind, but may go unresolved for too long because, to the parties involved, the issues do not warrant going to court. Examples often include neighborly disputes like tree maintenance, noise complaints, or pet maintenance; and landlord-tenant disputes involving security deposits and repairs. Other relevant cases include consumer complaints for services not rendered or refund issues, such as a dry cleaning company that has not reimbursed a client for a damaged article of clothing. In cases like these, both parties seek resolution, but would rather resolve their issues efficiently and at a reasonably low cost due to the nature of the dispute. CIRP seeks to mitigate this issue by providing a quick, efficient, and inexpensive solution.

Note that DC residents are welcome to reach out to CIRP for cases more involved than issues with neighbors, landlords, or tenants. The program regularly assists in cases

with primarily Spanish-speaking parties who may not be as open to coming into court due to language constraints. CIRP maintains a strong relationship with the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), and staff members regularly conduct community outreach in Spanish-speaking areas of the city. Other areas of support include employment issues involving abuse of power, underpaid wages, and refusal to meet minimum wage. In addition, CIRP has assisted with intra-family and sibling disputes such as the move-out of an adult child, or the move-in of an ill or elderly out-of-state relative. Cases like these are well-suited for mediation because they involve parties with close personal ties who benefit from assistance with communication. CIRP thus provides support in the form of trained mediators who help parties articulate their arguments and opinions, ultimately reaching an acceptable agreement without damaging the relationship between family members and friends.

Occasionally, parties are able to resolve their dispute over the phone and formal mediation is not required. When this happens, it is called conciliation. Conciliation and mediation are similar in that both are cost-free, efficient ways for disputing parties to reach a successful agreement. The processes differ in that mediation occurs in-person, conducted by professionals who require at least 40 hours of basic training – it's a formal process that results in a written agreement. Conversely, conciliation is more informal, conducted by volunteer Dispute Resolution Specialists (DRSs) and typically occurs over the phone. While both processes are efficient, the informal nature of conciliation means that disputes are typically resolved especially quickly, often in under a week.

DC Courts encourage residents looking for quick and effective conflict resolution to reach out to CIRP by phone at (202) 879-3180 or in person at Court Building C, 410 E Street, NW Suite 1700. The team will assist by conducting a brief intake interview in order to effectively gauge the circumstances and goals and will then recommend appropriate action in the form of mediation or other relevant services that the parties may not be familiar with. CIRP staff members can also provide referrals for people searching for legal counsel and related resources. Aside from an extensive database, DRSs are equipped to conduct external research in order to find the resources that residents are looking for. This is a free service the court offers to the public.

# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA Act

July 2015 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The ADA is the federal law that guarantees civil rights for persons with physical, mental, or psychological impairments. The anniversary gives an occasion to highlight a few of the ways the DC Courts provide access to justice and employment for persons with disabilities.

- Manual wheelchairs can be borrowed from the Information Center in the Moultrie Courthouse and from the Clerk's offices in Buildings A and B, and the Public Office of the DC Court of Appeals.
- Documents can be converted from WORD to Braille by the Information Center.
- Service animals and service dogs in training are welcomed at the DC Courts.
- Powered driven mobility devices such as electric carts and Segway ® are welcomed when they are used in a safe manner.
- Testing for applicants to the District of Columbia Bar is accessible.

- Sign language interpreters will be provided upon request.
- Built in or portable assistive listening devices (ALD) are available in the courtrooms and hearing rooms. Portable ALD are available upon request in areas such as meeting rooms.
- CART (Communication Access Real Time Transcription) will be provided upon request to make a proceeding accessible to a deaf or hard-of-hearing person.
- Handheld and table top magnifiers are available upon request.
- Reasonable accommodations are provided to job applicants.
- Reasonable accommodations are provided to employees with disabilities.
- Architectural and other barriers are removed as the courthouses are renovated.
- The Center for Education and Training has technologies that make training accessible.
- Jurors with disabilities are accommodated.

