



## Values and Leadership Overview and Update Fall 2015

The values initiative is a key element in the DC Courts 2013-2017 Strategic Plan. A court-wide committee updated and refined the values to define what's most important in how employees work together and serve the public. Fundamentally, the better employees are able to work together, the more successful they will be in serving the public and creating a positive work environment.

In conjunction with the emphasis on values, the DC Courts have also identified a set of leadership principles to help ingrain the values in the work culture. The goal of the values and leadership initiative is to create consistency, enhance professionalism and strengthen the organization's performance. As mentioned, these improvements will have an impact on the Courts' ability to fulfill its mission and serve the public.

To date, a summary of accomplishments includes the following:

- Leadership principles have been rolled out to promote consistency across the organization. The principles emphasize innovation, employee contribution and development, collaboration and excellence.
- Managers, branch chiefs and supervisors across the courts have been engaged to participate in training and leadership business meetings. To date over 100 managers and leaders have either completed or are currently completing the QuickStart training, a skills-based management program.

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## 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Employee Awards Ceremony

The DC Courts' Employee Awards Ceremony recognizes outstanding employees who exemplify the values in their daily work. This year marked the 34<sup>th</sup> annual celebration to acknowledge all court employees for their dedication and commitment to serving the District of Columbia. In addition, the ceremony provides an opportunity to credit specific employees for special recognition awards related to public service, management achievement, and an "unsung hero."

The event was held on Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> and featured the Courts' own "Just Us" band. Congratulations to all 2015 award recipients! See who they are in pages 4 through 7.



# DC Courts' Strategic Plan Accomplishments: Procedural Fairness

By David Bell, Strategic Management Division

Every five years the DC Courts develop a strategic plan to share the Judicial Branch's goals and priorities with the residents we serve and the justice partners with whom we work. In 2015, the Courts reached the midway point in implementing *Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All: Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts, 2013-2017*.

As a check-in at this mid-point, the DC Courts Strategic Planning Leadership Council (SPLC) undertook a high-level review of the Courts' progress in achieving the Plan, which is outlined in a booklet: [Mid-Point Accomplishments](#).

In this and future articles, we will highlight some of the ways in which our dedicated employees and judicial officers are working to ensure our mission "to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and resolve disputes peacefully, fairly and effectively in the District of Columbia," and striving towards our vision of "Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All."

Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan, *Fair and Timely Case Resolution*, is a primary purpose of courts. Fair and impartial court processes are essential to justice. Court proceedings and treatment of litigants must be fair and litigants must *feel* that they are fair. At the same time, courts must resolve cases in a timely manner and avoid undue delay. The effective administration of justice requires a careful balancing of the goals of fairness and timeliness.

An important objective under Goal 1 is ensuring **procedural fairness** for litigants. Research has shown that when litigants feel that the judicial process is fair, they are more likely to accept the fairness of the outcome. Procedural fairness can be achieved by allowing litigants to be heard, by providing respectful treatment, impartiality, and clear explanations of what the process is and how decisions are made.

A few years ago, the Code of Judicial Conduct was revised to allow judges to provide parties with information about a court proceeding, to ask neutral questions, and to explain the basis of a ruling, all of which are helpful strategies in fostering procedural fairness. In 2014, judicial officers and senior court managers participated in a DC Courts' training conference on procedural fairness, featuring leading expert Tom Tyler from Yale Law School.

In addition to judges, courtroom clerks have a crucial role to play in ensuring procedural fairness in the courtroom. In December 2015, the Criminal Division will pilot a procedural fairness training for courtroom clerks which, if evaluated favorably, may become a model for other divisions.

While a procedurally fair courtroom is critical, most people who come to court will not interact with a judge at all – their experience with the court will be with employees at intake counters, payment windows, self-help centers and any other location where interactions occur with court users. How litigants are treated by court employees from the moment they enter the courthouse and encounter security personnel sets the tone. Therefore, **all employees have a role to play in promoting fair and impartial processes and procedures for court users.**

Under the current Strategic Plan, training for new employees explains the theory of procedural fairness and its role in promoting public trust and confidence in the courts. Procedural fairness includes the following elements:

**Voice:** People have a strong desire to express their thoughts and questions. You can allow litigants you are serving to have a "voice" – to feel that they have been listened to. Despite hearing similar questions many times over the course of a day, you can listen attentively and respond professionally.

**Respect:** Being listened to is symbolically important – it conveys respect, which is another component of procedural justice. As one of the Courts' values, respect means we treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and understanding. From a litigant's point of view, if a court employee treats them with dignity, courtesy and understanding, they are more likely to believe that they will receive justice in their case.

