



The YLD Review

The State Bar of Georgia — Lawyers Serving the Public and the Justice System

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Young Lawyers Division

Fall 2006

Georgia Wins ABA's Highest YLD Award

Congratulations to the State Bar of Georgia's Young Lawyers Division, which was awarded the highest honor given to young lawyer divisions across the country, Aug. 5 in Honolulu, Hawaii, at the American Bar Association's Annual Meeting.

The ABA Awards of Achievement Program is designed to encourage project development by recognizing the time, effort and skills expended by young lawyer organizations in implementing public service and bar service projects in their communities. The Georgia YLD was recognized as the Best Overall YLD in the country, placing first in the Comprehensive category. *The YLD Review* won second place in the Newsletter category. The Minorities in the Profession Committee's (MIPC) project, "An Evening With the Justices," won first place in the Minority Project category. The MIPC hosted a panel discussion and cocktail reception with Georgia Supreme Court Justices Robert Benham and Harold Melton for more than 100 minority lawyers and law students.

Georgia won second place in the Service to the Public category for their "Stop Domestic Violence" program, an online video project created to over-

come language barriers experienced by non-English speaking victims. This was accomplished by developing web-based videos about domestic violence and temporary protective orders, translating the scripts and webcasting the videos in multiple languages, and training Georgia courts' staff, agencies, shelters and community organizations to navigate the LegalAid-GA.org web site to locate these videos and use these foreign language resources.

Georgia also won second place in the Service to the Bar category for its Leadership Academy program, which was started last Bar year as a comprehensive leadership development program serving as an intensive "next step" to the Bar's recently instituted Transition into Law Practice Program.

Congratulations to Damon Elmore, 2005-06 YLD president; Deidra Sanderson, YLD director; Bryan Scott and Amy Howell, 2005-06 newsletter editors; the State Bar's Communications Department; Mawuli Davis and Holly Geerdes, 2005-06 Minorities in the Profession Committee co-chairs; Laurel Landon, Tonya Boga and Leigh Martin May, 2005-06 Leadership Academy chairs; and Mike Monahan and Tracey Roberts for the Stop Domestic Violence Program. ✎

2006 Annual Meeting Filled With YLD Activity

The Young Lawyers Division wrapped up the 2005-06 Bar year in Hilton Head, S.C. at the Westin Resort during the State Bar of Georgia's Annual Meeting, June 1-4.

The YLD had a full weekend of activities, beginning with the annual YLD/Lawyers Foundation of Georgia 5K Fun Run, which was won by the Hon. Johnnie Mason. June 2 activities included a three-hour CLE and the pool party, which was sponsored by Huseby, Inc., the Litigation Committee, and Michael Geoffroy, candidate for YLD secretary. That night, guests were transported to and from Windows on the Waterway aboard open-air trolleys for the YLD dinner.

Saturday morning began with the annual Brunch and Awards Ceremony, where awards were presented for outstanding commitment and service to the

Bar, profession, public, and YLD. Distinguished Judicial Service awards were presented to judges in recognition of distinguished service on the bench, commitment to improving the practice of law, and active support of the YLD. The Second Annual Young Lawyer Ethics and Professionalism Award and Commitment to Justice Awards were also given. (For a list of award winners, see page 4.)

The 2006-07 YLD officers were sworn-in at the brunch by Georgia Supreme Court Justice George H. Carley. The officers are: Jonathan A. Pope, president; Elena Kaplan, president-elect; Josh Bell, treasurer; and Amy Howell, secretary.

The YLD activities were rounded out by the Golf Tournament at the Port Royal Golf Club. The first place foursome included Andrew Jones, Kevin Moore, Scott Kimbrough and Chuck Hodges. ✎



The 2006-07 officers were sworn-in at the YLD Brunch and Awards Ceremony. Immediate Past President Damon Elmore, standing in for Secretary Amy Howell; Treasurer Josh Bell; President-elect Elena Kaplan; and President Jon Pope.

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from the President

The Right Attitude is Everything

By Jon Pope

It is with great excitement I write to you during the 60th year of the Young Lawyers Division. Created on May 31, 1947, then the Younger Lawyers Section, the organization's purpose was "to advance the science of jurisprudence, promote the administration of justice throughout the State, uphold honor in the profession of law and establish cordial dealings between members of the profession." In June 1998, the name was changed to Young Lawyers Division, although the mission and purpose has remained constant. Despite our continued efforts to accomplish our mission to "uphold honor in the profession of law," the negative perception of lawyers is at an all-time low.

