



Full Court Press



DC Courts Care Program Advances Community Service

Organizes first official event serving at DC Central Kitchen

The DC Courts Care program is the result of a project originally submitted in the Management Training Program where court leaders recognized the value in pursuing a court-endorsed community service initiative and encouraged the DC Courts Community Service Committee (CSC) to collaborate with the Management Training Team. The program was developed based on the original Management Training program project and supple-



mented by research findings on corporate best practices in corporate community service. The DC Courts Care program supports and promotes employee involvement by offering community service opportunities

that reflect the interests of employees. The DC Courts Care program also authorizes division directors to approve the use of administrative leave for court-sponsored employee community service.

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New DC Courts Interpreter Registry Increases Language Access



Wolof. Shona. Kinyamulenge. Oromo. Amharic. Dari. Ewe. Do you recognize any of these languages? They are a few of the many languages spoken by the diverse population of

the Washington, DC metropolitan area. A key goal of the DC Courts is to increase language access. To advance this goal, the DC Courts' Special Operations Division recently implemented a new DC Courts Interpreter Registry and is in the process of

developing the first nationwide Amharic Language Court Interpreter Certification Exam.

Members of the community who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, or understand English are considered to have limited English proficiency, or "LEP," and are entitled to language assistance services under federal law when they come to the Court to conduct business. Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users are also entitled to language assistance. The Courts

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Jury Service Appreciation Week

Thanking jurors for the service to the courts

From September 9 through September 12, the Superior Court leadership thanked jurors for serving by celebrating Juror Appreciation Week. Juror Appreciation Week is a nationally recognized celebration to thank jurors for giving their time to fulfill their civic duty. Locally, the Court honors jurors during Juror Appreciation Week with appearances from members of the bench and the Courts' executive leadership team. During the week, jurors were served complementary coffee, tea, and light refreshments to help make their day that much easier.



Chief Judge Morin welcomes jurors.

of one's peers is essential. Juror Appreciation Week kicked off on Monday with DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin explaining to jurors that, in the context of jury service, everyone is equal - whether they are hourly workers, salaried workers, cabinet members, or even other judges; they all have to answer the summons to serve. Later that morning, DC Superior Court Clerk of Court Zabrina Dempson answered questions from jurors about the juror summoning process, and then let jurors

know they had received notice that no more juries were required that day, and they were free to go.

Potential jurors were given special pamphlets along with their traditional juror handouts, thanking them for responding to the summons, and providing details explaining how the DC Superior Court has redesigned jury service to reduce inconvenience to potential jurors. For example, the DC Superior Court now utilizes an on-call system that notifies jurors if they have to report for service. In 2018, the Court successfully called off more than 11,000 jurors via the on-call system. Additionally, jurors



Judge Cordero

have access to free WiFi, a business center, charging stations for their technology devices, and child care for children two to twelve years of age.

Each day of jury service begins with an orientation video explaining the jury selection process, clarifying how voir dire works and why an unbiased jury

On Tuesday, Civil Division Presiding Judge Laura Cordero thanked the pool of jurors for sacrificing their time, and explained the significance of what they were doing. Judge Cordero reminded the jurors that a jury of one's peers is part of the bedrock of our society, and that everyone present in the courts is grateful for the time spent preserving that fundamental right. On Wednesday and Thursday, Criminal Division Presiding Judge Milton Lee spoke to those serving jury duty and expressed his gratitude, explaining just how essential juries are to the legal system.

"The whole court process grinds to a halt without you all," Judge Lee said. He then went on to introduce the staff of the Jurors' Office to the audience, further reinforcing the idea that everyone within the courts is truly grateful for jurors' time and service.



Judge Lee

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Family Court Social Services Division Participates in National Night Out to Promote Community Building



Last month, the DC Superior Court Family Court Social Services Division joined millions of neighbors, law enforcement and community agencies across all 50 states, U.S. territories, and military bases to celebrate the 36th Annual National Night Out.

National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer and more caring places to live.

National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances.

In the District of Columbia, DC residents in all seven police districts joined with their neighbors, police officers and community leaders for a time of celebration. Events from community cookouts to open houses – block parties, candlelight vigils and athletic events took place beginning in the late afternoon hours and lasting well into the night.

