



# Full Court Press



Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

February 2013

## From the DC Courts Executive Team: sequestration, cross-training and a new strategic plan

We hope everyone's year is off to a good start. The DC Courts' Executive Team has been paying close attention to our nation's fiscal situation and since the Courts' budget is directly impacted by decisions made in the US Congress, we wanted to share an update on what to anticipate.



*DC Courts Executive Team (from left to right): Court of Appeals Clerk Julio Castillo, Executive Officer Anne Wicks, Deputy Executive Officer Cheryl Bailey and Superior Court Clerk Duane Delaney.*

If sequestration goes into effect on March 1, all federal agencies will be affected by the automatic budget cuts that will immediately take place. All agencies have been preparing for this process and have created plans on how to address the sequestration process. The Courts' plan contemplates significant budget cuts that will impact our infrastructure, but at this point we do not anticipate personnel layoffs or furloughs. Although our budget will be severely curtailed and our belts tightened, the fact that no layoffs or furloughs are anticipated is good news for all of us.

The budget cuts make it more imperative for us to retain a highly skilled workforce. In this vein, a new survey has been opened to all employees asking for input on a cross-training initiative. Spearheaded by the Center for Education and Training, the survey will help to design a cross-training program that enhances employee's skills, strengthens our workforce and

helps us to continue building a Great Place to Work. The survey has received more than 300 responses and we thank all those who participated.

Finally, we want to invite all employees to the kick-off event of the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan on March 1, 2013. The Strategic Planning Leadership Council has put a tremendous amount of work into the process of developing our new plan and we wish to thank all those who contributed. As a performance-oriented court system, the new 2013-2017 Strategic Plan will serve as the Courts' blueprint for the next five years. In the March 1 event, you will hear more about our strategic goals and new values.

We continue to receive a great deal of feedback since our townhall in December 2012. Please share your thoughts and ideas, which will help us foster a culture of communication.

### ***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*

### **IT Branch Manager to present on court technology initiatives at national conference**



*Members of the IT team, left to right: Sindura Pannala, Ashok Parthasarathy, Imran Haque, Bharat Pappu, Ron Berry, Mulu Bekele and Milind Panwalkar.*

As a result of efforts to showcase the Courts' projects in the IT community, Bharat Pappu, the Courts' Applications Development Manager, will present at the Oracle Development Tools User Group Conference (ODTUG Kscope 13) to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana on June 23-27. Bharat's abstract—titled "Oracle APEX invalidates the Project Management's Triple Constraint"—was selected from among more than 900 technical submissions.

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## Installation ceremony for Magistrate Judge Gretchen N. Rohr

Magistrate Judge Gretchen N. Rohr was welcomed to the DC Superior Court bench in an installation ceremony on January 4th. Superior Court Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield presided over the ceremony, which highlighted Judge Rohr's extensive background in mental health and justice. Judge Rohr will serve as Chair of the Superior Court's Mental Health Commission and will also preside over the Juvenile Behavioral Diversion Program.

Magistrate Judge Rohr previously served for five years as the Director of the DC Jail and Prison Advocacy Project for University Legal Services. In this capacity, she represented individuals with mental disabilities involved with the criminal justice system and designed an interdisciplinary initiative for diverting those individuals from behind bars into community-based, self-directed treatment. This approach has been recognized nationally as an innovative model by advocates and administrators alike. The Judge has lectured extensively across the country on topics including disability law compliance in criminal justice settings, employing peers as reentry specialists and enhancing community and institutional safety through crisis intervention and trauma response.

Prior to her practice in DC, Magistrate Judge Rohr was a staff attorney with the Georgia Advocacy Office and worked for two

years as a Holland & Knight LLP *Chesterfield Smith Fellow*, where she worked in partnership with the Atlanta-based Southern Center for Human Rights litigating constitutional rights cases in prisons. She has also served as the Co-Chair of the Individual Rights and Responsibilities Section of the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Committee and on the Board



*Magistrate Judge Rohr takes the oath of office administered by Superior Court Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield.*

of Directors for several charitable organizations in the District and abroad.

