



Wills for Heroes DCBA's Inaugural Pro Bono Legal Services Program for Denton County Fire Fighters

By Kristen Pannell, Attorney at Law, www.pannell-legal.com and Dawnelle Thompson, Attorney at Law.

On Saturday, July 16th at the Denton County Fire Department's Central Fire Station on Hickory Street, there were 51 local firefighters and their spouses who attended the inaugural Denton County Bar Association's Wills for Heroes program. Firefighters from Denton, Argyle, Carrollton, Celina, Coppell, Corinth, Justin, Krum, Lake Cities, Lewisville, North Fort Worth, and Ponder participated in this event. Upon their arrival, firefighters were welcomed into a room decorated with over 50 red balloons and a buffet of assorted foods and beverages. Many of the firefighters commented that it felt like a party. For the DCBA, it was an event worth celebrating!

Over two dozen Denton County volunteer attorneys and paralegals gave their time and talent to these first responders by drafting documents

prior to the event and notarizing and witnessing the formal signings on July 16th. The provided documents included the following:

- a simple will;
- a durable power of attorney;
- a medical power of attorney; and
- a directive to physicians.

Member attorneys met with the firefighters and spouses to review these prepared documents and answer questions. Teams of volunteer attorneys, paralegals, and notaries administered the required legal formalities to execute these documents.

Initially, approximately 100 participants registered to take part in the Wills for Heroes Program. Due to schedule conflicts with some of the firefighters, we were only able to assist roughly one half of the participants during the event.

DCBA volunteers are already working to accommodate the remaining participants. We will need additional assistance with drafting and conducting signing ceremonies. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Kristen Pannell at kpannell@efaprocessing.com.

Michelle Houston, Executive Director of the DCBA, has been a proponent of our legal community joining this statewide pro bono program for some time now, and this was the first year that the DCBA could make the commitment to begin serving these first responders.

The participant interview process yielded interesting information about the actual numbers of both police and fire department personnel that do not have wills or other disability forms on file. The feedback provided indicated that 8 or 9 out of 10 police officers and firefighters do not have these valuable legal documents.

The importance of this program seems clear and is a meritorious

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From the President

By the time you read this, I hope that we have had about six inches of rain and much cooler temperatures. Congratulations to all of you who had a chance to visit cooler climates this summer. Wow, who could have imagined it could be hotter than the summer of 1980, for those of you who are old enough to remember 1980!

This summer was a busy one for the Bar. We kicked it off with the WinStar trip, having come off a very successful Bench-Bar conference, and then enjoyed the Skeet and Meet (a new tradition!). We've also enjoyed happy hours, mixers, and the DCAP thank-you and sign-up parties. In addition to our busy social schedule, you all found time to volunteer for a very special cause, Wills for Heroes. I'm proud of all the good work you do!

During July, some of your bar representatives had an opportunity to attend the Bar Leaders Conference held every July in Houston. We enjoyed two days of education, exchange of ideas, and meetings related to new bar activities. I was

very impressed with how well Denton County was represented at the conference and also how many of our members hold state-wide offices and positions. Currently, Amie Peace and Kim Killebrew serve on the Local Bar Services Committee and Cameron Cox serves as District II Director for the Texas Young Lawyers. I know that several of our members have served in the past.

We had an opportunity to meet with other bars in our region and bars of a comparable size. It was very beneficial to hear what other bars are doing and what works and doesn't work. I think we were able to come away with several ideas to improve the services of our bar to our members, the public, and our profession.

Two of the most impressive new initiatives by the State Bar concern law-related education and providing resources to civics teachers in the classroom. One such program initiated by the State Bar is entitled "Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay!" which focuses on landmark Supreme Court decisions that affect everyday life for our citizens. The program is an interactive web-based project designed to assist



Dena A. Reecer, President

Texas teachers in preparing students for the new TEKS standards. The program includes videos explaining the Supreme Court decisions in a very entertaining, but also informative, format.

Trust me—these are quality videos; not like the old documentaries on reel-to-reel projectors we watched in social studies class. At the conference we watched one of the videos which was over *Marbury v. Madison*. I recall the case from somewhere in the recesses of my mind, but it was nice to be reminded of its significance (hint: the opinion established the concept of judicial review), and it was done in manner

President Letter continued on page 4.

DCBA Officers

President, *Dena A. Reecer*

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Don R. White, Jr.

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Vice President,

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Secretary, *Travis Biggs*

CLE Director, *Julia Kerestine*

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Library Board of Governors,

Andrew M. Lloyd

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CLE Committee, *Julia Kerestine*

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DCBA Sections

• *Trial Lawyer's Association*

• *Family Law Section*

• *Greater Denton County Young*

Lawyers Association

• *Real Estate, Trust, and Probate*

Law Section

• *Criminal Law*

DCBA Membership

Your DCBA Membership includes

- *Free and discounted CLE programs*
- *Monthly luncheon & happy hour*
- *Networking opportunities*
- *Listing on the bar website, including photo, two practice areas, and a link to your website.*

For more information see our website: www.dentonbar.com.