The Family Court Social Services Division staff were located in Police Districts 4, 5, 6, and 7 serving ice cream, popsicles, and Italian Ice- a huge hit with children and adults alike on the 90 degree afternoon!

National Night Out is designed to:

- Heighten crime and drug prevention awareness;
- Generate support for, and participation in, local anti-crime programs;
- Strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships; and
- Send a message to criminals letting them know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back.

Jury Service Appreciation Week—from page 2

While every speaker made different points, all shared a common theme: the DC Superior Court appreciates jurors' time, dedication, and sacrifice. While Juror Appreciation Week is celebrated only once a year, jurors are appreciated every day.

To learn more about jury duty, see: <https://www.dccourts.gov/jurors>

-- By Executive Office Communications Intern Alex Kerravala

Mexican Judicial Delegation Visits DC Superior Court Drug Court

As part of the international outreach conducted by the DC Courts, a Mexican judicial delegation of four judges and other high-level officials associated with law enforcement, criminal defense and prosecution recently visited the DC Superior Court Drug Court program. In addition to the judges and other officials, the delegation also included two representatives from the US Department of State, three CICAD (the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission) staff members, and two interpreters.



Judge Gardner speaking to the delegation.

During the visit our Mexican guests learned about different aspects of the Superior Court Drug Court program. The judges came from Toluca, the state capital of the State of Mexico. The State of Mexico is one of just five Mexican states (out of 32 totals) that have drug courts. Drug court programs are still relatively new in Mexico. As of February 2017, there were just 22 drug court programs. However, the government of Mexico has announced plans to expand existing programs and create pilot Drug Courts in other Mexican states. Its central location, the State of Mexico has emerged as a leader in training judicial officials from across Mexico on the Drug Court model. For this reason, the delegation was interested in gaining as much knowledge as they could about the very successful DC Superior Court Drug Court program. They hope to use that information to continue the development of their own drug court programs.

Over the two days visit, the Mexican delegation was able to view and discuss typical drug court cases, presided over by Judge Wendell P. Gardner, Jr. as well as tour the drug testing lab, C-10, and the courtroom and arraignment cell blocks. The team of drug court facilitators for the training consisted of members

of the Pretrial Services Agency, United States Attorney's Office, Public Defender Service, and the Office of Attorney General. The visitors were informed about the eligibility requirements for drug court and its voluntary enrollment, as well as the rewards for good behavior and sanctions for bad behavior.

The Mexican delegation also heard from two former drug court graduates who stated that their nearly decade of sobriety is due to the positive impact of the DC Superior Court Drug Court. The two graduates shared their different experiences in the program and how they were able to graduate successfully after their time in the program. Both spoke about how the program awoken them to the need to change their mindsets in order to stop the unhealthy way they were living each day. This state of mind contributed to their troubles with the law. They noted that the Drug Court program was able to reveal their need to escape the cycle of substance abuse that was holding them back and hurting them and their loved ones. The graduates' words illustrated the profound effect that the Drug Court program can have on its participants. Their remarks demonstrated that the DC Superior Court Drug Court did not just help them finish the program, but that it also helped them sustain the progress that each participant had made even after they graduated from the program.

The visit of the judges and officials from Mexico was packed with information and discussions about the DC Superior Court Drug Court program. The goals of this visit were to inform and perhaps inspire our visitors via knowledge about our Drug Court program and to help them build model programs in Mexico, tailored to the specific needs of their courts and communities.

DC Courts Care Program —continued from front cover



Through the program, eligible employees will be granted up to eight hours of paid administrative leave per year to participate in court-approved community service activities in the District of Columbia during

regular business hours. The DC Courts Care program is aligned with the court's values of excellence, fairness, integrity, and respect.

In the recent implementation of the program, committee members have met and collaborated with each other about which organizations in the city to collaborate with. Most recently, the committee served just a couple of blocks from the Courts at DC Central Kitchen. DC Central Kitchen's mission is to use food as a tool to strengthen bodies, empower minds, and build communities.

