

Full Court Press

Newsletter of the District of Columbia Courts

Open To All, Trusted By All, Justice For All

July 2007

Volume XXIII Number 2

FIRST EVER COURT-WIDE CONFERENCE AND DIVISION FAIR By Michelle Moss, Executive Office Intern

On May 3, 2007, the D.C. Courts held the first court-wide spring conference with the theme ‘Everyone Can Make a Difference at the D.C. Courts.’ The event had a huge turnout, about 600 employees, and the attendees reported that they enjoyed the experience. Employees were divided into two groups, based on their last name, and attended workshops and a presentation by the nationally renowned motivational speaker Willie Jolley.

The workshops successfully conveyed information on topics such as customer service, communications, and leadership. These workshops encouraged court employees to reach their full potential toward contributing to the Courts’ mission to administer justice in the community.

At the Division Fair, employees learned about what court employees do in other divisions. The Court Reporting and Recording Division wore team t-shirts saying “Speed Limit 225 words

per minute!” The Special Operations Division even offered prizes at their booth. With 100% participation, the Division Fair surely met its goal of improving division morale and team spirit and cultivating a court-wide mood of unity.

Willie Jolley was a



WILLIE JOLLEY gave his very motivational talk not once, but twice, so everyone could get in. Over 600 court employees filled the court cafeteria. Every available chair was needed.

star at the conference. He gave his inspirational talk “You Can Be Unstoppable” twice, and shared his “5 Secrets to Creating a Five Star Life!!!” His five steps to success are:

Wake UP! (& Dream)

Consider the Possibilities

Show UP!

If you want to Go UP, You’ve got to Show UP!

Stand UP!

Become a Leader of One. Before you can lead MANY, you must be able to lead ONE...YOURSELF!

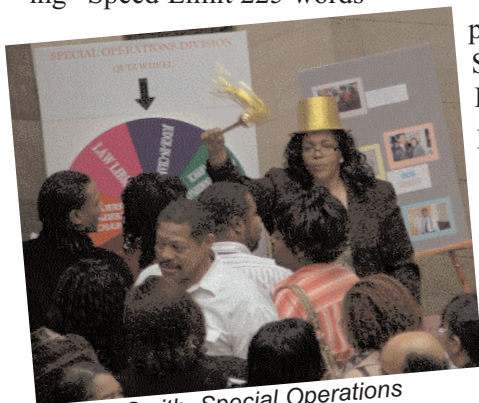
Step UP!

When life throws you a curve, Step UP and knock it out of the park!

Think UP!

Make up your mind to W.I.N.

The Conference and Division Fair proved to be a winning ingredient toward enhancing employee morale and has been requested again as an essential and inclusive court activity.



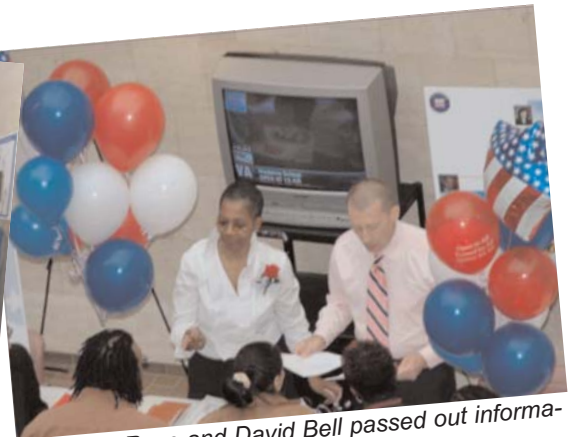
Mildred Smith, Special Operations Division, gathers the spectators with the promise of a prize.

Included in this issue:

- 2 Court Interpreter Services
- 3 New Employee Profiles
- 3 Rave Reviews
- 4 Social Services Initiatives
- 5 Victoria Rowell Visit
- 6 Civil Division e-filing
- 6 A Crime Victims Generosity
- 7 A Valentine’s Day Story
- 7 Power Outage Thank You
- 8 Black History Month Pictures/Court Training Conference



The IT booth at the Division Fair was, of course, Hi Tech!



Lula Cox-Ray and David Bell passed out information about the Executive Office.

More pictures on page 8.

OFFICE PROFILE: INTERPRETER SERVICES

By Michelle Moss, Executive Office Intern

Of the thousands of people who pass through the courthouse doors every day, an increasing number need the assistance of Interpreter Services. The Office of Interpreter Services was established 21 years ago in response to the growing community of non-English speakers and increasing concerns about providing to the deaf and foreign language speakers due process and equal access to the American legal system.