Judge Rohr continues to serve as an active member of the DC Jail Diversion Task Force, an interagency working group chaired by Judge Michael Ryan which addresses

issues relating to people with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system. Her expertise and commitment to consensus-building have helped the DC Superior Court access effective behavioral health resources and have supported the integrity and fair functioning of the adult mental health and juvenile behavioral courts since their inception.

## Multi-Door Division Launches New Pilot Program

Prompted by recent developments in an emerging field often called eldercare mediation, Claudette Taylor (Multi-Door's Probate Mediation Program Officer) began investigating its potential benefits for the court and the public. Around the same time, Ms. Taylor noticed the large number of intervention cases filed with the Probate Division and realized that these cases might benefit from mediation. Through collaboration with the Probate Division's Guardian Assistance Program, the Probate Mediation Program established a new pilot program—namely, the Older Adults and People with Disabilities Mediation Calendar (OAPDM). The Guardian Assistance Program has been instrumental in educating others about the need and benefits of mediating intervention cases.

OAPDM is the first major expansion of the Probate Mediation Program (Program) since the Program's inception in 1992. Historically, the Program primarily handled litigation cases and other cases as referred by the judge. If adopted permanently, OAPDM will expand the Program's caseload of intervention cases.

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In line with employee engagement programs across the Courts, the Information Technology Division (ITD) has put in place goals and initiatives that encourage staff to publish technical papers and present at key technology conferences. The effort falls under ITD's strategic objective of developing a best-in-class workforce by attracting and retaining highly-skilled employees.

Bharat is the perfect choice to represent the Courts and ITD at the ODTUG Kscope 13 worldwide conference. Since joining the ITD team in 2010, he has proven to be a true inspirational leader and a creative thinker in addressing the business needs of the Courts.

In his conference abstract, Bharat lays out how the Courts have successfully designed and developed more than 15 high-quality departmental applications utilizing Oracle APEX technology. Despite the fact that software products cannot traditionally be high-quality, inexpensive and quick to build, all at the same time, that is exactly what Bharat and his team have accomplished. The 15 applications, developed in coordination with Ronald Berry and the Production Support

team, are high-quality, inexpensive and have been delivered quickly.

The applications include solutions for the Family Court Self-Help Center, Family Court Office of the Parenting Coordinator, Family Court Fathering Court, Family Court Domestic Relationships Branch, Special Operations Division Child Care Center, Special Operations Division Appeals Coordinators Office, Special Operations Division Office of the Court Interpreting Services, Special Operations Division Superior Court Library, Probate Division, Criminal Division, Court Reporting and Recording Division, Budget and Finance Division, Research and Development Division, and Information Technology Division.

Additionally, ITD is currently developing a new system for attorney admission tracking and DC Bar examination management for the DC Court of Appeals. Other ITD employees involved in the effort include: Milind Panwalkar, Mulu Bekele, and Imran Haque, as well as consultants Ashok Parthasarathy and Sindura Pannala.

Please join us in congratulating Bharat and the ITD team for their contributions in support of the Courts' mission of delivering justice to the DC community.

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*Multi-Door article continued from previous page*

Similar to eldercare cases, the focus in OAPDM mediations will be ward-centered, meaning that the ward's best interest is the foremost concern. Most OAPDM clients will be individuals seeking guardianship of someone, guardians who want to solve problems such as living or care arrangements for their ward, and family members who have disagreements that include or affect the ward. Unlike eldercare mediation, OAPDM plans to serve individuals of all ages as well as their families and friends.

OAPDM aims to help the family function, give the ward options in his/her care, and address disagreements that the law cannot resolve. Its mediation process is designed to facilitate communication between family members and friends who have an interest in the outcome; parties to the mediation will be able to discuss and resolve both legal and non-legal issues. The Program will consider an OAPDM mediation successful if it: improves communication within the family; allows the ward to participate in the decision making process, as deemed appropriate based upon the ward's abilities; or results in the family designing a plan to care for the ward.