Upcoming Events & CLE

The How-To Attorney Adoption Day Training For Attorneys

Date:

Friday, September 16
9:00–11:30 AM

Location:

Denton County Court House
Central Jury Room

Registration:

To RSVP please contact Michelle Houston at 940-320-1500 or mhouston@dentonbar.com.



2011 Adoption Day

Date:

Friday, November 4
9:00–11:30 AM

Location:

Denton County Court House, 2nd Floor

Registration:

We are accepting donations and volunteers. Contact Michelle Houston at mhouston@dentonbar.com if you are interested in participating.

Please drop off any teddy bear or monetary donations to the DCBA/DCAP office.



Accepting Donations and Volunteers for Kinship Fair



Please help us raise money and gather volunteers for the 2011 Kinship Fair being held at TWU's Pioneer Circle on October 22. If you are interested in donating or volunteering, please contact Andrew Passons by calling 940-591-1191. Donations of any amount are welcome, donations of \$250 or more received prior to August 16 places the donor's name on the 2011 Kinship Fair T-shirt.



Register Now: Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar

Date: October 5–7, 2011

Location: Marriot Hotel and Golf Club, Fort Worth, Texas

Details: A three day multi-track CLE seminar sponsored by the Paralegal Division, State Bar of Texas. Earn up to 14 CLE hours. Register online at www.txpd.org.

Monthly Meetings

Collaborative Professionals

DCCP will meet at **9:00 AM** on Tuesday, **September 6**, at Oakmont Country Club, 1901 Oakmont Dr. in Corinth.

Family Law

Family Law will meet at **12:00 PM** on Thursday, **September 15**, in the Central Jury Room, 1450 E. McKinney St. in Denton.

Paralegals

DCPA will meet at **12:00 PM** on Thursday, **September 29**, at Oakmont Country Club, 1901 Oakmont Dr. in Corinth.

GDCYLA

GDCYLA will gather for their monthly:

- Meeting at **11:45 AM** on Thursday, **September 1**, at The Abbey Inn, 101 W. Hickory in Denton.
- Happy Hour at **5:00 PM** on Thursday, **September 8**, at the offices of Hayes, Berry, White & Vanzant, 512 W. Hickory St., Ste. 100 in Denton.

REPTL

REPTL will meet at **11:45 PM** on Wednesday, **September 21**, at Oakmont Country Club, 1901 Oakmont Dr. in Corinth.

For Your Practice

Wills for Heroes continued from page 1.

effort for our legal community. We will be able to take into next year our experience and implement a more efficient timeline and system so that our legal community can serve even more first responders.

Our volunteers were indispensable in the process of achieving this success, both in preparation and assisting with the notary and signing requirements. DCBA estimates the monetary value of the entire Wills for Heroes program to range between \$50,000 to \$60,000. For our volunteers, the value was priceless.

Members of the Denton County Paralegal Association who participated in the event and served as notaries and witnesses included Marguerite Alba, Michael Garcia, Glenda Hill, Denise League, Allison Martin, Sunnie Palmer, Christine Piott, Vicki Schmidt, and Pam Snavelly. In addition to volunteering in the drafting and

signing ceremonies, many of these individuals provided wonderful food and beverages for the firefighters and the volunteer staff. Special thanks to Pamela Snavelly for the cookie tray and to Denise League and her husband for providing deli trays and Mrs. Baird's snacks.

Volunteer DCBA attorneys who participated in drafting and reviewing documents as well as answering participant questions included Travis Biggs, Leronda Broyard-Williams, Erin Dion, Christopher J. Everett, Alison Grant, Lisa Hernandez, Debby Mackoy, Art Maldonado, Melissa Maldonado, Kristen Pannell, Christine Qualls, Dawnelle Thompson, Andrea Timmons, and Carol Wolfram. A special thank you to Grace Weatherly for providing the envelopes and to Darcy Loveless and Vicki Isaacks for providing snacks and beverages for the event.

Thank you also to Kathy Barnette

and Laura Gentry for the coffee service, Cheryl Isbell and Marguerite Alba for the balloons, Mallory Speicher for the deluxe photography and superb protein bars, and Dorothy West for her miscellaneous treats.

Huge thanks to the local restaurants who sponsored the event with food and beverages: Phil Shirley, general manager and owner, of Hannah's Off the Square restaurant and wine & martini bar in Denton, who provided generous catering services with various refreshment trays and water; Lucy's Moms on Main restaurant and bakery in Aubrey, who provided over three dozen delicious cupcakes; and Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant in Denton, who provided amazing tiramisu. Other corporate sponsors included Cici's Pizza, which provided 20 pizzas; Frito Lay, which provided assorted chips; and Coca-Cola, which provided soft drink products and T-shirts.



