



Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

December 2013

2013 Employee Townhall Provides Opportunity for Updates and Employee Participation

By Kathie Gant, Administrative Assistant, Court Social Services Division

On Friday, December 6, the DC Courts Executive Team held an employee townhall. The Executive Team, also known as the E-Team, consists of Anne Wicks, Executive Officer; Cheryl Bailey, Deputy Executive Officer; Julio Castillo, Clerk of the Court of Appeals; and Duane Delaney, Clerk of the Superior Court. Enthusiastic attendees listened as the meeting began with updates on the efforts to strengthen the Courts' goal of "Building a Great Place to Work." One of the key themes was employee engagement and participation.



Questions and comments from the audience.

Each member of the E-Team focused on various areas of achievement. Mr. Castillo talked about overcoming the challenges of operating the Courts on a reduced budget as re-

quired by federal budget guidelines. He expressed, along with the entire E-Team, his appreciation to the employees of the Courts for maintaining a strong work ethic and standards while serving the public, particularly in light of the government shutdown and sequestration.

Mr. Delaney spoke about the Strategic Plan for the Courts. He shared that one key element for the success of the Strategic Plan was staff participation. All employees play an important role and contribute to the success of the Courts. Mr. Delaney also encouraged staff to complete the 2013 Employee Viewpoint Survey, noting that confidential information attained from previous surveys has played a crucial role in creating changes in the workplace.

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December update from the DC Courts Executive Team: Townhall, Flexplace, Values and Employee Recognition

We would like to thank everyone who attended the townhall on December 6. We truly appreciate your questions and comments and look forward to hearing from you in the future. As mentioned, we began holding quarterly meetings with employees in 2013 and will continue to do so in 2014. We encourage everyone to share questions and comments as we strive to further develop a culture of communication within our Courts.

We took the opportunity in the townhall to speak about initiatives that will be implemented in the next few months. These

initiatives are being developed in direct response to the input we have received from all of you.

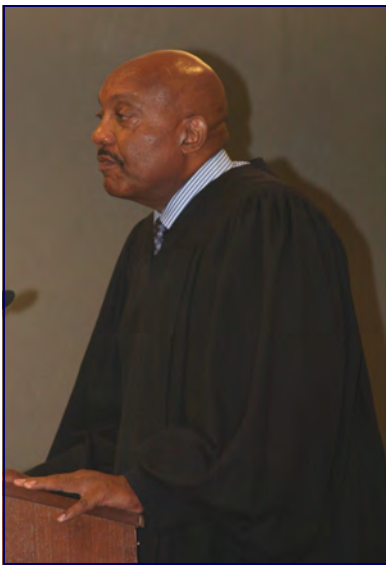
Flexplace (Telework)

We are happy to announce that after extensive consideration on how a program may be developed in our context, we have decided to move forward with a pilot project to evaluate whether telework might be feasible for the Courts. One of the key challenges for the Courts has

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Superior Court Drug Court Celebrates 20 Years of Success

This year the DC Superior Court Drug Intervention Program (SCDIP) celebrated its 20th anniversary working with the Pretrial Services Agency to provide an intensive sanctions and incentives-based substance abuse treatment program for certain defendants charged with misdemeanors and non-violent felonies. A graduation ceremony in September, celebrating individuals who successfully completed the program and had their cases dismissed by US Attorney Ronald Machen, was also the occasion to celebrate this milestone.



Judge Gregory Jackson

The morning began with a formal discussion among drug court advocates, graduates, judges and Pretrial Services Agency staff, moderated by Michael Botticelli, Deputy Director of the Office National Drug Control Policy. Judge Gregory Jackson, the current SCDIP judge, gave a brief overview of the program and introduced Judge Frederick Weisberg, who was the SCDIP judge from 2011

until 2012, as well as having

been the first judge to preside over the program in 1993 and 1994.

The attendees were extremely moved by hearing from Anthony Hill, a 2007 SCDIP graduate, and Karen Christian, a 2005 Family Treatment Court graduate. Both Mr. Hill and Ms. Christian explained how these programs gave them a new outlook on life while helping overcome addiction and criminal problems. The discussion centered on the importance of drug court programs and their impact on recidivism.

Cliff Keenan, Director of the Pretrial Services Agency (PSA), spoke about the advantage the SCDIP program has in handling drug testing and sanctions expeditiously as a result of PSA having its own, in-house lab. The group also discussed the challenge for government agencies to keep pace with the rapidly changing domestic and international drug supply, including synthetic drugs. The meeting attendees then left to take their seats for the graduation, which was held, as it is

every month, in courtroom C-10. As the graduation ceremony convened, the audience was graced with a musical performance by recording artist and songwriter Ana Gibson, poetry by SCDIP case manager Tarinna Terrell, and a vibrant and inspiring message from Reverend Tony Lee of Community Hope AME Church. Reverend Lee related the success of the graduates to a popular Hip-Hop song entitled “Started from the Bottom” by artist Drake.

