

Full Court Press

Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

Open To All, Trusted By All, Justice For All

December 2008

Volume XXIV Number 6

ADOPTION DAY 2008

By Gerald Ashby Jr., Executive Office Intern

Saturday, November 15, 2008 marked the 22nd Annual Adoption Day celebration co-hosted by D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency. This year's theme was Adoption – Making a Lifetime of Difference. The morning got off to a slow start with nippy weather and presidential motorcades utilizing all streets and corridors around the Moultrie Courthouse. Families trickled in and enjoyed a delicious breakfast, appreciating the artwork done by children adopted in years past.

The weather and traffic concerns were no match for the joy that is adoption. The courthouse was packed full of smiling faces, warm hugs, and happy children. The cer-



A proud family listens to the wise words of their son.

Photos by Gerald Ashby, Jr.

emony began with greetings from Superior Court Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield and Family Court Presiding Judge Anita Josey-Herring. After their remarks, families also received greetings from CFSA Interim Director Roque Gerald, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and Senator Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana. The keynote speaker this year was motivational speaker LeCount R. Holmes, Jr., a native Washingtonian who now spends most of his time traveling around the country reenacting the life of abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Mr. Holmes spoke of the importance of respecting yourself, knowing your dreams and aspirations, and gaining the power associated with self-reliance and determination. Mr. Holmes also spoke of family and a

need for family in individuals' lives, telling a story of his adopted brother who is such an essential part of his family. Following Mr. Holmes riveting speech, local news anchor and emcee for the event Barbara Harrison began the adoption ceremony. In her unique way, Ms. Harrison introduced each child to the audience, telling about their favorite hobby or subject at school or toy, ultimately guiding them and their new parents to the judge presiding over the case who signed their final adoption decree in front of the audience. To assist her in exciting the younger crowd, McGruff the Crime Dog made an appearance. Sixteen children were adopted into 12 families at the ceremony, adding to the 195 children who have already been adopted this year.

The event was a great success and the adoption day planning committee congratulates those whose lives will be enriched through adoption in 2009.



A young audience member watches the color guard presentation.

Included in this issue:

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Family Court judges and CFSA Interim Director Roque Gerald pose with Senator Landrieu for a picture before the Adoption Day ceremony.

New Employees

By Gerald Ashby Jr., Executive Office Intern

Marissa Kuhn

Marissa Kuhn joins us as one of the newest Budget Analysts in the D.C. Courts' Budget and Finance Division.



Marissa was born in Connecticut and received her bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester. Marissa went on to pursue her master's degree from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA. Before joining the Courts, Marissa worked as a Program Analyst in the D.C. Office of the Chief Technology Officer. Marissa enjoys her new position and appreciates the opportunity of a "better quality of life." When she isn't in the office, Marissa enjoys running and reading as much non-fiction as she can get her hands on.

Leticia Williams

Leticia Williams, a native of Philadelphia, came to the District in October and works as an Official Court Transcriber in the Court Reporting Division.



Leticia earned her certification for the position from the Orleans Technical Institute in Philadelphia. Leticia has a unique background, previously working as a secretary clerk and, soon after, as the lead financial accounts clerk with the Department of Veteran Affairs. When asked about her decision to work with the D.C. Superior Court, Leticia replied it was time to "try something new." In her free time Leticia enjoys reading.

Nicole Stevens

The Full Court Press is published by the District of Columbia Courts. Inquiries should be submitted to Room 1500.

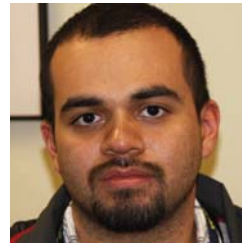
*Leah Gurowitz, Editor
Dennis Shipley, Creative Director*

A native New Yorker, Nicole Stevens serves as the Superior Court's Assistant Deputy Register of Wills. Nicole is no stranger to the District, earning her bachelor's degree in Political Science from Howard University, and her Juris Doctor degree from American University. Before joining the Courts, Nicole worked for the firm Loewinger & Brand, PLLC. Nicole enjoys her new role and appreciates that she can provide a service for the community, a true opportunity to give back. When she gets the chance, Nicole enjoys traveling.



