



# Full Court Press



## Letter from the DC Courts Chief Judges to Court Employees regarding Coronavirus Situation

We are in the midst of an unprecedented health crisis. Nothing like this has happened in over 100 years. Today's world is a much more mobile and connected one than a century ago, which is clearly a positive development but one that has associated risks, risks which are now playing out. We know that many of you are worried, anxious, concerned, and/or scared. We want to assure you that we understand - and on different levels share - those feelings.

As public servants, we all share a commitment to keeping our courthouse Open to All, as our vision

statement says. But in this time of crisis, we as chief judges, as leaders, must decide which court functions are truly essential to public safety and which can be delayed/ rescheduled. We have spent the past few days making difficult decisions on reduced operations, implementing them, communicating with you and with other court partners about schedules, training employees who don't usually telework on how to do that, and getting word out to members of the public.

This situation has evolved rapidly and continues to do so. So we have made plans and had to modify

*Continues on page 7*

## DC Superior Court Starts 2020 with Seven New Judges

The DC Superior Court bench kicked off the year with a number of new faces, and a few 'old' faces in new places.

On January 10th, Rainey Ransom Brandt's (pictured) investiture was held at the Moultrie Courthouse, where she has worked for over twenty years. Rising from law clerk to Special Counsel to the Chief Judge (working for three different chief judges) and then Magistrate Judge. Judge Brandt was sworn-in by Senior Judge Michael Rankin, for whom she served as a law clerk when she



began her DC Superior Court tenure. During her investiture ceremony, remarks were made by Presiding Magistrate Judge Errol Arthur and Senior Judge Stephanie Duncan-Peters for whom Judge Brandt had also served as a law clerk.

On January 17th, the Court held its second investiture. Shana Frost Matini was sworn-in as an Associate Judge by Senior Judge Richard Levie, for whom she had served as a judi-

*Continues on page 2*

## DC Superior Court Starts 2020 with Seven New Judges — *from front cover*

cial law clerk after graduating from UDC's David A. Clarke School of Law and later as an assistant to Judge Levie in his capacity as a Special Master in a large federal lawsuit brought against the tobacco industry. Before law school, Judge Matini (pictured right) taught English at the Language Teacher's Training College in Stupsk, Poland. At her investiture, Senior Judge Levie made remarks, as did Senior Assistant Attorney General Robert DeBarardinis, a former colleague of the judge at the DC Office of Attorney General.



On January 24th, the Court's third investiture of the year was held, as Jason Park (pictured left) was sworn-in as an Associate Judge. Judge Park joined a large corporate law firm in New York after law school, where he received pro bono achievement awards for work on litigation to expand hospital access for low income community members. After a judicial clerkship and then some time at a DC law firm, Judge Park joined the DC US Attorney's Office. Judge Kelly Higashi administered the oath of office. Remarks were made by former

United States District Court Judge Ricardo Urbina, for whom he served as a judicial law clerk after law school.

Last but by no means least, the Court's fourth investiture was held on the last day of the month. On January 31st, James A. Crowell IV (pictured right) was sworn-in as an Associate Judge by Chief Judge Robert E. Morin. Judge Crowell is a former Assistant US Attorney who most recently served as head of the Executive Office of US Attorneys at the US Department of Justice after serving as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Attorney General. US District Court Judge Charles A. Pannell, Jr., for whom Judge Crowell had clerked after law school, gave remarks, as did former Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, for whom he had worked in the US Attorney's Office in Maryland.



### February - A shorter month, but still a number of new judges



On February 21st, the Court held an installation ceremony for three new Magistrate Judges. Magistrate Judge Raquel Olivo Tribal (pictured left) was raised in Brooklyn, went to college in Ohio (Oberlin) and then taught English in Japan. Most recently she was an Attorney Negotiator in the Domestic Violence Division, and prior to that served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Child Support section of the Office of the DC Attorney General. Judge

Trabal was sworn in by Associate Judge Laura Cordero. Her college friend, Elizabeth Barajas-Román, President and CEO of the Women’s Funding Network, gave remarks.