Growing up with a judge as a father is not easy. Discussions over rule violations were modeled after criminal jury trials and pleas for curfew extensions were akin to motions hearings. I learned from an early age to formulate logical, concise arguments at these times. One thing that was never tolerated in the Pope household was a bad attitude. No amount of argument or citation of authority could assuage the anger of my father after being presented with a bad attitude from one of his children. I believe one of the most significant, yet ignored, impacts on life is attitude.

My family and I were in Charleston, S.C. this summer and had lunch at Hyman's Seafood. At each table in the restaurant, there are cards containing various "words of wisdom." One of the cards contained a quote by Chuck Swindoll, author of a book titled "Attitudes." I have no idea who Mr. Swindoll is but the quote made an impression on me:

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than success, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company . . . a church . . . a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every-day regarding the attitude we embrace for that day. We cannot change our past . . . we cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. We cannot change the

inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude . . . I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you . . . we are in charge of our ATTITUDES."

When I gave my first address as President of the YLD to the Board of Governors at the annual meeting, I told them one of my goals was to assist the State Bar in its efforts to improve the public image of lawyers. I believe the improvement of the public image of lawyers is of special importance to young lawyers who are starting out in their careers. With more than 8,600 members and 27 committees providing community service, the YLD is in a unique position to reach out to the public in a way that can help define the image of lawyers in a positive way. As we fulfill the duties of our job, interact with the public, and execute the mission of the YLD, we must always be mindful of the impact our attitude has on the public perception of our profession. A consistently pleasant and helpful attitude can spread far and wide, thus benefiting all of us.

I want to also encourage all members of the YLD to participate in YLD events. Whether it's running for office, joining a committee or simply attending a meeting, your involvement is paramount to the continued success of the YLD.

One of our oldest and most successful committees, the High School Mock Trial Committee, will host the Georgia High School Mock Trial Competition beginning Feb. 16, 2007, with the state finals competition being held on March 10 and 11. The committee is in need of volunteer coaches and judges. The YLD Litigation Committee has graciously agreed to coordinate with the High School Mock Trial Committee in locating volunteers. I would encourage all YLD members to participate in this wonderful program.

As always, if you have ideas for new programs, suggestions as to how we can improve YLD services, or if I can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me at jpope@hpb-law.com. ☺

Community Service Committee Sponsors Zoo Day

By Margaret Geer and Laura Stewart

If you thought the courtroom was a zoo, you haven't seen anything yet! One of the most popular events that the YLD Community Service Committee sponsors is its annual "Zoo Day," a special occasion on which YLD members take a group of foster children to Zoo Atlanta. This year, Zoo Day was held on May 20. YLD members and children alike enjoyed seeing all of the exotic animals, including lions, elephants, giraffes, birds, zebras, and, of course, the famous pandas, Lun Lun and Yang Yang.

The children were thrilled about riding the Nabisco Endangered Species Carousel and the Norfolk Southern Zoo Express Train, which provided them with a close-up tour of a few of the animals, like the kangaroo. The fun did not end there. Lunch was held in the Arc building, where the zoo is currently displaying an interactive exhibit entitled "Wild Like Me," in which the children enjoyed learning from Yogi Bear how animals are just like them!

The committee is grateful to all of the volunteers and to its sponsors, without whom this event would not have been possible: Brown Reporting, Inc., King & Spalding LLP, and Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP. ☺



Volunteers at the Community Service Committee's Zoo Day at Zoo Atlanta in May 2006.

Lessons I've Learned From the Bench

By Judge John Ellington

- You can do anything in a courtroom you want to until somebody (usually the judge) tells you that you can't.
- Just because you can do anything in a courtroom you want to, doesn't mean that you have to.
- There is life outside the courthouse – get one.
- Listen.
- Remember, there are no original stories, just original thieves. If you see another lawyer's style that you like, steal it and make it your own.
- In law and in life, it is the people that you meet and the friends that you make who make the difference.
- Git-R-Done. . . early. There is no penalty for filing early. If you later think of something that you left out, amend.
- Even if it is your first time doing something, act like you have done it 100 times before.
- Time is money. Although money will not buy you happiness, it will buy you a Mercedes-Benz that you can ride around in and look for happiness.
- Read the rules. Read the rules. Read the rules.
- Let your ethical standards be known. That way you can avoid ever being put into a compromising situation in the first place.
- Most appellate judges think that they are legal scholars. The truth is that they are just lawyers who once knew a governor.
- I tell lawyers and parties, you ought to win when you are supposed to win and you ought to lose when you are supposed to lose.
- It doesn't cost anything to be nice – to staff, bailiffs, clients and other attorneys.
- Motions for Reconsideration (MFRs), also known fondly by the court as "more fascinating reading," will be granted only when it appears the court overlooked a material fact in the record, a statute or a decision which would require a different judgment from that rendered, see Rule 37(e).
- In life there are substitutes for a lot of things – sugar, salt, milk – but there are no substitutes for truth, honesty and integrity.
- What we do in the judicial system is important. We deal with people's property, people's children, and people's freedom.
- Everybody in the world does not have a courthouse. It is America's system of justice that separates us from all the other countries in the world.
- On oral argument, always reserve time for rebuttal.
- It is incumbent on us as lawyers to protect the judicial system. It is one thing for someone to lose a case. It is much worse for someone to lose confidence in the judicial system. ⚖️