President Letter continued from page 2.

that appeals to middle and high school students. I was quite entertained, which may say something about my level of entertainment sophistication. I encourage you to check it out at www.texaslr.com.

Another exciting new civics program is called iCivics. You can check it out at www.icivics.org. iCivics is a program founded by

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to, in her words, "reinvigorate civic learning in and out of the classroom."

While still serving on the Court, she started working to build a program to give teachers the tools they need to teach the material and make learning fun for the students. The program employs games and other interactive materials, can be taught online, and includes everything a teacher will

need in the classroom. The best part is that it is free to the school districts. Funded by the Carnegie Foundation, the games and materials are first-rate and have been vetted by top gamers.

It was exciting and rewarding to see all the good work being done by lawyers. It is amazing to see what can be accomplished when great minds and commitment come together. Have a great month!

DCBA 2011 Bar Poll Results

The Denton County Bar Association recently conducted its annual Bar Poll, where members rate Denton County judges in the following areas: courteousness to litigants and their attorneys, understanding and correctly applying the law, timely rulings, timely court scheduling, accessibility

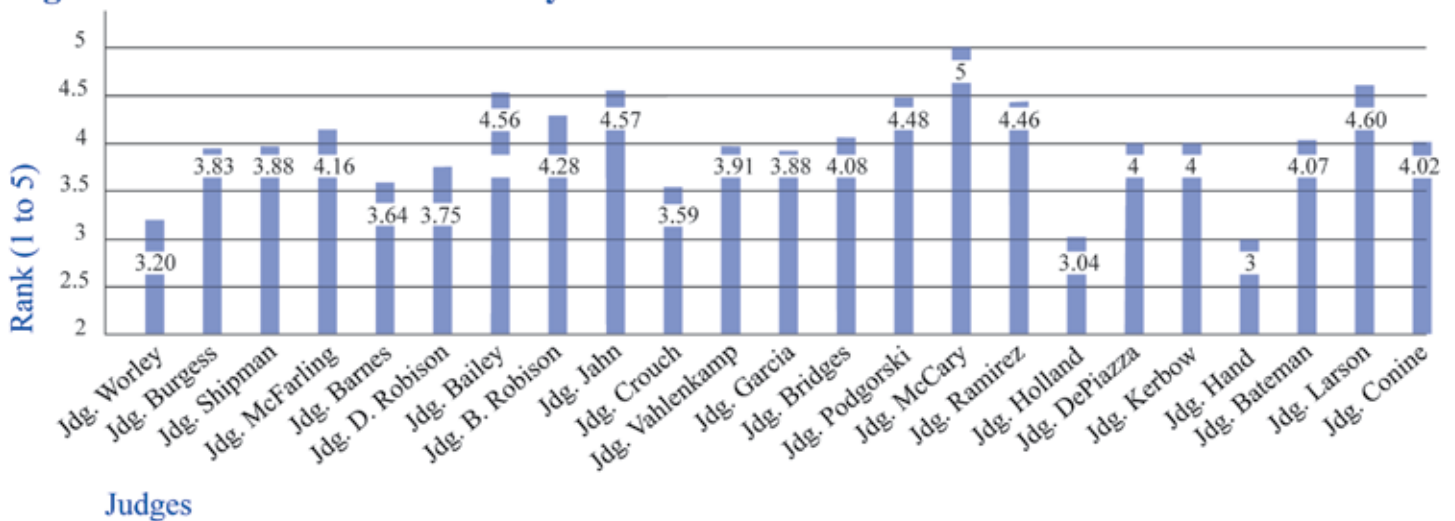
to attorneys, overall temperament, and overall courteousness of court staff. The poll was administered by Ballot Box Online, an independent third-party facilitator. All individual votes are strictly confidential.

The 2011 poll results are displayed in the graph below (Figures 1), The

graph represents each judge's overall score from 1 to 5, with 1 being worst and 5 being best.

If you wish to receive a copy of the detailed report, please contact Michelle Houston at 940-320-1500 or at mhouston@dentonbar.com.

Figure 1: 2011 Full Denton County Bar Poll Results



Beginner's Luck? Skeeters Benefit Adoption Day Program

By Rachel Li, The Law Office of Rachel Li, PLLC, www.rachellilaw.com.

Thanks to everyone who made it out to the Second Annual Skeet n' Meet on July 18th. Gina and Brent Hill graciously offered the use of their Pilot Point home, pool, and guns. Over 75 people attended, including first-time skeet shooter, Julia Kerstine. Julia has "mad skillz" and kicked butt at the skeet shoot. (Hope her trial skills aren't as well-honed as her skeet shooting!) Jennifer Schultz

won the "Little Pink Sniper" shooting competition and generously donated her monetary winnings to Adoption Day. (Denton County Adoption Day takes place November 4, 2011.)