DC Central Kitchen is an iconic nonprofit and social enterprise that combats hunger and poverty through job training and job creation. The organization provides hands-on culinary job training for individuals facing high barriers to employment while creating living wage jobs and bringing nutritious, dignified food where it is most needed. DC Central Kitchen's social ventures include serving scratch-cooked farm-to-school meals in DC schools, delivering fresh, affordable produce to corner stores in neighborhoods without supermarkets, and operating a fast-casual cafe.

In the District of Columbia, 92,000 children and

adults are struggling to feed themselves. Despite an improving economy, in 2017, it was reported that nearly fifteen percent of households in the District of Columbia struggled with food insecurity. Across the nation, as many as 48 million people are food insecure.



DC Central Kitchen fights hunger daily by preparing 3 million meals each year for the community and serving them to children and adults in need through innovative partnerships with schools, homeless shelters and nonprofits. Unequal access to economic opportunity and healthy food has created a public health crisis in DC's low-income neighborhoods. With only three full-service grocery stores east of the Anacostia River, in Wards 7 and 8, and nearly 200,000 DC residents living on city blocks where the closest healthy food retailer is at least three times farther away than the closest fast food or convenience food store, DC Central Kitchen feels that improving access to healthy food in DC has never been more critical.

DC Courts employees gathered together to serve at DC Central Kitchen for the first official Courts Care event. Court employees worked with the kitchen staff to cut, chop, peel and prep food in the kitchen. Many of those who volunteered mentioned how they felt fulfilled and empowered through their community contribution and look forward to volunteering again.

DC Superior Court Family Treatment Court Graduation

The Family Treatment Court (FTC) Program, one of the problem-solving courts at the DC Courts, held its most recent graduation ceremony on September 11, 2019 at the Moultrie Courthouse. Gold and silver balloons decorated the courtroom, which was filled with the graduates and



their family and friends. Smiles and giggles were ever-present, and the feeling of joy and accomplishment could not be overstated. While the ceremony celebrated the graduation of seven participants from the FTC Program, only three were able to attend the ceremony, and so Dynan Duncan, Tyrita Cooper, and Carla Thompson took the stage with pride and confidence in how far they had come. Before the graduates received their diplomas, several Court officials spoke to the graduates. DC Superior Court Chief Judge Robert Morin, extended his congratulations and remarked how good it felt to hear and see smiling children in a courtroom.

The entire FTC team shared their words of encouragement with the graduates, praising their accomplishments and also motivating those present who are on the path to graduation. “Be the person you want your kids to see” was the overall message, and it clearly resonated with the graduates. Awards were given to four participants for outstanding work and dedication within the program. Even though they have not yet graduated, a special congratulations went to Markisha Euell, Taniesha Mathis, Tila Williams, and Jennifer Gomez for their dedication as program participants, as they work towards graduation.

The most impactful aspect of the ceremony was the graduation itself, where all three of the graduates had something to say to the FTC team and

the future graduates. Ms. Duncan was up first, where she was incredibly grateful for the team that helped her along the way. “I didn’t think I had a chance [to remain sober and keep her children].” Thankfully the FTC staff understood her needs and challenges. After overcoming the stringent steps that the first

stage of the program involves, she was able to say that she has made great strides towards overcoming her substance abuse disorder.

Following Ms. Duncan was Ms. Cooper, who looked to the future to help herself through the FTC process. “I have to give my child something to remember me.” She went on to tell current FTC participants to find something in their life to grab hold of to help them get through the process. “Whatever you have to do, get it done.” With the hard road she has gone through, it’s clear she wants to do whatever she can to help those that follow her.

Ms. Thompson gave an incredibly passionate speech about how her kids got her through FTC. “I was using to get rid of pain, but when my kids walked out the pain was worse.” While some grasp on to a career, personal goals or spouses to overcome a substance abuse disorder, Thompson’s children were clearly everything that got her through. “If you love your kids, you will finish this program,” she concluded.

The ceremony ended with Magistrate Judge Tara Fentress singing *Thank You Lord For All You’ve Done For Me*, reminding the graduates once again that they had come a long way, and they had much to celebrate.