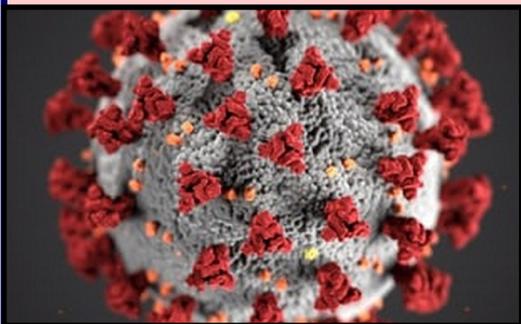
Next came Magistrate Judge Ebony M. Scott, who was raised in Buffalo, NY but came to DC for law school and has lived here ever since. Most recently Judge Scott served as Deputy Director of Mayor Bowser’s Office of Legal Counsel, after working for the DC Office of Human Rights as General Counsel and as an Assistant Attorney General in the Office of the Attorney General for DC. Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby of the DC Court of Appeals, for whom Judge Scott clerked right after law school, gave remarks and administered the oath of office.



The ceremony closed with the installation of native Washingtonian Judith Pipe as magistrate judge. Judge Pipe graduated from American University and received her juris doctor magna cum laude from the Columbus School of Law at Catholic University. She joined the Public Defender Service for DC after graduation and served there for a dozen years, ultimately becoming a supervisor in the trial division in 2014. Jason Downs, General Counsel, in the Office of the DC Attorney General, who was a former PDS colleague of the judge, gave remarks. Chief Judge Robert Morin administered the oath of office.

***Congratulations and welcome to all the new judges.***

## **DC Courts Coronavirus Updates**



The DC Courts have set up a page to provide the latest updates in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Please check this page for details on operating status and general information.

<https://www.dccourts.gov/coronavirus>

Please also check the DC Department of Health’s coronavirus page, where you will find advice on how to protect yourself and what to do if you show symptoms.

<https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>

## DC Courts Care Winter Recap



The DC Courts Care Committee has had a few initiatives in the past couple of months but, and they have made a huge impact. Although the holidays can be a busy time for everyone, the Courts Care Committee made sure to dedicate some of their time, even in the middle of the workday to serve others. This past winter, the Committee partnered with two amazing organizations to spread some holiday joy and fill the gaps in under-served communities.

In November, the Courts had their annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. Spearheaded by Ms. Betty Gentry, the Thanksgiving Food Drive, now under the Courts Care umbrella, worked tirelessly to sort, gather and distribute Thanksgiving Dinner items for over 200 local families. This year, the committee exceeded their goal and through the monetary donations of court employees as well as the hands-on contributions of committee members, were able to provide food to those in need.

In December, the Courts Care Committee partnered with Operation Gratitude, a nonprofit organization that sends care packages and letters to deployed troops, first responders, veterans, new recruits and military families. Over the course of two days in the Board of Judges conference room, court employees wrote over 100 letters!

At the top of the New Year, the committee began collecting coats for the Winter Coat Drive in partnership with the local organization, Thrive DC. This organization works to prevent and end homelessness in Washington, DC by providing vulnerable people with a wide range of services to help stabilize their lives. Founded in 1979 to serve dinner to homeless women, Thrive DC has grown to be a comprehensive, professionally staffed, bilingual organization serving more than 2,000 men, women, and children each year. The organization is a local safety net for people experiencing homelessness, unemployment, housing instability, and food insecurity. Their goal is to help those they serve take the first steps toward independence and self-sufficiency. With the help of the court employees, the Courts Care Committee was able to deliver over 150 Winter items to Thrive DC in Columbia Heights.

The DC Courts Care Committee is so grateful to everyone at the Courts who have supported any of the aforementioned initiatives and we look forward to continuing our service and creating an even bigger impact in the Spring!



## DC Courts Celebrate Black History Month



DC Courts' Black History Month 2020 celebrations invited court employees to reflect upon the annual theme "African Americans and the Vote." The theme

called for the commemoration of two anniversaries—the sesquicentennial of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, by which black men gained the right to vote after the Civil War, and the centennial of the ratification of the Nineteenth

Amendment, by which women won the vote. The Courts' Black History Month Committee put together three fun and informative events that aligned with this year's theme.