Walter Claros

Walter Claros is the newest Bilingual Deputy Clerk in the Family Court. Walter was born and raised in Waldorf, Maryland. He attained his associate degree in art from the College of Southern Maryland. Before joining the Superior Court, Walter worked with the Pentagon Federal Credit Union. Walter decided to work with the Courts to get involved in government, and so far he is very pleased. When he isn't working hard in Family Court, Walter enjoys fixing cars.



Ashley Ferguson-Fleming

Ashley Ferguson-Fleming is an Accounting Technician in the Budget and Finance Division. Ashley was born



Photos by Gerald Ashby, Jr.

and raised in Washington, D.C. and attended Georgetown Day High School and went on to receive her Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice from Kutztown University in Pennsylvania. Ashley stayed in Pennsylvania, working as a legal assistant for the firm Simon & Associates. With a passion and drive to continue to grow and attain future career goals, Ashley made her way back to the District, to work at the D.C. Courts. Ashley enjoys her position as an accounting technician and feels fulfilled knowing that she is assisting the community by providing her service. In her free time, Ashley is ripping and running with her two-year-old daughter, who seems to always be full of energy.

Gercha White

Gercha White, an Official Court Reporter, was born in the Republic of Panama.



Traveling to the United States at a young age, Gercha grew up in New Jersey and Washington, D.C. Gercha attended what was then Banneker Junior High School and then Dunbar Senior High School. Gercha continued her education taking courses at the University of the District of Columbia and Georgetown University, ultimately receiving certification in court reporting from Temple Business College in Virginia. Before coming to the Courts, Gercha worked as a freelance reporter. She enjoys her new position because it has supplied her with the stability she sought and the new environment she needed. When she isn't transcribing for the Courts, she is at her other full-time job as a mom. The family enjoys going out to the movies, roller-skating and ice-skating.

A FRIENDLY FACE IN THE CFO'S OFFICE

By Leah Gurowitz, Executive Office

On December 1st, 1982, Dana Friend got great news: a native Washingtonian, he had been offered a job at the D.C. Courts. On December 1st, 2008, Dana Friend got even better news, a 26-year D.C. Courts veteran, he was selected as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Courts. For Dana, it was a tremendous honor: an opportunity to serve his hometown community and to work with a team whose professionalism and dedication he admires.

Dana was born in Washington, D.C. and was raised here and in Landover, Palmer Park and Upper Marlboro, Maryland. He graduated from Frederick Douglass High School in 1977. At the time, he intended to be a doctor and was accepted to a pre-med program at UCLA. But Dana took an aptitude test and was told that his scores showed an incredible talent for business. That test result made him think about his career goals and what he really wanted to do with his life. He recalled how much he enjoyed an accounting class in high school. The University of Maryland offered him an academic scholarship, which he accepted.

Dana graduated from Maryland in 1981 and initially worked as a limousine driver, along with his stepfather, who was a firefighter and drove limousines part-time. Dana drove full-time for year and then part-time for another nine years, while simultaneously working for the Probate Division of Superior Court. In talking to Dana and discussing his career, one notices that the word “simultaneously” is used a great deal. This multi-tasking is likely attributable to his mother, Kathryn Dorsey, who demonstrated a strong work ethic and was always supportive of him in all his varied endeavors.

Dana began at the Superior Court as an auditor in the Probate Division, then became a supervisory auditor. In 1991, he was asked to be an accounting officer for what was then called the Financial Operations Division. In 1997 he was asked to *simultaneously* serve as Special Assistant to the Executive Officer for most of the year. Then in January, 2002, he was named Chief of the Banking and Financial Operations Branch of the Budget and Finance Division, and a year and a half later was named Deputy CFO. Late last year he was named Acting CFO.



Dana Friend

Photo by Leah Gurowitz

While doing all this, Dana *simultaneously* performed in the Blair Mansion Inn’s Murder Mystery Theater, and in 1991, he began not only performing, but also *simultaneously* executive producing and managing the murder mystery performances. Dana continues with the Blair Mansion Inn, though with a much reduced workload since he became Acting CFO.