**Impartiality:** When you treat everyone impartially they are more likely to feel that the court system works for everyone. This is especially important for litigants without lawyers and limited-English proficient court users.

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# Values and Leadership Overview and Update—Fall 2015

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- Division plans have been or are currently being developed. The purpose of the plans is to actively engage employees and identify specific changes that will strengthen our performance and day-to-day organizational culture.

A more comprehensive overview and history of the initiative can be summarized in three distinct phases.

## Phase I - Values Assessment

The first step in the initiative, launched in the spring of 2014 in partnership with a consulting firm, was to conduct a values assessment involving interviews and focus groups with senior leaders, employees, branch chiefs and supervisors throughout the courts. Through this assessment the following points were identified:

- There was general consensus that the Courts' values are the right values to focus on.
- There is significant room for improvement in making the values operational in the day-to-day work environment.
- Consistent leadership aligned with the values is a critical success factor for the values to come to life fully.

As part of this phase, a Values Steering Committee and Values Leadership Council were created. The Steering Committee consists of senior leaders who are tasked with overseeing the initiative. The Values Leadership Council consists of employees from various divisions who share ideas and provide feedback on the initiative as a whole and with respect to various divisions.

## Phase II – Focus on Leadership First

Based on the values assessment, the decision was made to focus on leadership first. This focus has included the following:

- Last fall a Senior Leaders Values Summit was held to share the results of the values assessment and build alignment with the senior leadership to the values initiative.



- The leadership principles were established to build a shared understanding of what is expected of court managers and leaders.
- A first ever leadership conference was held last December. The meeting included managers, branch chiefs and supervisors, and focused on the values and leadership principles.
- QuickStart for Managers was launched. The training provides management models, tools and approaches to manage consistently with the leadership principles.
- To date over 100 managers and leaders have either completed or are currently taking the QuickStart program including the Executive Team, Division Directors and Deputies who took the program first.

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### UNSUNG HERO AWARD - CLEONIA TERRY

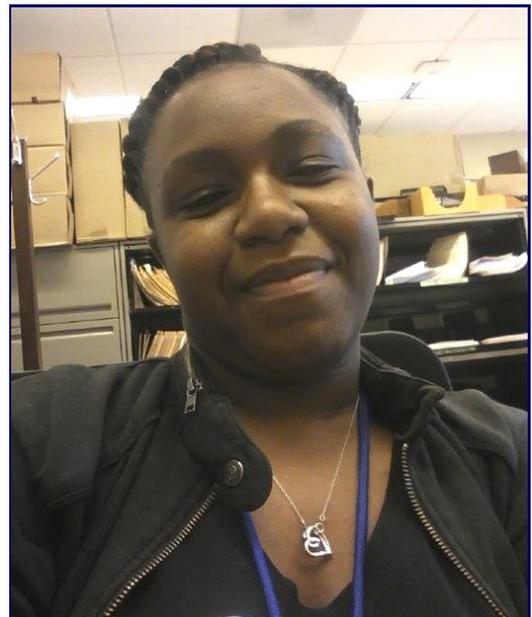


Cleonia Terry works in the Criminal Division as the Mental Health Community Court Coordinator. Day in day out Ms. Terry provides the Mental Health Community Court judge, participants, and defense attorneys with valuable information and personal assistance. Ms. Terry takes great pride in being able to serve all stakeholders and help further the mission of the Courts. Cleonia has met individually with more than 350 defendants to provide an orientation about the mental health court program and complete an Admissions Form, always displaying a customer-friendly and professional attitude. Ms. Terry has completed numerous site visits to agencies providing resources to mental health court, and she has trained the staff of several mental health Core Service Agencies. She has additionally coordinated visits to other mental health and drug treatment programs, and hosted visits of foreign and national delegations to the DC Superior Court's program. Cleonia has coordinated in-depth informational sessions for community service workers and helped

develop training for DC Courts employees on understanding and responding to behaviors of those with mental health issues. Ms. Terry makes a difference by serving stakeholders and embodying the court values of Excellence and Respect. For her service and accomplishments, she is most deserving of the Unsung Hero Award.

### UNSUNG HERO AWARD - KEYONNA ALLEN-HASTINGS

Keyonna Allen-Hastings works as a Staff Assistant for the DC Court of Appeal's Committee on Admissions. Ms. Allen-Hastings is a dedicated professional who quietly and unassumingly works behind the scenes to get the job done. She is responsible for processing more than 300 motion applications per month, as well as certifying and coordinating with more than 250 applicants to the DC Bar for the monthly swearing-in ceremony. Her impact, however, goes well beyond her duties. Keyonna has been a crucial contributor to the administration of the Bar Exam that takes place each year in February and July. She has led a team of staff members in recruiting and assigning proctors for the exam, and was instrumental in updating and producing proctor instructions for the bar exam. Ms. Allen-Hastings also assists the Administrative Services Division with the procurement needs of the Court of Appeals. This is a responsibility she volunteered to assume after the retirement of a staff member in 2012. In all her work, Keyonna makes a difference by displaying the court values of Accountability and Integrity. For her professional commitment and dedication, she is most deserving of the Unsung Hero Award.