The purpose of interpreting is not to make a literal translation but to convey the meaning of the speaker. This means that the interpreter, in addition to knowing legal terminology, must be aware of idioms that do not directly translate. For example, a Spanish-speaking witness may say “no, miento,” which literally translates to “no, I lie” but is actually an idiomatic expression that means “no, that’s not right.” For a sign language interpreter, conveying the meaning of the speaker means the interpreter must show in his face the emotion the speaker conveys in his tone.

The Coordinator for Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Services, Francis Burton, has been working for the D.C. Courts since the Office of Interpreter Services was created. For Francis, his interest in interpreting services grew out of his experience as a teenager interpreting church sermons for people who were deaf. This immersion into the deaf community paved the way for his future career as an instructor to faculty and staff at Gallaudet University and, ultimately, brought him to the D.C. Courts. As for what he likes about his job, Francis cites the sense of accomplishment he feels for

putting people on the same playing field. This is particularly true for members of the deaf community who are called in for jury duty. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, deaf person has the right to sign language interpreters, allowing them to fulfill their civic duty by participating on a jury.



James Plunkett, Coordinator for Foreign Languages Services, and Francis Burton, Coordinator for Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Services.

The Coordinator for Foreign Languages Services, James Plunkett, III, has been working at the D.C. Courts for five and a half years. James’ interest in interpreting services was awoken by accident. One such influential episode was when, being a Peruvian native and fluent in English, James agreed to interpret for a group of scientists visiting Peru. Though James is fluent in Spanish and English, he enjoys learning other languages and can speak Portuguese well, has an

intermediate knowledge of French, and, in a move away from Romance languages, is learning Mandarin. James’ role as a Coordinator for Interpreter Services means that he no longer gets much time in the courtroom; however, he recalls with fondness various incidents from his time in the courtroom, such as being used by a witness as a prop to demonstrate a violent act.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority (85-90%) of those needing an interpreter in the D.C. Courts are native Spanish speakers. The most significant factor that determines demand on Interpreter Services is not how many people they service but how long that person will need their services. A deaf person on jury duty, may need an interpreter for days. A Chinese-speaking person incarcerated on a criminal charge will need an interpreter throughout his time in the criminal system.

The Office of Interpreter Services is certainly an unsung hero of the D.C. Courts. Their hard work means those D.C. residents who are non-English speakers or who have hearing impairments have access to the same services, are able to perform their civic duty as a juror, and most importantly, understand legal proceedings and have access to justice. We thank Interpreter Services for their many years of dedicated work!

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

*Leah Gurowitz, Editor
Dennis Shipley, Creative Director*

New Employee Profiles

By Stacy Whyte – Executive Office Intern

Sharita Obiora—Courtroom Clerk



A Political Science major at Howard University, Sharita Obiora was a clerk with the Prince George’s County Circuit Court before making her way to the D.C. Courts. She is still in training, but what she has encountered so far has been an “overall positive experience.” She said, “People have been friendly...it

has been nice.”

In her spare time, Sharita enjoys reading, working with computers/web surfing, working out on weight machines, listening to music, or simply talking on the phone. She recently started learning how to play the saxophone, a talent some people might not know about. “I played the clarinet as a youngster, but I always wanted to learn to play the saxophone,” she remarked.

Sharita hopes to attend law school where she will prepare herself for a legal career. In fact, her future goals were in mind when she took her position with the Courts. “I became a clerk because I wanted to learn more about trial strategy and see what goes on behind the scenes between judges, attorneys, etc.,” she said.

Sharita is particularly interested in mediation and arbitration. She hopes to eventually pursue a career in alternative dispute resolution, civil rights law, or collaborative law.

Alesha Matthews-JAA to Judge E. Christian



Native Washingtonian Alesha Matthews feels right at home at the D.C. Courts. Having grown up in Northwest D.C., Alesha feels that her job affords her a unique opportunity. “It is interesting to be able to see what’s going on in your own city,” she said.

After graduating from Theodore Roosevelt High School and attending Virginia State University for two years, Alesha worked in the U.S. Attorney’s Office for 17 years until 2003. While there, she worked in various sections, but did most of her work in the homicide division. Following the U.S. Attorney’s Office, she worked for three years at the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

A self-described “people person,” Alesha has many interests to occupy her free time. “I like reading, bowling, and hand dancing,” she said. Alesha also likes “to take nice vacations” and is a member of Second New Saint Paul Baptist Church. However, Alesha easily spends most of her time with her teenaged daughter, a high school student at Archbishop Carroll High School.