On February 7th, the committee held a kick-off event in the Juror's



Lounge, which consisted of mini exhibits curated around the Fifteenth Amendment, the Nineteenth Amendment and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. A corresponding bingo game was provided for attendees to work through as they looked at and learned from the exhibits.

On February 21st, the committee conducted a debate in the Historic Courthouse Ceremonial Courtroom, where two teams, made up of court employees, went head to head, outlining the pros and cons of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, debating whether it is still necessary in the year 2020. The teams consisted of Court heavy-hitters, including Taylor Halcromb, Jeremie Johnson, Arnettia Wyre, Terrance Bailey, and Joseph Goings. After a healthy debate, the floor was open to the audience for commentary and congratulations.

This year's final Black History Month event was an opportunity to implement something new: the first annual, African American Impact Awards. The event was inspired by the Hispanic Heritage Month C.O.R.O. Awards and honored organizations and people from around the District whose work has positively impacted and uplifted the African American community. After brainstorming and submitting a list of nominees, the committee voted and identified the winners of the awards. The award names were inspired by influential African Americans who left their mark on the DC community. The Charles Hamilton Houston Legal Services Award was given to Bread for the City for services they provide in

their Legal Clinic. The Mary Church Terrell Community Service Award was given to So Others Might Eat for their dedication to those who are under served in the areas of homelessness, healthcare, job training, and basic needs. The Nannie Helen Burroughs Humanitarian Award was

given to Steven Park, founder, and Director of Little Lights Urban Ministries, an organization providing services to children and families in the Southeast DC public housing communities, Potomac Gardens, and Hopkins.

Of course, no final Black History Month event would be complete without good food and great entertainment! The Court's very own Joseph Goings presented an original poem, Marvena Davis and friends provided numerous musical selections, including the African American National Anthem, 'Lift Every Voice and Sing,' and Howard University student, Addison Turner performed an original piece. The event closed out with great music, as well as a fun photo booth.

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported this year's Black History Month festivities! See you next year!



## New Division Director Appointments

**Nicole Stevens** has been appointed to the position of **Register of Wills/Director for the Probate Division**. Ms. Stevens was appointed Deputy Register of Wills in June 2017. Prior to her appointment, she served as an Assistant Deputy Register of Wills for nine years and as the Acting Register of Wills since April 2019.

Ms. Stevens has dedicated her professional career to the practice and administration of law in the District of Columbia. Prior to joining the Probate Division, Ms. Stevens was in private practice as a senior attorney with Loewinger & Brand, P.L.L.C., where she specialized in probate, real estate, landlord-tenant, and contract law and litigation. Ms. Stevens previously served as an elected member of the DC Bar's Estate, Trusts, and Probate Steering Committee and remains an active member of the Probate Section of the DC Bar. As a respected member of the DC legal community, Ms. Stevens has participated as a panelist and guest speaker on a variety of probate-related issues.

Ms. Stevens' extensive knowledge of the myriad legal issues presented in the Probate Division makes her a valuable member of the Probate Rules Committee. She is a key participant in the Probate Division's judicial on-boarding program and working group to improve processes for the operations and auditing branches and program analysts' functions. She has worked diligently to enhance the services of the new self-help center to support access to justice for self-represented litigants. Ms. Stevens fully embraces the DC Courts' commitment to values and leadership principles and serves as the Executive Sponsor of the Division's Values Team. Ms. Stevens is a graduate of Howard University and American University's Washington College of Law. She is also a graduate of the DC Courts' Management Training Program. Ms. Stevens is admitted to practice law in the District of Columbia, New York and New Jersey.

**Lynn Magee** has been appointed to the position of **Civil Division Director**. Since September 2018, Ms. Magee has served as the Acting Deputy Director for the Civil Division. Ms. Magee has dedicated her legal career to supporting the goals and initiatives of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. For almost 12 years, she has contributed to the growth and development of the Civil Division. As an Attorney Advisor, she utilized her legal background to educate, train and coach non-judicial staff on the intricacies of civil matters, and the utilization of the electronic case management system.