*From left to right: Sonya Roundtree, Victor Quiros, Claudette Taylor, Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division Director Jeannie M. Adams, and Sally Moreland.*

Although OAPDM's potential benefits are many, the Program will move cautiously as it implements the pilot program. The pilot program is designed to assess several aspects of OAPDM, including the impact that court mediation might have on intervention cases, the amount of pre-mediation work necessary, and the length of time required to fully mediate a case. The Program will determine whether or not to continue OAPDM after thorough study.

*Additional information is available by contacting Ms. Taylor or Victor Quiros, Multi-Door's Civil Branch Chief.*

## DC Court of Appeals holds oral arguments at UDC and Howard law schools

As an educational outreach initiative, the DC Court of Appeals held two off-site oral arguments in cases filed with the Court, one at UDC's David A. Clarke School of Law and the other at the Howard University School of Law. The idea was a collaborative effort of Chief Judge Eric T. Washington and local area law school deans to provide law students with a glimpse of real-world litigation at the appellate level.

The oral arguments were held before a three-judge appellate panel in the schools' moot courtrooms. The arguments held at the David A. Clarke School of Law were before DC Court of Appeals' Chief Judge Eric Washington, Judge Kathryn Oberly, and Senior Judge William Pryor. The events were of special significance to UDC as Dean Shelley Broderick opened the doors to the new Moot Courtroom before the arguments began. Dean Broderick conveyed her excitement by cutting the ribbon to the doors while explaining how much of a milestone the new courtroom is in the history of the school. After court was adjourned, the judges held a question and answer session for students on various topics unrelated to the cases heard. Students were eager to learn about career choices and goals, court decorum, and the expected writing and presentation skills of an attorney.

At the Howard Law School session, the three-judge panel included: Associate Judges John Fisher, Anna Blackburne-Rigsby, and Phyllis Thompson. Judge Blackburne-Rigsby, a HULS alumna, expressed her appreciation for attorneys who are "...willing to engage, well prepared, and thoughtful." Judge Fisher

stressed the importance of an attorney demonstrating exceptional writing skills because lack thereof is "...an indication that they are lazy and sloppy." The judges also used this time to discuss their legal educational background and how it has helped shape their careers.

Tiffany Mouzan, UDC Law student, commented that the session was "...very informative. It's awesome they brought the Courts to us – really beneficial." The Howard session was filled with first year law students, ready to understand how the subjects they learn about in class are applied in actual court proceedings. Dean Okianer Christian Dark expressed how the DCCA arguments on site were an "...extremely valuable opportunity for HU law students in their first year."



*From left to right: Chief Washington; Judge Oberly; Katherine S. Broderick, Dean of the David A. Clarke School of Law; Annamaria Steward, Associate Dean of Students; and Senior Judge Pryor.*

## DC Courts go to school: educating high school seniors on the importance of jury duty



*Magistrate Judge  
Karen Howze*

"If you were on trial, would you like a judge or jury to hear your case?" That was the rhetorical question posed by DC Superior Court Magistrate Judge Karen Howze to a class of School Without Walls seniors. The visit to the DC school was part of an initiative by the Council for Court Excellence to reach out to students in the District and bring education on the significance of jurors and their crucial role in the justice system.

As the students contemplated the question, they were shown a reenactment of an actual criminal trial heard in DC Superior Court in 1990. As the judge presided, an eye witness, expert witness,

and detective each took the stand. The government and defense counsel gave their closing arguments, while the students played an important role as the jury.

After the court proceedings, the class split into 12-panel juries, selected a foreperson, and each juror's perspective was discussed.

When finished deliberating,

Judge Howze asked each foreperson to give the verdicts.



*Judge Howze with the students*

*Continued on opposite page*

## Superior Court holds 5th Fathering Court graduation



*Fathering Court Judge Milton Lee with a graduate.*

The Superior Court held its fifth Fathering Court graduation on Friday, January 25, recognizing the ten men who recently completed the Fathering Court program. The program was created in response to the District's need to provide services connecting formerly incarcerated fathers reentering the community with their children. Presiding over the graduation ceremony were Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, Family Court Presiding Judge Zoe Bush and Fathering Court Judge Milton Lee.