# Employee Awards

## Special Achievement Awardees

### MANAGEMENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - DANIEL LEE



Daniel Lee joined the DC Courts' Human Resources Division in 2012 to implement the new Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS). The new system was designed to integrate the Courts' personnel, payroll and financial functions in a user-friendly and state-of-the-art environment. Mr. Lee hit the ground running and in a very short time learned the Courts' culture and unique needs. Daniel worked with court officials to research best practices, explore options, and insure that the Courts were in compliance with government policies and practices. In less than two years, Mr. Lee developed a cadre of core staff to support this enormous task and set about changing the way business was done by Human Resources. He made certain, through detailed training, that each employee in HR and throughout the Courts understood the new business processes. This endeavor required comprehensive and coordinated planning and execution. Since the system went live in May 2015, all employees have been paid correctly and on time; a win-win for all. Through Mr. Lee's leadership, the DC Courts are more efficient as a

government agency and he has earned the respect of the Courts' employees. Mr. Lee is a testament to Excellence in motion and most deserving of this year's Management Achievement Award!

### PUBLIC SERVICE INDIVIDUAL AWARD- HILDA ESPINO-PALMA

Hilda Espino-Palma exemplifies living our values at the DC Courts every day. They are more than just words to her. Ms. Espino-Palma is a Deputy Clerk in the Landlord and Tenant branch of the Civil Division where she continuously displays a positive attitude and is very approachable even in the midst of the intense, fast-paced environment and constant high-volume of customers. Ms. Espino-Palma treats everyone with the utmost respect and dignity, both colleagues and outside customers. She is dedicated to improving the working processes not only for her division, but for the court environment as a whole. Getting recognition is not foremost on her agenda, but rather making sure that the Landlord Tenant branch is effectively and efficiently run, and all with an easy smile. Ms. Espino-Palma is a leader amongst her peers, respected by her supervisors and trusted by the court users, including the attorneys. She strives for excellence in her work product, is accountable for her mistakes and mentors newer employees. If you take a trip to the Landlord and Tenant Court, most assuredly one of the gleaming faces you will encounter will be Ms. Hilda Espino-Palma.



## Congratulations to the 34th Annual Employee Awards Special Achievement Awardees

### TECHNICAL SPECIALIST AWARD - MARCUS MCCALL



Marcus McCall serves as the webmaster for the DC Courts. The work that Mr. McCall performs, primarily behind the scenes, is critical in supporting the Intranet and Internet for the Information Technology Division. To say that his is a thankless job would be a gross understatement. Marcus' daily tasks include web design, as well as development and administration of our Intranet for court personnel and Internet for the public. Marcus uses his technical and functional expertise to maintain and improve the delivery of information for the court to its audiences. Collaboration is an essential component of much of the work performed by the IT Division. As a consummate team player, Mr. McCall is a highly valued member of the IT team. Whether during one-on-one, group, or new employee Intranet training sessions, his kind, easy-going and approachable demeanor serve Marcus well as he explains technical features to non-technical stakeholders. In an extremely demanding environment, Marcus is able to effectively navigate multiple priorities, while remaining highly responsive to his clientele. Even when faced with last-minute requests for website postings, or pre-dawn wake up calls for operating status postings, Marcus remains unflappable. His outstanding work ethic truly

epitomizes the court values of Excellence, Integrity and Accountability. Mr. McCall deserves recognition as this year's Technical Specialist recipient.

### ENTERPRISE SERVICE AWARD – RICHARD PARRIS

Richard Parris, the DC Courts' Chief Security Officer, has made significant contributions to ensuring a safe and secure environment for the administration of justice. He continually seeks ways to strengthen courthouse security, and advocates strongly for modifications to security procedures, equipment, and staffing. Mr. Parris has heightened awareness among court personnel of the importance of maintaining a secure environment. In a 2011 survey, 65% of court employees agreed with the statement: "The D.C. Courts have prepared employees for potential security threats." By 2013, 87% of employees felt they were prepared for security threats, an increase of 22%. Mr. Parris has focused attention on access control, since this is the first line of an effective defense. Per Mr. Parris' recommendation, a full-time Access and Control Manager was hired, and this fiscal year funding was approved for a new access control system. Rich improved the Moultrie building garage vehicle screening procedures; he sought and received funding for 25 additional security officers; and he teaches an excellent security preparedness training on active shooters which is mandatory for all personnel. In addition, Rich is the Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR) for the security officer contract, and he helped reduce the cost of the contract with the US Marshal Service by assuming additional responsibilities previously performed by the marshals. Mr. Parris has done an outstanding job balancing courthouse security requirements with the need to keep court buildings accessible to the public. The Courts are grateful for all he does to keep the court buildings safe for judicial officers, court staff and the public, and congratulate him on being the recipient of this year's Enterprise Service Award.