Dana’s talents and commitment to serving the Courts have been recognized not only in his con-

tinual promotions, but also in acknowledgements such as being the first recipient of the Courts’ Outstanding Achievement Award. Dana was selected for the award for establishing programs that “enhance court productivity and [result in] cost efficiencies.” He re-engineered and automated the CJA and CCAN voucher tracking system, resulting in a reduction of more than 50% in the amount of time to process the vouchers. Dana was also integral to the introduction and the use of a court credit card program for purchases and travel. The award mentioned his “standard of excellence” and also, that one quality for which Dana is always known: his “jovial nature.”

When asked what Dana likes best about working at the D.C. Courts, he had many answers: he feels pride in his work and feels that his colleagues also have a sense of pride in their work and the organization. He said “there’s a good sense of teamwork and camaraderie here” and spoke at great length of the Budget and Finance Division staff and how much he enjoys working with them and learning from them. “The only reason I am where I am is because of the staff here; they are incredibly hard-working, dedicated and professional. So many of my colleagues over the years have been so very supportive and I will be eternally grateful.”

Dana also credited court leadership. “I am an example of the advancement opportunities that are available at the Courts. I took advantage of a number of different training opportunities and learned a great deal from them.” Without realizing it, Dana summed up his thoughts in four short words “I love this organization.”

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS D.C. COURTS' STYLE...

By Gerald Ashby, Jr., Executive Office Intern

It's beginning to look a lot like...the holidays, throughout the D.C. Courts. In offices at Gallery Place, doors have been wrapped as presents. In Building A, festive holiday wreaths hang on office walls. It seems everywhere you turn there are lights in seasonal colors. However, everyone acknowledges that no office is more ambitious in their decorating than the Executive Office, with its annual unique display created by Eleanor Nazareno, administrative assistant to Anne Wicks, the Executive Officer.

Eleanor says she was never very interested in arts and crafts as a child, but it is clear that she has developed into a very crafty adult. She credits this creativity to her humble beginnings in sewing, where she quickly transitioned from making dolls to making clothes. The annual decorating tradition she has created began eight years ago, when a colleague drew up a snowman. Eleanor liked it so much she thought he should recreate it for the front window. The snowman looked lonely there by himself, so Eleanor brought some things from home to dress up the front windows. Each year Eleanor's creativity has



Part of the 2008 Executive Office front door display.

Photos by Dennis Shipley

grown, with hallmarks like her winter wonderland Christmas trees and 2005's skiing penguins. And with each year more of the office seems to be decorated. This year each portion of the office has a theme. The front entrance to the Executive Office is the North Pole, with Santa Claus and a few of his favorite reindeer, surrounded by snow and candy cane posts. As you enter the office an 8-foot Christmas tree decorated with ornaments in metallic green, gold and red greets you. The mirrors in the front portion of the office, like presents, are dressed with ribbons and bows. As you continue toward the Executive Office Conference Room, you enter Candyland with garlands overhead that are full of candy canes, cupcakes, lollipops and little gingerbread men parachuting down. The entrance to Ms. Wicks' office features a small Christmas tree, frosted pink with tiny hand-made cupcake ornaments. If that were not enough, the magic continues down the corridor, where you are whisked away into a winter wonderland, with a large wreath at its entrance and painted blue ornaments draped from the ceiling like icicles. As the last stop, the conference room has become the home to families of snowmen, women and children.

The smallest decoration in the office is a 5x7

Each year Eleanor's creativity has



The Executive Office front door in 2001, one of the first displays.



Creative Display Artist extraordinaire, Eleanor Nazareno (left), and Chief Assistant Lula Cox Raye setting up the 2005 holiday display.

Continued on Page 5.



The famous skiing penguins.

chalkboard with a painted plywood Santa peering over and permanently painted “ ___ days till Christmas.” This small blackboard became a feature in the office some four years ago when Lula Cox Raye, the receptionist, received the item as a gift from a close friend. Lula wasn't sure how she felt about a chalkboard that constantly reminded her of how

many days there were before Christmas, so she brought it into the office. After the little Santa on top stared at her from her desktop she decided to put it up, writing 300 in pink chalk, in the space allowed. Fellow employees and visitors often laughed, commenting on how early this countdown board was up. However, as the days dwindled



One of the yummy displays in the Executive Office this year.