As a former U.S. Attorney’s Office employee, she was already familiar with many procedures and hopes to continue growing professionally in her current position.

April 13, 2007

Ms. Lori Edley
Transcript Office, Room 5500
Superior Court of the District of Columbia
500 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Edley,

On April 12 I went to your office at Room 5500 to inquire about certain transcripts that I had requested in a neglect matter. I was assisted by Mr. Bryant Baldonado of your office. Mr. Baldonado was very professional and he went to great lengths to accommodate my needs. I appreciate very much the work done by your office and particularly the work done by Mr. Baldonado. I was sufficiently impressed to be moved to write this letter.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Cambridge

February 1, 2007

Terry J. Lambert
Chief, Landlord & Tenant Branch
Superior Court of the District of Columbia
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Employee Laurena Young

Dear Mr. Lambert:

I write to express my observation of the professional and patient manner with which Ms. Laurena Young performs her duties each and every time I have been attended to by her at the Landlord and Tenant Branch. I represent clients frequently before the Landlord and Tenant court.

On these occasions, I have observed her professional demeanor and temperament and attention to details in dealing with me and other patrons in my presence.

On my last visit to Landlord and Tenant court, I complimented her on these qualities and promised to put it in writing. She gave me your name.

Sincerely,

Vincent C. Uehendu

Rave Reviews

Edward Jenkins
Branch Chief
Civil Division
Moultrie Courthouse
500 Indiana Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

December 28, 2006

Dear Mr. Jenkins,

I would like to commend the excellent customer service of Blanche Richardson, who works in the Civil Division’s office. With the media and the public usually focusing on negative aspects of the District of Columbia’s employee services, some attention deserves to be given to a District employee who exemplifies helpful service to the point of going above and beyond the normal standard -- all to ensure a DC resident receives superior service. Blanche has done that in my case and deserves recognition.

I recently prevailed in a D.C. Superior Court Case after about five years of effort, which was an excruciating personal experience. I obtained a judgment against the other party and needed to get a Triple Seal so I could record it, before attempting to collect. I felt blinded by the process, trying to figure out many details on a time-sensitive deadline, without the assistance of a lawyer. Blanche patiently explained the process, promised me she would follow-up quickly, promptly called me at my work and cell phone (I gave her all my numbers) and then personally processed a second original Triple Seal document, just before I arrived to pick up both documents. Impressive.

I appreciate her consideration, effort and appreciation of my deadline. I wish all of us would treat one another in such a manner when working in a customer service environment. So I offer “job-well-done” kudos to Blanche, and to your division, for its excellent customer service. Let’s hope Blanche and her colleagues who show a similar attitude get the recognition they deserve from the Court in the New Year. Happy 2007!

Sincerely,

Scott Sherwood
Director of Public Affairs
The Real Estate Roundtable

New Initiatives of the Family Court Social Services Division

By Terri Odom, Director, Court Social Services Division and
Louis Kelly, Senior Operations Manager, Office of the Clerk of the Court

The subject of juvenile delinquency has been the focus of a lot of press and legislative attention lately, and on the minds of many D.C. residents. But many, including many court employees, are not aware of the extensive work that the Family Court Social Services Division (CSSD) is doing each and every day. CSSD wants to inform the public and the court community of its efforts to respond to the needs of court-involved youth. On any given day, CSSD supervises approximately 1,600 juveniles, roughly 65% to 70% of all youth involved in the city's juvenile justice system. For nearly four decades, CSSD has developed models and service delivery frameworks that have been replicated in jurisdictions nationwide. It is from this rich history that the Division continues to reengineer and retool its resources and man/womanpower to effectively meet the needs of District youth. Working in collaboration with various public and private agencies, CSSD continues to effectively serve and supervise juveniles throughout the District of Columbia. Highlights of the past year include the following:

Leaders of Today in Solidarity

In February 2006, following six months of aggressive analysis and planning, CSSD created and launched its new integrated probation case management and community supervision initiative designed to respond to the needs of adolescent females through a comprehensive strength-based approach, entitled Leaders of Today in Solidarity (LOTS). The focus of LOTS is to identify and respond to the needs of adolescent girls prior to adjudication, with a strong concentration on the diverse attributes and obstacles of girls by way of a designated, highly trained probation officer of record throughout the girl's involvement in the Family Court. Prior to the inception of LOTS, an average of 20 girls were remanded to secure detention, an average of 14 girls were remanded to shelter home and recidivism rates averaged between 20% and 25%. From March 1, 2006 thru March 1, 2007, data analysis conducted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation specific to outcomes for LOTS show a 74% reduction in the number of girls detained in secure detention and a 75% reduction in the number of girls remanded to shelter beds.