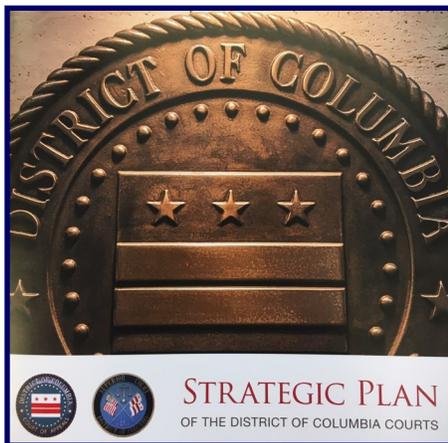
By Alex Kerravala, Executive Office Communications Intern

provide language access by offering professional interpreting services free of charge to LEP individuals and persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, as well as court forms and informational brochures in other languages. Through the Office of Court Interpreting Services, the court dispatches an average of 8,400 contract interpreters annually to courtroom proceedings and other court events in over 40 languages.

Court interpreters serve a critical role in legal proceedings. They ensure that LEP and deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals have the opportunity to participate fully in the court process. Through an interpreter, LEP and deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals can testify about their experiences and observations, preserve their evidence for the record, and challenge the testimony of adverse witnesses. As a result, the court is able to gather all the facts of a case and make informed decisions.

To ensure that the DC Courts' contract interpreters have the highest qualifications and degree of skill and professionalism, the Office of Court Interpreting Services has launched and is now implementing the Courts' first formal testing and training program for court interpreters, the DC Courts Interpreter Registry.

Interpreters who have passed a certification exam in their target language, and interpreters who have passed other qualifying tests (if a certification exam does not exist) may be included in the Interpreter Registry after they complete mandatory training on topics such as the Interpreter Code of Ethics, practice standards, and court procedures and protocols. Interpreters who are already on the Courts' roster must comply with program requirements by



December 31, 2020. To maintain their eligibility, all registered court interpreters must complete 8 hours of continuing education each year in the field of interpretation and translation.

Certified interpreters on the Interpreter Registry will receive priority in court assignments. Regarding the three most frequently requested interpreters (Spanish, Amharic, and American Sign Language), all of the Courts' contract interpreters who communicate in Spanish and American Sign Language are certified.

None of the Amharic interpreters, however, are certified because no certification exam in Amharic currently exists. Given the high concentration of Amharic speakers in the DC metro area, the Special Operations Division in collaboration with the Strategic Management Division applied for and received grant funding from the State Justice Institute to develop the first Amharic language court interpreter certification exam in the United States.

The National Center for State Courts has been engaged to create the exam, which is expected to be completed by October 2020. The exam will test for all three modes of interpretation (simultaneous and consecutive interpretation and sight translation), and will be made available to courts around the country, including the courts in California and Minnesota where large numbers of Ethiopians also live.

To learn more about court interpreting services, the Office of Court Interpreting Services, and the new Interpreter Registry, see: <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/information-and-resources/interpreting-services>



The DC Courts have undertaken a multi-year initiative to highlight and bring to life the DC

Courts values of Accountability, Excellence, Fairness, Integrity, Respect and Transparency, The initiative is focused on deepening the integration of DC Courts values set forth in the Strategic Plan into the day-to-day operations and culture of the Courts.

Employees are actively engaged in the initiative through involvement on the Values Leadership Council and other various groups that play a key role in the design of action plans to promote the values. Two themes that have emerged from feedback sessions and which continue to be an area of focus, are (1) improving management practices and collaboration to improve consistency across the organization; and 2) empowering employees to recommend work process improvements and encouraging innovation and creativity.

The Court divisions have participated in values projects, including group exercises, roundtable discussions, and town hall meetings to keep employees informed of initiatives and stretch opportunities available to them; established values teams or divisional Living Our Values plans; and conducted 360 degree reviews of everyone in a leadership position.

In May this year, employees participated in Values Pulse Check surveys to provide updated feedback. The surveys indicate over 90% of employees are aware of and committed to living the Courts values. 60% of employees report seeing progress in how the values are lived. Among court divisions, 72% improved in accountability, 44% in excellence, 78% in integrity, 61% in fairness, 50% in respect, and 72% in transparency.



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.