The table is ready for the 2005 Executive Office holiday party.

down to the 40's people appreciated the little reminder. This chalkboard is now a year round feature in the office. When asked of its importance Lula commented, “it's the small things that mean so much.” Although comical in nature, the little blackboard instills hope, something always to look forward to.



The traditional Executive Office holiday fire (on DVD).



Eleanor and Frosty pose for a picture before the 2008 holiday party begins.



One of the many snow people displays at the 2008 holiday party.

MULTI-DOOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION DIVISION WELCOMES NEW MEDIATORS AND A NEW TRAINING FORMAT

By Jeannie M. Adams, Director, Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division

In October 2008, the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division ("Multi-Door") designed and implemented a new mediation training format. For the first time, basic mediation skills training was offered simultaneously to prospective mediators for the Civil, Small Claims, Family, Child Protection and Landlord/Tenant



Staff and mediators who just completed the new training.

Photo by Michael Simms

Mediation Programs. In the past, Multi-Door offered program-specific training every two years, which made it difficult to meet immediate demands for new mediators in specific programs between scheduled training classes. Multi-Door recognized that there was a small but growing need for new mediators in several of its key programs, particularly on evenings and weekends, which is when many family mediation sessions are held in order to accommodate working parents.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Training Manager Victor Voloshin and Staff Assistant Sarah Minkin — with the generous help of the Research and Development Division — created an online form to efficiently process and analyze a large number of applications. As a result, Multi-Door was able to select a diverse class of trainees that met the Division's desire to increase the number of African-American mediators, bi-lingual mediators and attorney mediators with litigation experience. The training applicants came from diverse professional backgrounds, and included attorneys, family therapists, social workers, child psychologists, Equal Employment Opportunity specialists, guardians *ad litem* and other helping and legal professions.

The new training format provided four days of

basic mediation skills training, followed by six days of program-specific training in a specialized area. The basic mediation skills format was originally developed by the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution, where I worked previously, in conjunction with colleagues and other trainers. The Superior Court's Multi-Door Division adapted

the Massachusetts model's basic format and designed the specialized training component to meet training needs here in D.C.

Utilizing the new training format and the newly implemented open enrollment process, which allows mediators with previous training from an approved ADR program and prior experience mediating court cases to join Multi-Door's rosters, the Division proudly welcomed 10 new mediators this past year. An additional 40 new trainees are currently completing the intensive training requirement before officially joining the rosters.

Multi-Door would like to extend special thanks to the Center for Education and Training for providing training rooms and technical assistance. Also special thanks to long-time Multi-Door mediators Marianne Vardaman and Janine Harris for their training assistance, and to all of the guest speakers from District agencies who came to share their knowledge and expertise with the trainees. This truly was a collaborative effort to produce the best possible outcome!

Multi-Door's continuing commitment to the D.C. community is to provide high quality mediation programs, served by highly skilled mediators. The Multi-Door Division will continue to make every effort to fulfill its mission.

**Coming in
2009!**

The D.C. Courts are seeking to become a 'Best Place to Work.' To get there we need your input. Look for the Human Capital Survey in February and tell us what you think.



HUMAN RESOURCES - HEALTH INSURANCE

By, Evelyn Stephens, Human Resources Division

The Office of Personnel Management has extended the deadline for open season. This means the District of Columbia Courts and all federal agencies will have an opportunity to change their FEHB, FEDVIP, and Flexible Spending Account selections until January 31, 2009. This extension was granted to allow employees to take more time to review and understand changes that some service providers have made in their 2009 coverage. The Courts' Human Resources Division will be accepting belated enrollments until January 31, 2009.

The chart below shows the date when your coverage will be effective based on when your belated enrollment is filed with the Human Resources Division:

Program	Enrollment Received	Effective Dates
FEHB/FEDVIP	Dec. 8, 2008 – Jan. 3, 2009	Jan. 4, 2009
	Jan. 4, 2009 – Jan. 17, 2009	Jan 18, 2009
	Jan. 18, 2009 – Jan. 31, 2009	Feb. 1, 2009
FSAFEDS	Dec. 8, 2009 – Jan.3, 2009	Jan. 4, 2009
	Jan. 4, 2009 – Jan. 31, 2009	1 st Day after election is received

To help with making health care decisions, a new web-based tool, is available: www.PlanSmartChoice.com. This site provides a step-by-step process to guide the user to the objective and personalized information needed to make benefit decisions. By taking a couple of minutes to answer a few questions, the website will assist you in selecting the best health insurance coverage plan for you.