“You started from the bottom, now you are here, but your here will get you over there to more success and stability,”

Lee told the graduates. He encouraged SCDIP participants and graduates “...stand in extreme conditions, be yourself, and make decisions to be your own individual when the world wants you to be like everyone else.”

The program commenced with personal testimonies from graduates. One stated that SCDIP “created some structure in [her] life, changing people and places, and giving [her] stability.” They were particularly adamant about how Judge Jackson and their case managers were dedicated to believe in them when they failed to believe in themselves.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Botticelli gave testimony about his 25-year journey from standing in front of a judge because of substance abuse issues to now working for the President of the United States. He ended by stating: “It’s not about me, it’s about the journey, all of our journeys.”

Later Mr. Botticelli underscored the importance of drug courts: “Drug courts are a key component of our new drug policy reform plan, which takes a public health approach to drug policy by emphasizing prevention, treatment, and smart criminal justice reform programs like drug courts.” West Huddleston, head of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, followed the testimonies by proclaiming he “...has the luckiest job – telling the world about courtrooms like this!”



Judge Frederick Weisberg

Consumer Law Court-Based Legal Services Project at the Superior Court

By Raquel Trabal, Bilingual Attorney Negotiator, Domestic Violence Unit



In June 2012, Chief Judge Satterfield's Administrative Order 12-08 allowed attorneys who are associated with a pro bono program or legal services to enter a temporary appearance in consumer law cases.

These attorneys must

notify the court of their appearance in that case for that day only. The appearance is then automatically withdrawn at the conclusion of that day.

This administrative order paved the way for the Legal Aid Society of DC to partner with AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) along with the DC Bar Pro Bono Program to create a Consumer Law Court-Based Legal Services Project. The project offers same day representation to defendants who have consumer debt cases in either the Small Claims Court or on the Civil Actions collection calendar. This increases access to justice for litigants without lawyers.

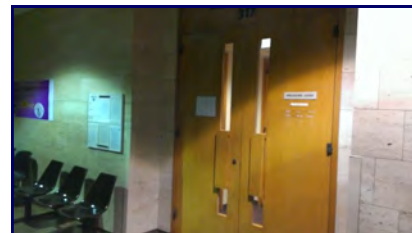
The DC Bar Pro Bono Program screens cases to see if they are appropriate and eligible for services and then directs them to the appropriate organization. Generally, individuals are eligible if they meet the following basic criteria, such as: the individual's matter is before the court that day; they are at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline; and the

matter is one where legal assistance would be effective in one day.

The organizations offer a range of services including: advice on what to expect and how to respond; assistance in drafting an Answer or a Motion to Amend a Complaint; and even negotiation on settlements. In addition, there are a handful of cases in which the organizations provide representation for the full duration of the case. In the past year, over 180 low income clients have benefited from the program.

One such client was a defendant who was assisted by Legal Aid in a particular case. The defendant, a low-income father of five who had been involved in an auto accident case, was unable to navigate the court process because of a medical condition. Legal Aid's intervention helped him to avoid a judgment and instead get a full dismissal of the case.

Legal Aid helped the defendant file an Answer and get the default vacated. Legal Aid also reviewed his medical records and researched the issue of negligence in cases of sudden physical impairment. Legal Aid then worked to seek a resolution – providing evidence of the defendant's medical condition and case law supporting a defense against negligence under these circumstances.



Clothing Drive a Success! Thanks to all who participated



The clothing drive for children in domestic violence shelters was a success! Employees from the entire court system donated over 200 cubic feet of clothes, coats and shoes. Special thanks to the Administrative Services Division and the Executive Office who graciously assisted the Domestic Violence Unit and the Crime Victims Compensation Program in this effort. The clothes were distributed amongst the various shelters in the city that serve domestic violence victims and their children. Thanks to all who participated! The drive shows that the DC Courts family is a community with a big heart and great values.

From left to right: Carmella Gonzalez, Rita Blandino, and LouEthel Green-Williams.

December Update from the DC Courts Executive Team (continued from front cover)

been to balance a telework initiative with the nature of our work, which requires intensive contact with the public on a daily basis. A Planning Working Group is currently developing the details with an eye toward launching the pilot next Spring.