## PUBLIC SERVICE GROUP AWARD – JUROR’S OFFICE



**Back row from left to right:** Teaira Van Dyke, Antoinette Sweeney, Takisha Bland, Doris Dew, and Maenylie Reed. **Front row from left to right:** Tawanda Williams-Warren, Suzanne Bailey-Jones, and Francine Harmon.  
**Not Pictured:** Janquale Lawrence, Donna Little, and Angela Mills.

This year’s winning Public Service Office is the DC Superior Court Juror’s Office. Each day these staff provide direct services to members of the community. Two achievements during the past year that demonstrated a commitment to public service were the introduction of debit cards and activities recognizing Juror Appreciation Week. With assistance from the DC Courts Budget and Finance and Information Technology Divisions, a new “Juror Debit Card” program for juror payments was implemented. This program demonstrates the Courts’ commitment to providing EXCELLENT customer service; enhances the Courts’ ACCOUNTABILITY by strengthening its internal controls around the expenditures of public funds; mitigates the

Courts’ exposure to waste, fraud and abuse; and enhances the ‘juror experience’ through the convenience of their payments being issued on a secured VISA debit card. And in keeping with the goals of the Courts’ Strategic Plan, the Juror’s Office hosted Juror Appreciation Week. Each day jurors were welcomed with gifts, coffee and refreshments. As part of their orientation, jurors were greeted by Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield and/or a judge from his Judicial Leadership Team. Jurors were able to ask questions about the Court and about jury duty. Juror Appreciation Week has had the residual effect of TRANSPARENCY regarding the juror process, as well as demonstrating that we RESPECT their commitment to our shared democracy by helping the Court in the administration of JUSTICE FOR ALL citizens in the District of Columbia.

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### **Strategic Plan Accomplishments**

#### **Continued from page 2**

**Clear explanations of court procedures and decisions:** For many individuals, a visit to court is a stressful event. The legal terminology and procedures can be confusing and intimidating. When you use simple terms to explain court processes, the reasons for doing so, and any consequences they may have for the person, you demonstrate respect both for the court user and for their right to have their problems handled fairly by the courts.

These principles comprise “procedural fairness” and are an important part of “Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All.” Addressing procedural fairness is just one of the Courts’ accomplishments under the current strategic plan related to Goal 1, *Fair and Timely Case Resolution*. We encourage you to read the full [Mid-Point Accomplishments report](#), available on the Courts’ intranet, to learn more about the many accomplishments you and your fellow employees and judges have made as we deliver justice in the District of Columbia.

## Phase III – Engaging Employees

The focus of phase three, currently underway, is to engage all employees. This phase is taking a division-by-division approach to engage employees through the creation of division-specific plans.

- To date, one third of the divisions have started division specific activities.
- There are plans in place to have all divisions engaged in division specific activities by the end of the year.

An additional activity to be launched soon consists of **Pulse Checks**. These ongoing checks will consist of a quick email questionnaire that will create a measure of how the Courts are doing on the values across the divisions.

If you have any questions about the values initiative, please reach out to your Division Director or Values Leadership Council member. Additionally, you may reach out to [David Chang](#) in the Center for Education and Training or [José Idler](#) in the Executive Office, who coordinate the Values Leadership Council.

*“The values are core principles which underlie a code of expected behavior and conduct among the DC Courts’ judiciary and court personnel.”*

*“These values reflect the input of our judicial officers, managers and staff, as well as the expectations of the public we serve. They prescribe individual and organizational standards to which we hold ourselves accountable, and enable the Courts to manage both continuity and change, as we continue to focus on our mission while remaining flexible, innovative and responsive to the changing environment.”*

DC Courts 2013-2017 Strategic Plan



### ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our conduct and are answerable for our performance.

### EXCELLENCE

We provide the highest quality of service in everything we do.

### FAIRNESS

We are impartial in our actions, decisions and treatment of others.

### INTEGRITY

We demonstrate the highest standards of ethical behavior.

### RESPECT

We treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and understanding.

### TRANSPARENCY

We are open in our processes and communicate our actions and decisions clearly.