At **PlanSmartChoice**, you can:

1. Learn which plan best meets your personal needs among the many plans and options.
2. Choose a plan that fits your budget. You might save \$100, \$200, or more per month in your health-related expenses.
3. Take advantage of tax savings by learning how much to contribute to a Flexible Spending Account.
4. Compare plan information to understand the details of medical, dental, and vision plan options.

Some other sites that may be helpful in your selection are:

For **FEHB** (health benefits) program information: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/>

For **FEDVIP** (dental and vision plan) information:

<https://www.benefeds.com/Portal/loginUser.do?MenuName=Research>

For **FSAFEDS** (flexible spending plans) information: <https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/index.asp>

For any further questions or concerns please contact a Benefits Specialist in the Human Resources Division at 202-879-0496

January

16 2009

Mark your calendar for this season's second **Health Benefits Fair on January 16, 2009**. FEHB carriers and Human Resources Division representatives will be on hand to answer questions and address concerns that you may have. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact HR, your present health insurance plan or any prospective health insurance carriers.

Rave Reviews

From: 고일광
Sent: Wednesday, October 15, 2008
To: [Banks, Crystal L.](#)
Subject: Giving Thanks From Korea



Photo by Dennis Shipley

Dear Mrs Crystal Banks,

Thanks to your cooperation and guidance while we've been in U.S. last week, were we able to return to Korea with great satisfaction.

We really, really appreciate you.

We're quite sure that our experiences at your Court and those materials you gave to us would give great wisdom to our Judiciary enhancing justice in divorce and juvenile cases.

We wish your Court's prosperity.

God bless you and your Court.

Sincerely in representing our party(3 judges)...

To: WebMaster
Subject: Exceptional Service Provided by Superior Court/Probate Division /Small Estates
Employee: [Mr. Michael Barnes](#)

Good Morning,

I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the level of service provided by an employee of the District of Columbia, Mr. Michael Barnes. Mr. Barnes is currently employed in the Probate Division, Office of the Register of Wills, Small Estates Unit.



Photo by Leah Gurovit

At the passing of our beloved Mother in January of this year, we were advised that a Petition for Administration of Small Estate application had to be completed. While the form is not particularly difficult to complete, in the midst of our grief, we made numerous mistakes. Mr. Barnes was eventually assigned our case.

Upon our arrival, Mr. Barnes came out of his office, introduced himself, and escorted us back to his desk. He looked over our petition, suggested corrections, and provided explanations as to why the corrections were needed. His knowledge of the subject matter was impressive and his ability to "make simple" an extremely difficult topic is a gift to those of us who are intimidated by the entire process.

Mr. Barnes calming and professional manner was evident during an especially difficult part of the appointment when I was temporally overwhelmed with grief. Mr. Barnes provided me with the time needed to compose myself. After asking about my well being, Mr. Barnes continued through our appointment. At the conclusion of our appointment, Mr. Barnes escorted us to the next department.

As a native Washingtonian, this type of service is unheard of in the District, as well as, the Federal Governments. Please pass on my sincere appreciation to Mr. Barnes. While I hope never to require his services again, it is nice to know that employees like him still exists and are available to assist the individuals at difficult times.

Good Morning Mr. Wynn,

On occasion, my two boys attend child-care under the management of [Ms. Coleman](#) and supervision of [Ms. Anderson](#). In August, my kids were introduced to the primary election by the staff in the childcare center and as a result of this introduction they took a strong interest in both the primary and general elections. Every time they saw the candidates of the primary election and general election on television, they would watch with enthusiasm. Ms. Coleman and Ms. Anderson perform their duties with much care and concern for the kids. I feel very comfortable and assured that my kids are safe when I use the Courts' emergency childcare services.



Zabrina Dempson, Branch Chief
Small Claims and Conciliation Branch



At a September 18, 2008 ceremony proclaiming September 30, 2008 as "Chief Judge King Day" in the District of Columbia.

Photo by Doxie McCoy
Office of Council Chair Gray