

# Profiles

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charges into expedited hearings and emphasizing community service sentences, instead of jail.

Williams also has made building relationships with other city leaders a priority. Philadelphia City Council members reported that the first time they had been invited to visit the D.A.'s Office was under Williams' tenure.

With his election Jan. 4, 2010, Williams became the first black attorney to lead any of Pennsylvania's prosecutors' offices.

## RHONDA HILL WILSON

Wilson is the founder of the Law Offices of Rhonda Hill Wilson, a three-lawyer personal injury firm in Philadelphia. In 2010, she was elected treasurer of the American



WILSON

Association for Justice and currently serves as Pennsylvania State Liaison for the AAJ's Women's Caucus.

In addition, Wilson serves on the board of governors and as parliamentarian for the Philadelphia Trial Lawyers Association and is a member of the board of governors and the executive committee as well as co-chair of the diversity committee of the Pennsylvania Association for Justice.

She is also on the board of directors and is co-chair of the diversity committee of the Public Justice Foundation and is the Philadelphia president of the National Bar Association Women's Law Division.

## JUDGE DWAYNE D. WOODRUFF

Though many in the Pittsburgh area likely know Woodruff better for his days playing cornerback for the Pittsburgh Steelers, he's known in the legal community as a respected family court judge in Allegheny County Common Pleas Court.



WOODRUFF

Elected to the bench in 2005, Woodruff spent much of 2010 serving on the Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice, which was created in response to the so-called "kids for cash" scandal in Luzerne County. As a member of the commission, Woodruff helped develop a series of recommendations on how to revise the state's juvenile justice system and improve judicial ethics.

Since then, he's held meetings with stakeholders in Allegheny County to weigh the implementation of Interbranch Commission recommendations locally and brainstorm ways to continuously improve juvenile court locally. He's also a chair of Allegheny County's Truancy Task Force.

Woodruff, who attended law school at night before running his own firm, also chaired the "Do the Write Thing" initiative in Pittsburgh with his wife, Joy, in 2010. The initiative, a part of the National Campaign to Stop, "gives middle school students an opportunity to examine the impact of youth violence on their lives in classroom discussions and in written form by communicating what they think should be done to change our culture of violence," according to its website.

## JUDGE SHEILA WOODS-SKIPPER

As the Philadelphia Common Pleas Court's supervising judge of the criminal section of the trial division since November 2008, Woods-Skipper has been a key leader on trying to reduce the number of mentally ill defendants cycling through the city's criminal justice system and bringing more case management to bear on criminal cases so they don't linger in the system.



WOODS-SKIPPER

Woods-Skipper has been the presiding judge of the common pleas court's mental health court, which officially launched July 2009. The court focuses on defendants serving sentences in the Philadelphia prison system. Defendants are released about a year early from jail before the criminal system's authority

to supervise them ends, and they are placed under Woods-Skipper's supervision as well as the supervision of a multidisciplinary team with the goal of providing them proper treatment to reduce their recidivism. In 2010, the program saved defendants from spending 372 days in jail and saved taxpayers \$36,638, according to a court calculation.

On the case management side of things, Woods-Skipper has been part of the leadership team that has been working over the last two years to consolidate all of a defendant's pending court cases at the earliest possible juncture. The most recent effort is the establishment of common pleas track rooms, or Strategic Management ARC (Advance Review and Consolidation) Readiness and Trial (SMART) courtrooms, to lead coordination of cases on the same floor and aligned with the city's detective division. Cases are listed in SMART rooms after arraignment with the requirement that defendants and their attorneys should have received a plea bargain offer and discovery before the SMART room listing. Within the first two months after zoned courts started, 50 percent of pleas were being entered in the SMART courtrooms, according to court statistics.

Woods-Skipper and the rest of the criminal section leadership also have addressed the fact that cases could get delayed when criminal defendants demanded a jury trial just as their cases are scheduled for trial. The court started a new jury demand protocol in the spring of 2010. •