Our intensive public contact influences how we may be able to think about telework or flexplace. This means that the pilot and any potential program would require employees' physical presence at the office most days. Flexplace in our context does not mean a primarily remote or home-based workforce. It is also important to note that although flexplace represents a slightly different way of doing business,

we should not see any disruptions in our core functions and operations.

We would also like to remind everyone that other flexibility options are available to our employees. The Courts currently allow for several work-flexibility formats—including compressed and flexible schedules—on a case-by-case basis and based on business needs. To explore these options, you would need to discuss arrangements with your manager and work with the Human Resources Division to apply and obtain approval.

Values Implementation

One of the cornerstones

of our 2013-2017 Strategic Plan is our court values: Accountability, Excellence, Fairness, Integrity, Respect and Transparency. In fact, one of the objectives in the Strategic Plan (section 5.C.2) is to “ensure that court personnel demonstrate professionalism, exemplify the Courts' Values, and provide excellent customer service through in-service training programs, coaching and role modeling.”

In order to achieve that objective, we'll soon launch an initiative to integrate the values and behaviors into the culture and day-to-day operations of the Courts. We had an initial kick-off meeting and will be asking for volunteers to join a group responsible for implementing the values at the Division level. Stay tuned for more information. You will be invited to share your thoughts on how we are doing in living our values and what will support us in living consistently with our values.

Employee Recognition

Employee recognition is a topic that we have emphasized throughout the year—one that we highlighted in the townhall and was reflected in events such as Public Service Recognition Week and the Employee Recognition and Awards Ceremony. Excellence and commitment to our mission should not go unnoticed and we wish to encourage everyone to continually say thank you and recognize colleagues who demonstrate excellence in their jobs. We believe that one of the ways in which we will enhance our Great Place to Work culture is by saying thank you and recognizing a job well done.

In closing, we would like to encourage all employees to share your feedback in the 2013 Employee Viewpoint Survey. Your contribution is very important and we look forward to receiving your input to continue strengthening our workplace.

Thank you for everything you do and we wish everyone a wonderful Holiday Season.

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



Open through December 31

For questions about the DC One Fund program, contact Ave Broadie.

DC Superior Court and the DC Child and Family Services Agency host 27th Annual Adoption Day

On Saturday, November 23, the DC Superior Court and the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) co-hosted the 27th Annual Adoption Day Celebration at the Moultrie Courthouse. All children adopted in DC in the past year and their families were invited to a ceremony to celebrate the joy of adoption and encourage other residents of the area to consider adopting a child in DC's public child welfare system. 26 adoptions were finalized during the ceremony.



NBC4 news anchor Barbara Harrison emceed the ceremony.

The touching ceremony was a rousing success. The presentation of colors was conducted by Woodson Senior High School's JROTC program. Then the national anthem was sung by "The Leslie Kids" of Bowie, Maryland, ages 13, 15, and 17. Judge Zoe Bush welcomed the families to the courthouse. Jamanie Farinot, age 8, read a poem. Chief Judge Lee



Performing during the ceremony.

Following the opening remarks, Leyia Jeffers, age 8, performed a musical selection. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Mayor Vincent

Judge Lee Satterfield gave opening remarks about the ceremony and all of the wonderful adoptions the court has been able to facilitate over the past year.

Following the opening remarks,

Gray, and Director of DC CFSA Brenda Donald each gave remarks about the special celebration, and "The Leslie Kids" performed another musical selection. Hayden and Monte Michaelson read a poem which Monte wrote himself about how happy he is to have Hayden as his new little brother. Tayia Jeffers, age 14, then performed a song. This was Tayia's fifth year performing at the DC Superior Court's Adoption Day.



Barbara Harrison and a new family member.



Mayor Vincent Gray (left) and Chief Judge Lee Satterfield (right) observe while new family members are introduced.

Judge Hiram Puig-Lugo welcomed Barbara Harrison, NBC4 News Anchor and Wednesday's Child Host, as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Ms. Harrison introduced 19 families whose 26 adoptions were finalized during the ceremony. Judge Carol Dalton presided over the ceremony that marked the beginning of new families. The ceremony ended with the joy and celebration of the families that came together that day.



Judge Dalton finalizes an adoption.

Judge Robert Okun Sworn in as Superior Court Judge



Judge Okun with his wife.

On Friday, November 8, Judge Robert Okun was sworn in as a judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. Chief Judge Lee Satterfield gave opening remarks and a brief biography of Judge Okun was read. Mr. Tony Quinn of the US Attorney's office then gave remarks, mentioning how proud Judge Okun's parents, two teachers, would have

been. He spoke of the judge as someone who always does the right thing and concluded by saying that his nomination to

the court was the US Attorney's loss, but clearly DC Superior Court's gain!