A raffle was held and attendees helped raise over \$400 for Adoption Day. Prizes included a shot gun, binoculars, and a decorator fan. Thank y'all to the following people who donated items for the raffle: Ed and



2011 Bar Leaders Conference

By Jill E. Jester, Attorney with Minor & Jester, P.C., www.minorandjester.com.

I was fortunate to attend the 2011 Bar Leaders Conference in Houston on behalf of the Greater Denton County Young Lawyers Association (GDCYLA). I was joined by other members of GDCYLA, the officers and staff of the DCBA, the Flower Mound Bar Association, and other Local Bar Services Committee members from our county. Together, with bar leaders from all over the state, we learned how to serve our members and communities better.

Five of us from GDCYLA headed

down to Houston at 5:00 AM. Things can get a bit slaphappy in a group that early in the morning. Before we arrived in Houston, we had a theme song and a nickname: *The Denton Danger Delegates*.

The conference was filled with seminars and sharing opportunities, all very informative. It was interesting to hear what larger and smaller bar associations around the state are doing, both the good and the bad.

Seminars included topics such as bar association diversity and resources

for civics education. Breakout roundtables by bar size afforded opportunities to discuss in more detail some of the programs other bar associations have provided.

Seminars focused on helping bar associations included: using social media to promote your bar association, financial assistance in the form of grant opportunities for bar associations, law practice management, resources for local bars, how to attract new members, and a program called Vote America.

Those seminars geared towards bar members included: leadership strategies to encourage and better bar leaders, how to convince lawyers to get the help they need (focusing on stress and depression), mentoring initiatives, a closing arguments CLE, law focused education, protecting yourself in cyberspace, baseball with the bench, a judicial internship program, and a Coffee with the Judges program.

Programs presented designed for the general public included: Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans, protecting



Cynthia Burkett, Duane and Louellen Coker, Mike and Delany Gregory, Brent and Gina Hill, Judge Robert and Laura Ramirez, and Steve and Liz Trout.

A dinner of BBQ with all the fixings was served. Misters, along with a margarita machine and a keg, helped keep guests cool. The kids enjoyed bouncing on the trampoline and in the bounce house and swimming in the pool.

Big thanks also to those who

assisted on the shooting range: Earl Dobson, Jeff Fleming, George Mitcham, and Bill Stewart. First-timers and experienced shooters alike enjoyed the range and competitions set up by Brent Hill.

And finally, kudos also to the crew who helped with set-up and clean-up: Cynthia Burkett, Angie Burnett, Nathan Burnett, Nicole Delacerda, Jordon Jones, Randy Jones, Rachel Li, Amie Peace, Jennifer Schultz, and Joe Zellmer. Some of these guys were



there pretty late, because the event started at 4:00 PM and the last guest left at 2:30 AM. Good times were definitely had by all.

From our Sponsors

our children, vulnerable populations and resources, fundraising ideas to support legal aid, a teen alcohol awareness program, a teen summer law program, teen dating and healing the wounds, a day of service, a kids law library, and an original play by the Houston Young Lawyers' Association on teen dating violence. (When do some of these people work?)

From our group, GDCYLA president-elect Brook Stuntebeck presented the CLE program she helped coordinate on Evidentiary Issues. This CLE was a huge success in Denton where participants worked together to enter evidence in a staged trial. Cameron Cox, Director for our district of the Texas Young Lawyers Association, presented the Texas Lawyers For Texas Veterans program, which has also been very successful in Denton in the past. Both representative speakers from Denton did us proud.

On the whole, the conference was inspiring. It was great to see so many people donate their valuable time and energy in the service to members of the bar and the public.

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DCBA in 2011-12

September Bar Luncheon

Date:

Friday, September 9, Noon
Meal included

Location:

Oakmont Country Club
1901 Oakmont Drive
Corinth, Texas 76210

Program:

Social Media & eDiscovery

Speaker:

Peter S. Vogel

October Bar Luncheon

Date:

Friday, October 7, Noon
Meal included

Location:

Oakmont Country Club
1901 Oakmont Drive
Corinth, Texas 76210

Program:

TBA

Speaker:

TBA

DCBA Probate Guardianship and Ad Litem Seminar

Date:

Friday, October 7, 2011

Location:

Oakmont Country Club

Details:

7.25 hours CLE (1 hour of Ethics).
To register please contact the
DCBA at 940-320-1500.

Announcing

Congratulations to Charles Beachley
on the birth of their grand-daughter
Victoria Maries Beachley on August
10, 2011.