Satellite courtroom



Probation Officers Craig Moore and Ebony Neptune in the Drop-In learning room.

To learn more about LOTS, please contact: Supervisory Probation Officer Denise W. Coates at 202.508.1942 or coatesd@dcsc.gov.

Child Guidance Clinic

Following years of hard work, dedication and coordination, in 2006, CSSD's Child Guidance Clinic's post doctoral psychology internship training program was accredited by the American Psychological Association. As an accredited internship program, the program receives applications from psychology students across the country interested in completing their post doctoral practical training in the Nation's capital. Accreditation of the Clinic is a major accomplishment, placing the Clinic on par with a variety of nationally recognized internships. The Clinic provides individual and family counseling to youth and families involved in the Family Court; performs diagnostic evaluations, testing, and assessments to determine their needs; and conducts Domestic Relations home studies to assist the Court in the determination of custody placements. For more information about the Child Guidance Clinic, please contact Dr. Michael Barnes, Supervisory Psychologist at 202.508.1816 or barnesm@dcsc.gov.

Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Drop-In Center

Building on the reality that together everyone achieves more, CSSD successfully developed the nation's first ever Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Drop-In Center. With the help of the Administrative Services, Budget and Finance, Research and Development, and Family Court Operations Divisions, BARJ opened last year. Located in the Southeast quadrant of the city, the center has office space for probation officers, a large recreation and learning room, as well as a satellite courtroom. It offers an alternative to detention for youth pending adjudication and an alternative suspension program. On July 1, 2007 following months of program planning, the BARJ Drop-In Center began taking referrals for evening supervision. For more information about the BARJ Drop-In Center, please contact Supervisory Probation Officers Stephen Liggon at 202.508.8261 or liggons@dcsc.gov or Mark Jackson at 202.508.2656 or jacksonm@dcsc.gov.



Recreation area

ACTOR VICTORIA ROWELL READS FROM HER BOOK

The Women Who Raised Me: A Memoir

By Michelle Moss, Executive Office Intern

On May 22, 2007, D.C. Superior Court was a flurry of activity: women, children, lawyers, and court employees were rushing around the third floor of the courthouse. However, instead of people hurrying to reach a trial or sentencing, they were on their way to hear Victoria Rowell, famous for her role as Drucilla Winters on *The Young & the Restless*, speak about her life as a foster care child.

Victoria Rowell was born a ward of the state of Maine.

From infancy until her 18th birthday, Ms. Rowell was part of the foster care system. From her experiences, Rowell wrote *The Women Who Raised Me: A Memoir*, published in April. The book focuses on the positive role foster care played in her life, particularly the strong foster mothers who provided Victoria with the love and stability that gave her the tools to succeed.

Ms. Rowell spoke glowingly of

several of her foster parents, praising their devotion to parenting and to her. Rowell sought to encourage others to consider fostering and adopting and to reassure foster children that they could succeed, despite the obstacles they face. Ms. Rowell described how, with the love of her foster mothers and her own hard work, she was able to succeed in ballet performance and acting. Rowell also

opened up the floor for questions; the foster children's questions covered a wide range of topics including the possibility of creating a reality foster care television show.

The event was complete when Friends of the Superior Court generously donated a copy of her book to each foster child who attended the presentation. Rowell signed every copy of her book and chatted at length with everyone who lined up to speak with her. To foster children, Rowell gave

individualized words of advice; to foster parents, Rowell spoke of her appreciation for their hard work.

The Family Court is most appreciative of Ms. Rowell's time and her continued support of D.C. foster children. In 2005 she served as keynote speaker at our Adoption Day ceremony.