Laura Hankins, General Counsel of the Public Defender Service (PDS) also spoke, highlighting how she and Judge Okun had become friends because he is genuine about his views, straightforward about where he is headed and shows respect for others.

Josh Friedman, Associate White House Counsel, then gave a presentation and read the commission. Judge Frank Schwelb, from the Court of Appeals, administered the oath of office to his former law clerk as Judge Okun's wife, Susan, held the Bible. Finally, in a touching moment, Judge Okun's children Eli and Julia robed him.

Employee townhall article continued from front cover

Dr. Bailey talked about the Courts' values and how these values reflect our organizational identity, define our work culture, and aid in carrying out the vision and mission of the Courts. Dr. Bailey challenged participants as well as all the court staff to do a self-assessment to see how we are each living and modeling the Courts' values. She challenged all participants to assess areas of improvement and be part of a culture that lives out these values on a daily basis. She also discussed several initiatives, including a telework pilot project, performance management and changes to the Child Care Center. Mr. Victor Quiros of the Cross-Training Committee shared an update on a cross-training pilot project.



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.

The E-Team then took questions and comments from the audience on topics that included: sensitivity training, grade increases, training and career development, court facilities, computers and committee participation. Employees at the meeting described it as interesting and informative, while the E-team expressed appreciation for the enthusiastic participation of the employees.

Ms. Wicks expressed her appreciation to the employees for their valuable input over the last year. She spoke about the need to emphasize employee engagement and discussed several initiatives the Courts have undertaken to increase engagement. One of the central points was related to communication. She mentioned how the E-Team had held meetings to listen to employees and will continue to do so in 2014. She also mentioned that a key priority was to emphasize a culture of recognition.



A brown-bag lunch held in April 2013.

Kave Reviews



Natalie Byrd

I would like to commend Judge-In-Chambers Court Clerk Supervisor - Natalie Byrd for the outstanding, pro-active service and assistance she provided to me recently. Ms. Byrd truly went beyond the call of duty to help a citizen in need resolve a frustrating problem, and did so in a prompt, effective, and gracious manner. You are fortunate to have such capable, committed, caring employee. She is a true asset to the DC Superior Court and the community.

To **Deena Whittington** (Marriage Bureau):

On behalf of my wife and I, we wanted to express our deepest gratitude and thanks for all your time and attention. Ms. Whittington, you went above and beyond to make sure we were taken care of! The fact that you reached out to make sure our ceremony could happen no matter what was the best!!

Please let the entire marriage bureau staff know what a wonderful job they are doing!!



Deena Whittington

Thanksgiving Food Drive: Thank you!

The 2013 D.C. Court's Thanksgiving Food Drive was a tremendous success. Your collections and monetary contributions fed approximately 461 and provided **"86 hefty turkey baskets, including rolls and a pie."**

Verna Smith, Chair and Renee Broom, Co-chair, would like to thank everybody for your donations. Our drive will be off to a good start next year because of your contributions. Your commitment to giving and the committee members' fundraising efforts are truly appreciated.



Rave Reviews



Kisha Morris

It is a pleasure to write expressing my heartfelt appreciation for the excellent service provided to me by **Ms. Kisha Morris** during a visit to the DC Marriage Bureau earlier this month to obtain a marriage license.

What strikes me most about our experience with Ms. Morris in the Marriage Bureau is that she is a model public servant. After interacting with her and other members of the Marriage Bureau, I am more confident in the public service sector. I am sure that Ms. Morris is an inspiration to those of you who have the privilege of working with her on a daily basis.

Even just two brief encounters left me inspired. Ms. Morris is precisely the kind of employee who strengthens our public service and makes me proud to live in the District of Columbia.

I am writing in regard to the excellent service I received from one of your employees. I spoke with **Terrance Bailey** (Deputy Clerk, Family Division) on the phone with regards for my request for a certified copy of my marriage license. He was very pleasant on the phone and understood my concerns in receiving the certified copy as soon as possible. Due to his swift service, I was happy to receive the certified copy on time. I have never written a letter commending an employee, but I felt it was worth praising Terrance. He stood out from many customer service representatives I have spoken to over the years.



Terrance Bailey



John Sheriff

I am writing to commend the superb work of **Mr. John Sheriff, IT Customer Service Manager**. Throughout the emergency shutdown, John Sheriff was a marvel, providing prompt, helpful and friendly customer service, which helped to make operations just a bit easier. Mr. Sheriff is a credit to the IT Division and to the Courts overall. Thank you.

Anne Meister
Register of Wills, DC Superior Court