“This program shows the effect that we can have on the community when we work with fathers to help them connect with their children and families,” said Chief Judge Satterfield. “As I learned from my own father, healthy fathering has an incredibly powerful influence on children’s lives.”

Explaining the tenets of the program, Judge Lee described the four criteria that each graduate must meet: full time, stable employment; fulfillment of child-support obligations, regularly and on time; ability to co-parent, connecting with the children, beyond financial support; and not reoffend. “You know what makes me proud?” said Judge Lee, “these are men today that have overcome all of that.”



*Superior Court Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield congratulating the graduates.*

Congratulating the graduates in closing remarks, Judge Bush stressed that the program was about more than just quantifying success and reducing recidivism. She said speaking directly to the graduates: “This is about connecting with your children and for them to know that you love them.”



*The graduates celebrate the moment.*

Beginning in November 2007 as a pilot program, the Fathering Court program combines needs-assessment, employment skills development and community resources to provide non-custodial parents the ability to better meet the emotional and financial needs of their children. The program is designed to equip fathers with skills that enable them to contribute positively to the emotional and economic well-being of their children.

Having had limited contact with their children, one in four DC prisoners owes court-ordered child support. In addition to owing money, they also face the challenge of finding employment in order to provide for themselves and their children. The Fathering Court is an innovative and voluntary program that helps these fathers reconnect with their children not just financially, but also emotionally. The recidivism rate for program participants in the first 5 years is under six percent.



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### *High school article continued from previous page*

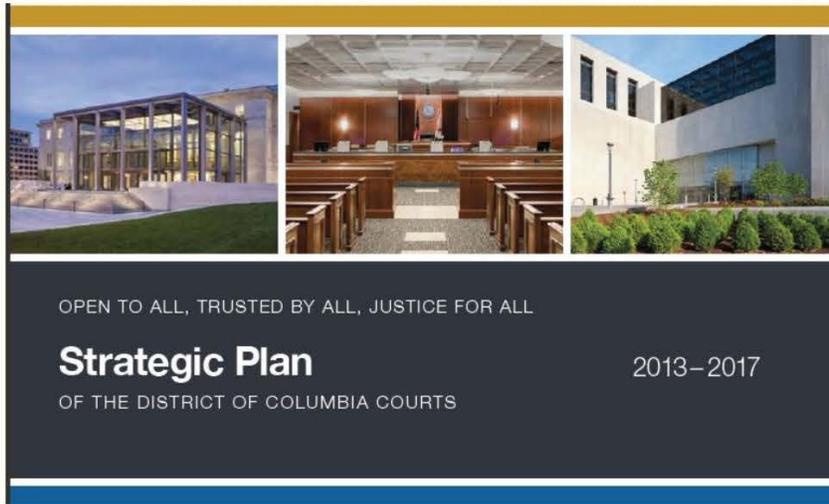
Afterwards the students were given the opportunity to explain verdicts as well as ask questions to help them understand what actually happens in a trial.

Educating the District's students about their civic duty to serve as a juror has been an important initiative for the DC Courts. Such forums allow participants to ask specific questions as well as to challenge assumptions they may have about being a juror: “What happens if you do not appear for jury duty?” or “How often can

you be called for jury service?” These opportunities also allow judges and courts to engage students with thoughtful questions to help them understand the role of juries.

Judge Howze stimulated the conversation by asking the students questions such as “What is the difference between being innocent and a not guilty verdict?” At the end, the students understood the vital importance of performing their civic duty when summoned as a juror.

# Kick-Off Event: VALUES AT WORK FOR JUSTICE



## ALL EMPLOYEES ARE INVITED

### March 1, 2013

#### Attend Either Session:

**11:45 am – 12:45 pm**

**Moultrie Courthouse**

**Jurors' Lounge**

**1:00 pm – 2:00 pm**

**Historic Courthouse**

**Ceremonial Courtroom**

## HR welcomes new staff members



*Daniel Lee*

The Human Resources Division (HRD) is pleased to announce the recent addition of Daniel Lee and Pam Hunter to the HRD team.