Ms. Magee's leadership skills proved to be essential as the Senior Program Analyst and then as the Acting Deputy Director in the Civil Division. In these capacities, she provided guidance to division leadership on the effective utilization of business intelligence to enhance operations, and helped implement enhanced business processes. Ms. Magee's sound application of key management principles contributed to the Civil Division and the Superior Court as a whole, achieving goals such as: more streamlined and efficient operations; expanded collaboration with stakeholders; and increased utilization of the Court's technological tools.

Prior to joining the Civil Division, Ms. Magee had an extensive background working with the DC Superior Court's judicial officers serving as a subject matter expert for Civil II cases; training law clerks on civil calendars and their management; and conducting legal research on procedural and substantive matters. She was instrumental in the implementation of the Court's first electronic case management system, CourtView. Ms. Magee has participated with the DC Courts' Management Training Program and the National Association for Court Management. She is a graduate of Marist College of New York and the Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law. She is admitted to practice law in the District of Columbia, and Massachusetts.

**Letter from Chief Judges — from front cover**

them. We have had many calls, meetings and briefings with various stakeholders including the federal courts and other state high courts, criminal justice partners, institutional litigants, legal services providers, District government officials, and our colleagues and court staff. Our highest priorities are the safety of court employees and the public that we serve. The DC Courts' Coronavirus emergency operations plan has been posted on the Courts' website in English and Spanish ([www.dccourts.gov/coronavirus](http://www.dccourts.gov/coronavirus)), which is updated virtually every day). The DC Court of Appeals has suspended oral arguments for the time being and is asking that filings be eFiled or emailed to a special email address. The DC Superior Court has drastically curtailed in-person court appearances, including postponing jury trials.

The goal of our plan is to protect our workforce and the public, while maintaining the courts' fundamental role in public safety and ensuring access to justice. We are thus utilizing "social distancing" by allowing as many employees as possible to telework. and remote work options. We want to thank all of you - those who learned to telework in just a few hours, the IT team who did the training and who has been on call throughout, the Capital Projects staff who have increased the cleaning and disinfecting in the buildings, the Administrative Services team who is working to ensure we have enough supplies to operate for the next several weeks, and especially our courtroom and public counter staff, security team (US Marshals and Court Security Officers), and the cleaning crew - you are on the front lines and have made us all proud.

Please take care of yourselves, your family and our court family during this challenging time.

With deep appreciation and respect,

*Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby*  
**DC Court of Appeals**

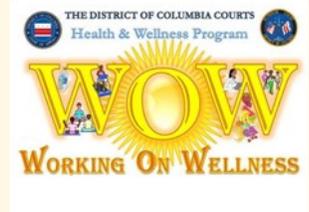
*Chief Judge Robert Morin*  
**DC Superior Court**

*Would you like to receive updates on WOW yoga and zumba classes? Would you like to be notified of WOW events? Would you like to receive R.S.V.P. invitations to Wednesday morning meditation sessions?*

*Would you like to be informed of upcoming WOW Lunch and Learn sessions? Would you like a copy of the WOW class schedule? Or, how about a link to the latest Employee Wellness Corner interview?*

If your answer is yes, then sign up for the WOW mailing list! Email the WOW Committee at: [wowcommittee@dcsc.gov](mailto:wowcommittee@dcsc.gov),

Tell us your area of interest (Yoga, Zumba, class schedule, fitness waiver, meditation sessions, Lunch and Learns, or Employee Wellness Corner), and stay in the know!



# 2019 Employee Viewpoint Survey Results

The survey results are in, and according to the approximately 680 court employees who participated in the 2019 Viewpoint Survey, the DC Courts continue to be a Great Place to Work! [See survey highlights below] Fourteen of the 71 core questions on the survey showed significant increases in positive responses. In addition, the Courts showed significant increases in the Fairness Index, while Employee Engagement and Satisfaction remained steady. Stay tuned for more updates in the future.