## *Save the Date*

# DC Courts Employee Awards Ceremony

*Thursday,  
September 17  
2:30pm*

### The **Full Court Press**

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Inquiries should be submitted  
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## Family Court Annual Cookout

The Family Court Operations Division held its annual cookout on Saturday, June 20, at Hains Point. This year's theme was "tailgating" and participants attended sporting their favorite team jerseys. Notable mentions include the following: Thomasine Dixon-Marshall, cookout coordinator; James Miles, deejay; and Darryl Maye, photographer.



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## DC Superior Court Mental Health Clinic Highlighted by National Organization

The Council of State Governments' Justice Center published a piece highlighting the innovative approach to addressing behavioral health needs in the District of Columbia Superior Court. The article, entitled "DC Courts Are Connecting Individuals with On-Site Treatment," describes the way in which the Court serves individuals with mental disorders who are involved or at risk of being involved with the criminal justice system.

The service is provided by an Urgent Care Clinic located in the Moultrie Courthouse that allows for access to on-site mental health and substance abuse assessments and services. The clinic is a collaborative effort between the Superior Court, the District of Columbia Department of Behavioral Health and Pathways to Housing.

According to the article, "this service is of particular benefit to judges, attorneys, and pretrial services staff, who typically want to ensure that defendants are quickly assessed and treated for their behavioral health needs." The clinic is available to anyone regardless of criminal charges and "responds to individuals with all severities of mental and substance use disorders, even if it is only to arrange for their transfer and admission to an inpatient facility."

The article can be found at:

<http://csgjusticecenter.org/courts/posts/dc-courts-are-connecting-individuals-with-on-site-treatment/>

# Probate Division Receives 2015 WINGS Award

In March 2015, the DC Superior Court was among five new courts to receive the Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) award from the State Justice Institute.

The WINGS award provides “a mini-grant and technical assistance to create innovative consensus-driven” adult guardianship programs in the awardees’ respective jurisdictions. Since 2008, the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP), under the Register of Wills, has been supporting the Court’s mandate to “ensure the well-being of persons under guardianship (also known as ‘wards’)” by conducting in-depth case review of wards under court supervision, review of biannual guardianship reports filed by court appointed guardians, and responding to inquiries from the public.

According to the DC Code, “a guardian is responsible for the care, custody, and control of the ward...personally acquainted with the ward and maintain[s] contact ... [to know] the ward’s capacities, limitations, needs, opportunities, and physical and mental health.”

In 2013-14, there were 2,157 active adult guardianship cases. With the support of the WINGS Award, the Probate Division will coordinate a community/court partnership.

The DC WINGS has identified three initial initiatives: (1) design a guardian complaint process; (2) provide training on guardianship as a restrictive alternative when less restrictive alternatives may be available; and (3) identify needed brochures and videos for public education on guardianship. GAP Program Manager, Aisha Ivey-Nixon, is optimistic about these exciting new initiatives, stating, “We want people to have access to justice in a very user-friendly way. Our goal is for people involved in the guardianship process to be well-informed.”

DC Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric Washington, past president of the Conference of Chief Justices, stated in a WINGS video (<https://player.vimeo.com/video/130107291>):

*“...There is a real need for strong court oversight of the guardianship process. These are some of our most vulnerable community members and we need to make sure that guardianship serves them well.*”

*In some situations, there are differences within the family regarding proper choices, or no family or friends available to help the ward in any way. The cases are often complex, with tension between rights and needs. There also is turnover in human services staff, as well as sometimes in court staff, with constant need for training for both. And there is variation in practice amongst the states, as laws differ.*”

*If guardianship is going to improve, it will take an ongoing court-community partnership. WINGS is a continuing forum for evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, prioritization of needs, and collaborative action. By combining the efforts of all public and private stakeholders, states can improve judicial processes, enhance services, better protect individual rights, and promote fiduciary standards and guardian accountability.”*

The goal is for all stakeholders to be well informed and to have access to justice. The WINGS Award is designed to help advance this goal. The WINGS Award provides an opportunity for the Court to be involved with the community in seeing resolutions.

The award was strongly supported by Chief Judge Washington and Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield and promotes the progressive efforts of the District to be an innovator in guardianship law.