Daniel is joining the team as the Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) Manager and will be responsible for managing the migration, implementation and maintenance of the new comprehensive and integrated HRIS. Additionally, he will be responsible for continuing and advancing HRD technology transformation initiatives.

Daniel is a certified Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) by the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI). He specializes in project management, systems and process management and improvement, data management, analytics and reporting. Daniel has previously worked within the education, non-profit, federal contracting, and healthcare services industries providing a variety of HR services and support. Daniel is a member and the Vice President of Finance for the National Association of African Americans in Human Resources (NAAAHR) Washington, DC Chapter. He is also a member of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).



*Pam Hunter*

As the Performance Manager, Pam will provide specialized knowledge and assistance on a wide range of Performance Management and Organizational Development concepts, practices and policies that will enhance and improve the utilization of the Courts' performance management system.

Pam is a certified professional in human resources with over 20 years of experience in various human resource disciplines including training and development, organizational and employee development, performance management, and diversity and inclusion. Prior to joining the DC Courts, Pam served as Program Manager for Diversity and Inclusion for the Office of the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) for the US House of Representatives. She was responsible for designing, developing, and implementing programs to help the organization strategically leverage diversity and build inclusion.

Among her previous positions within the CAO, Pam served as Program Manager for Performance Management, an Education and Organizational Consultant, and a Senior Training Specialist. Pam attributes her success in each of these roles to her practical experience and ability to forge meaningful relationships in order to accomplish goals. In addition to the US House of Representatives, Pam's previous employers include the US Small Business Administration, Westover Consultants, and the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS  
Health & Wellness Program



**“WOW” WANTS YOU!!!!!!!!!!**

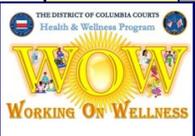


**SIGN UP TO BECOME AN AMBASSADOR FOR HEALTH**  
**MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON**

Using the gym in Court Building B  
just got better!

Have you seen the newly renovated  
showers and changing rooms?



# Rave Reviews

Greetings Mr. Johnson,

I am writing to thank you and your office staff [**Probate Clerk's Office**] for all of their assistance during my visit to the court.

My family had to file for guardianship/conservatorship of my mother ... and on my many visits to your office, I have received information, support and assistance in reference to making sure that I am meeting all of the courts requirements.

I would especially like to thank Ms. **Mary Ford** for her friendly, kind and professional disposition while assisting me with a request for information/documents. Although the office was very busy during my visit, Ms. Ford went out of her way to rush an order for documents. She also made sure that I was informed of the proper process to request documentation/information from the court. Her patience and kindness and great effort were appreciated!

Ms. **Stephanie Whittaker** and Ms. **Tanya Rainey** have also helped me during previous visits to the court and they were both very professional. In particular, I remember Ms. Rainey being very patient when I had made a mistake on a document. Ms. Rainey took the time to explain my mistake to ensure that I would not repeat the error on the final document.



*From left to right: Tanya Rainey, Mary Ford and Stephanie Whittaker*

## Commendations for the Crime Victims Compensation Unit

*To Ms. Rita Blandino:*

*I have to thank you from everything within me for all that you have done... You made me feel like I could go on with your encouraging words and kid-gloves. Thank you!*

*Ms. Laverne Washington:*

*I would like to thank you for all you have done to help me and my family in our time of need. A special thank you to you Ms. Washington for going the extra mile...*



*Rita Blandino*



*Laverne Washington*

## Anne Meister appointed to leadership role in national association

Anne Meister, Register of Wills of the DC Superior Court, was recently elected to serve as an officer on the Executive Committee of the National College of Probate Judges (NCPJ). As stated on their website, NCPJ "is the only national organization exclusively dedicated to improving probate law and probate courts." Anne was appointed to serve as an NCPJ officer for a 2-year term.



*Anne Meister*