Judge John Ellington was sworn in as the 66th Judge of the Georgia Court of Appeals on July 12, 1999 by Gov. Roy Barnes and was elected statewide to a full six year term in 2000. Prior to his service on the Georgia Court of Appeals, Ellington became one of the youngest trial court judges in Georgia when he was appointed State Court Judge of Treutlen County in 1991.

Ellington, from Soperton, Treutlen County, was admitted to the State Bar of Georgia in 1985. He holds degrees from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and the University of Georgia. He received his J.D. from the University of Georgia Law School. Ellington remains active in civic and professional organizations in both South Georgia and metro Atlanta. He resides on a family farm in Soperton.

Leadership Academy Accepting Applications

By Damon Elmore
YLD Immediate Past President

Nominations and applications are now being accepted for the YLD's Second Annual Leadership Academy Program. Building upon the foundation laid during its award winning inaugural year, the Academy will combine a mentor relationship of 20 prominent members of Georgia's bench and bar with 40 young lawyers that have been in practice for four to seven years. Young lawyers will be matched with mentors who share similar interests and career paths.

The program begins January 2007, and requires participation in six sessions through June 2007. The sessions will focus on topics of interest that further the mission of the YLD and have a secondary goal of cultivating complete leaders with respect to professionalism, ethics, and career and community service issues.

The sessions include an introduction to the legislative process and an examination of lawyers as elected officials and, we'll dissect each layer of our state and local courts. We'll stress the importance of participation in community service programs and we'll conduct a refresher course in the area of professionalism.

If you are interested in participating as a mentee, complete the form and return it to the YLD offices via fax at 404.527.8717 or e-mail to deidra@gabar.org.

Further information and details about the program are available at www.gabar.org/young_lawyers_division/. You may also contact Damon Elmore at damon_elmore@genpt.com or the YLD Director, Deidra Sanderson, at deidra@gabar.org.

Nomination/Application for Participation 2006-2007 YLD Leadership Academy

Name: _____

Year admitted to practice (circle one):

1999 2000 2001 2002

Firm/employer: _____

Law school: _____

GA Bar number: _____

Practice area: _____

Contact information:

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

(Optional)

Nominated by: _____

Are you a YLD Committee member? (circle one)

* Yes * No

Have you attended a YLD meeting? (circle one)

* Yes * No



2005-2006 Young Lawyers Division Awards

The YLD would like to congratulate the following award winners for the 2005-2006 Bar year:

- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the Public**
Brandy Daswani — Aspiring Youth Committee chair
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the Bar**
Elena Kaplan, Suzanne Alford, Jason Alloy, Jennifer Jordan — Bylaw Review Committee
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the Profession**
Laurel Payne Landon, Tonya Boga, Leigh Martin May — Leadership Academy
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the YLD**
Jeff Daxe, Scott Masterson — Litigation Committee co-chairs
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the YLD**
State Bar of Georgia Communications Department
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the YLD**
Terri Gordon
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the YLD**
Mike Krause — ABA Delegate
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the YLD**
Amy Howell, Bryan Scott — Newsletter co-editors
- **Award of Achievement: Outstanding Service to the YLD**
Amy Howell, Brooke Silverthorn — Juvenile Law Committee co-chairs
- **Second Annual Young Lawyer Ethics and Professionalism Award**
Christopher Cohilas



The Bylaw Review Committee (L-R: Jason Alloy, Suzanne Alford, Jennifer Jordan and Elena Kaplan) was presented with an Award of Achievement by 2005-06 YLD President Damon Elmore (far right).

- **Distinguished Judicial Service Award**
Justice George H. Carley, Judge John J. Ellington
- **Commitment to Justice Award: Criminal Defense**
Sarah Gerwig-Moore
- **Commitment to Justice Award: Criminal Prosecution**
Anne Elizabeth Green

YLD Gives Back to Georgia Communities

Macon

On April 29, the Macon YLD participated in Great Day of Service, organizing a donation drive for the Macon Rescue Mission, an organization that operates shelters for homeless men and women and victims of domestic violence, as well as six daycare centers in collaboration with the Division of Family and Child Services. The Mission provides hundreds of meals each day and also gives utility and rent assistance.