Those present will long



Victoria Rowell



Friends of Superior Court members with Judge Satterfield, Victoria Rowell, Magistrate Judge Gray and Family Court Director Dianne King.

remember her wisdom, candor, commitment and compassion, all on display along with some serious dramatic skills as Ms. Rowell read from her powerful memoir. Magistrate Judge Pamela Gray, herself a former foster child, introduced Victoria Rowell to the audience; together they displayed just how far foster children can go with a little encouragement and a little love.

SAVE THE DATE!!

September 27, 2007, 3:00 p.m.

for the

Employee Recognition and Awards Ceremony



CIVIL ACTIONS BRANCH MILESTONE

By Michelle Moss, Executive Office Intern

The Superior Court's Civil Division has implemented a comprehensive e-filing program. The first steps toward an inclusive e-filing system began on May 1, 2001. At that time, e-filing was available only for Civil I cases, mainly complex tobacco and asbestos cases. On February 5, 2007, however, the e-filing system expanded to include Civil II cases: all civil cases that surpass the \$5,000 Small Claims jurisdictional requirement, such as car accidents, breach of contract, and wrongful death.

Prior to implementation of e-filing, all documents filed after the complaint were filed in person. Though the complaint still has to be filed in person, having an e-filing system has reduced the number of times attorneys and staff have to come to the court to file - thus reducing lines in the Civil Clerk's office. But work has not reduced for the Civil Actions Branch. They receive approximately 350 e-filings a day, seven days a week. As of this May, the Civil Actions Branch has become so efficient that the numerous e-filing documents are processed within two days.

The Civil Actions Branch has worked to provide civil litigants with convenient and inexpensive access to the court with the use of e-filing. In addition, the Civil Actions Branch is also the first division to have case docket information available on-line through the Public Access system (see <https://www.dccourts.gov/pa/>). As with all new systems, there were many challenges to implementation, new procedures to learn and to teach our customers, but the Civil Actions Branch has, as Supervisor Derrick Monroe stated, "embraced the change."

The team that has accomplished all this includes: **Civil Director** Deborah Taylor-Godwin; **Deputy Director** Jon Peterson; **Branch Chief** Edward Jenkins; **Branch Supervisor** Derrick Monroe; **Intake Staff Supervisor** Aletre Barnett; **Intake Staff Members:** Jamila Colaie, Kanisha Cox, Erica Hartsfield, Crystal Kelley, Blanche Richardson, Patricia Terry-Mooring, Nancy Vaughn, Janis Vosh, James Wilson, Jeffrey Waugh, Thomas Wright; **Judgment & Interview Officer** Shirley Brooks; **Judgment Staff Members** Adrienne Marsh, Sharron Smith, Tonya Stevenson; **Information & Records Supervisor** Barbara Cain; **Fileroom Staff Members:** Kimberly Clipper, Darlene Davis, Chemere Gorham, Marion Swingler, Sasha Vance, and Vondell Wiggins; and Friendship House Volunteer Sheila Branch.



AN INNOCENT CRIME VICTIM'S GENEROSITY

By Michelle Moss, Executive Office Intern

On September 30, 2006, at 5:30 a.m. after work, Luis "Quike" Morales made a life altering decision; while walking home, he turned around and decided to visit a person he calls his "angel." As he knocked on the door of her apartment, someone down the hallway shot at him three times. Two of the bullets missed, one bullet hit him in the head. After lying in a coma that lasted ten days, Quike awoke to find that he would lose his right eye, a portion of his skull, and 10% of his frontal lobe.

An experience such as this would leave many people angry and bitter, but Quike has strived to rise above such emotions. And Quike has had help along the way. The D.C. Courts' Crime Victims Compensation Program, which assists innocent victims of violent crimes, was instrumental in helping Quike pay hospital bills and rent. Though Quike says that some days are hard, he does not want to continue the cycle of violence and anger, in fact, Quike wants to stop the cycle of violence the best way he knows how: through music.

Quike studied sound engineering in New York City and works as a D.J. in the District. He says "music is the medicine of the soul" and so Quike organized the

"Music is Bulletproof" campaign. The name of the unofficial campaign was inspired by the fact that the music of musicians such as John Lennon and Marvin Gaye, both killed by bullets, lives on. Quike spoke to another D.J. and mentioned how he would like to D.J. for free and, instead of people paying a cover charge, they could donate whatever they chose, so that it would not be an obligation but a sign of their generosity. The two men organized the event for "Music is Bulletproof" and because of the generosity of the community and the bartender who announced that all her tips would go to the campaign, Quike raised \$1000, which he donated to the Crime Victims Compensation Program.

