

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

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**The Southern District of West Virginia Celebrates  
National Women's History Month**

After Congress declared March as Women's History Month in 1987, Americans have been celebrating women in history past and present who by their actions have made a difference - - women who have been pioneers and heroines who have broken down barriers, created new opportunities, championed justice and who risked their lives for the greater good.

On March 31, 2016, the Clerk's Office hosted a luncheon to celebrate women focusing on the female judges of the Southern District of West Virginia: The Honorable Stephanie D. Thacker, Circuit Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit; The Honorable Elizabeth V. Hallanan, United States District Judge; The Honorable Irene C. Berger, United States District Judge; The Honorable Cheryl A. Eifert, United States Magistrate Judge; and The Honorable Mary E. Stanley, Retired United States Magistrate Judge. Judge Thacker, the first and only female judge in West Virginia who has served on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, served as the guest speaker.

Dawna Goodson coordinated the celebration and prepared a Women's History information packet. The packet was comprised of significant accomplishments and achievements by women throughout history and today. Bibliographies of the female judges of the Southern District of West Virginia were also included.

During the welcome, Ms. Goodson presented uplifting points from a Forbes Leadership article for the empowerment of women by other women:

- (1) **Lift As You Climb** - Don't pull the ladder up behind you. Have a generous spirit and support other women and their dreams. Help women around you meet the challenges they face and let them know they are valued.
- (2) **Be A Mentor** - Share your knowledge and ideas with other women so they may learn and grow. We want the younger generation to grow up believing they can do anything.

Helping other women get ahead won't diminish your position or power, it will only enhance it.

- (3) **And, Celebrate Other Women's Wins** – Compliment other women and be happy about their accomplishments and achievements. It's amazing how one simple statement can impact a person profoundly. Choose to be a positive force!

Also, a poem was read from an unknown author:

*A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking, because her trust is not on the branch but on her own wings. Always believe in yourself.*

In her opening remarks, Judge Thacker recognized Teresa L. (Terry) Deppner as being the first female Chief Deputy and the first female District Court Clerk serving the Southern District of West Virginia.

Judge Thacker spoke about her personal journey to the bench and the women who influenced her throughout her life. Her "Granny Thacker" was a tremendous influence and one from whom she drew strength and support. Her mother and "Granny Thacker's" sisters were also influential during her lifetime. Judge Thacker shared humorous stories of these ladies and their good-natured advice and impact on her.

Judge Thacker revealed becoming a lawyer was not exactly her plan, but her mother's. She wanted to study marketing; however, her mother gave her more than a *push* to attend law school. She was almost insistent upon it. Her mother actually bought her a trailer so that she could live in it while in Morgantown attending West Virginia University School of Law. Judge Thacker recounted saying, "Mother, what if I decide not to go to law school?" Her mother replied, "Well, you can just pay me back." The decision was made because Judge Thacker said she didn't have the money to give her mother for a trailer. Judge Thacker recalled feeling out of place at law school. She would walk the halls and look at pictures of graduating classes from years past in order to draw strength from the female graduates who had been there before her.

Judge Thacker reminisced about her career as a young female lawyer and shared a humorous story of a time when she was working with an expert witness, whose report she had helped to prepare, and whose deposition she was helping to defend. As the deposition was about to start, he realized that his button was pulled halfway off; and he asked her if she could sew it for him. She spiritedly answered, "No, but I can pull it the rest of the way off if you like".

United States District Court Clerk of Court, Teresa Deppner, spoke of the influence Judge Elizabeth Hallanan had on her during her forty-years-plus career with the Clerk's Office. She shared the advice the Judge had given her when she had initially applied for the Clerk's position and did not receive the appointment. Judge Hallanan had advised her to keep on trying and to not give up on her dreams of being the Clerk.

A luncheon prepared by Clerk's Office staff followed the program.