Luis "Quike" Morales hopes to spread his belief that life goes on despite the hardship that befalls us. Through Quike's positive attitude, his relationship to the D.C. Courts has come full circle: from being a recipient of the Crime Victims Compensation Program, Quike has worked hard to give back to the Courts and the community. More "Music is Bulletproof" events are in the works so that Quike can continue to help others and to spread his dream of a violence-free community.

RAIN, SLEET OR SNOW - THE COURT DELIVERS

By Stacy Whyte, Executive Office Intern

Many of us remember the snowstorm that struck the Washington, D.C. area the night of February 13, 2007; many of us remember our elation at hearing that we would not have to go to work on February 14th. Not so for Irene Ogoti and Michael Webster, who had scheduled their wedding for that day, at the Moultrie Courthouse in the Marriage Bureau.

They arrived at the courthouse, in wedding dress and tuxedo despite the snow, and found out that the courthouse was closed and the only judge present was hearing arraignments in courtroom C-10 all day long.

Criminal Division Director Dan Cipullo was at the courthouse, making sure the arraignment process went smoothly despite the weather, and learned of the situation. He contacted Chief Judge King who volunteered to perform the wedding if the couple could just wait while he shoveled his way out of his driveway and got to the courthouse.

At noon, Chief Judge King presided as Michael Webster, with his best man and new friend Dan Cipullo at his side, and Irene Ogoti, with her matron of honor and new best friend Rainey Brandt at her side, were joined in matrimony. The happy couple planned to have dinner with friends on Valentine's night, with a possible honeymoon trip to NYC that weekend.



Newlyweds Irene Ogoti and Michael Webster pose for a wedding party portrait with Chief Judge King, Rainey Brandt, and Dan Cipullo.

POWER OUTAGE – CONGRATULATIONS FROM CHIEF JUDGE KING

This is to congratulate all who helped in the Courts' response to the power failure on February 26 - 27, 2007. As you may recall, electrical service to most of the Moultrie Building was interrupted on a Monday afternoon and not restored until after midnight Tuesday. The power failure was caused when construction activity flooded a power junction box at 6th and E Streets, NW. This resulted in the shutdown of two out of three lines that supply electricity to the building, leaving the cell block and much of the rest of the courthouse in the dark. The Courts were closed throughout the blackout, with neither lights nor phones working in most places, but arraignments and initial hearings were held on Tuesday.

Relocating and conducting these functions required an extraordinary amount of effort, and all who were asked went beyond the call of duty. The U.S. Marshals Service brought more than 100 prisoners into the building through the C Street entrance and up to the second floor courtrooms through public space. IT staff reconfigured computers in Courtrooms 201 and 202 to enable Criminal Division clerks to work in CourtView as they normally do in C-10. The clerks transferred all of the C-10 operations. Capital Projects and Facilities Management Division staff worked literally around the clock. Family Court staff contacted D.C.'s Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services and developed a plan to hold juvenile intake hearings at the Youth Services Facility on Mount Olivet Road.

Throughout the difficult operations, everyone exhibited a professionalism, courtesy, and even good cheer that belied the difficulties and challenges they faced. The court was at its best, and everyone should be proud of our accomplishments on this occasion. Thank you for your assistance and support, and, again, for a job very well done.

Black History



As part of the D.C. Courts' celebration of Black History Month 2007, Lieutenant Commander Wesley Brown, the first African American midshipman to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy, visited the D.C. Courts and spoke, along with biographer Robert John Schneller, about the struggle for racial equality and his experiences at Annapolis. The two collaborated on a book about Commander Brown's experiences as a midshipman, *Breaking the Color Barrier*. The Courts further celebrated the rich stories of many accomplished and talented African Americans by presenting a "live museum" where court employees portrayed historical characters while mingling with attendees. The Live Museum figures discussed their characters' role in history and significant contributions, portraying such figures as Harriet Tubman, Booker T. Washington, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and several others.

The Court appreciates Arena Stage's donation of the costumes as well as the time and talents of all involved in putting on the Live Museum performance.



FIRST EVER COURTWIDE CONFERENCE AND DIVISION FAIR!!!



Integrated Justice Information System



Attendees at the Division Fair



Capital Projects and Facilities Management Division Exhibit



Court of Appeals



The Court Reporting & Recording Division

SAVE THE DATE!!

September 27, 2007, 3:00 p.m. for the Employee Recognition and Awards Ceremony