Center: Cristen Freeman, John Critchfield and April Howard with workers from the Mission.

Prior to the donation drive, the Macon YLD distributed a “needs list” provided by the Mission. On the day of the event, a Macon Rescue Mission truck (which donations filled almost to capacity!) was present at the donation site. To encourage participation, a cookout was held and the entire Macon Bar was invited to participate. It was a fabulous success with one of the largest turnouts ever for a Great Day of Service project in Macon. For more information, visit www.maconrescuemission.com

Atlanta

The Community Service Projects Committee teamed up with Hands On Atlanta to volunteer at Emma Hutchinson Elementary School for the 11th Annual Great Day of Service on May 6. More than 20 attorneys, representing a variety of Atlanta-area firms and government agencies, volunteered to work with children on their math, science, art, reading, and writing skills. School Principal Rebecca Dashiell-Mitchell stopped by and ate lunch with the group after tutoring. After two hours of tutoring, the attorneys and children shared lunch and played games. Great Day of Service is the largest organized community service project of the State Bar and is one of the most important projects of the year for the YLD. 🙏

2006 YLD Fall Meeting

October 6-8
Athens, Ga.

Hilton Garden Inn

UGA vs. Tennessee football game weekend

Minimum two night stay. Rooms are for YLD members registered for the 2006 Fall Meeting only. Discounted room rate for two nights including tax: \$430.92

Group dinner, business meeting and tailgate party to be offered.

YLD room rate reservations cannot be made through the hotel. For reservations, contact Deidra Sanderson at 404-527-8778 or deidra@gabar.org.

Reservation deadline is Sept. 15, and the YLD has only guaranteed 40 rooms, so reserve your room today!

Motion to Amend YLD Bylaws

The Organization Committee of the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia (the YLD) hereby presents this motion to the president of the YLD, recommending that the bylaws of the YLD be amended by replacing the existing bylaws with the proposed bylaws (posted at www.gabar.com/young_lawyers_division). The proposed bylaws amend the existing bylaws by, *inter alia*, changing the composition of the executive council, changing the requirements for serving as president and clarifying certain language in the bylaws. The committee requests that this motion be published in the fall issue of the YLD Newsletter and that a vote be taken at the Fall Meeting of the members of the YLD, scheduled for Oct. 6-8, 2006 in Athens, Ga., or the first meeting thereafter at which a quorum is present. Any questions or comments regarding the proposed bylaws or requests for a copy of the proposed Bylaws should be addressed to Elena Kaplan at 404-880-4741 or ekaplan@phrd.com.

Scenes from the Beach

Photos from the 2006 Annual Meeting in Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Right: James and Cristen Freeman and Matt Hall on the beach, prior to the fun run.

Below: Matt Reeves, Jason Alloy, Darrick Alford and Justice Harold Melton at the YLD Pool Party.



Tom Pope, Hon. Marion T. Pope holding Jon and Amy's son Andrew, YLD President Jon Pope, Amy Pope, her mother Marquita Moore holding Jon and Amy's daughter Caroline



Standing: Sam Brannen Jr., Jennifer and Lawton Jordan and Faisal Johnson

Seated: Kimberly and Scott Marty, Thad Kodish and Michael Geoffroy



Chuck Hodges, Kevin Moore, Scott Kimbrough and Andrew Jones



Above: Judge John Ellington and Justice George H. Carley

Left: Ronni Abramson and Elena Kaplan



Standing: Jason and Susannah Pedigo

Seated: Carl and Christina Varnedoe and Jeff Daxe

2006-07 Executive Committee

President



Jonathan A. Pope graduated from The Citadel in 1992 and received his law degree from Georgia State University in 1995. Jon is a name partner at Hasty Pope & Ball, LLP with offices in Canton and Gainesville. The firm focuses on wrongful death and catastrophic injury cases. In 2004, *Georgia Trend* magazine named Jon one of its "40 under 40." He was also recently named a "Rising Star" in *Georgia Trend's* "Superlawyers" publication due out in October 2006.

President-elect



Elena Kaplan practices taxation, corporate governance, employee benefits and estate planning with Parker, Hudson, Rainer & Dobbs, LLP. She received her J.D., *summa cum laude*, from American University, a L.L.M. in Taxation from the University of Florida, and her bachelor's from the University of Virginia, where she studied Costume Design and Historic Preservation. Elena has been actively involved with the YLD since 1999 when she chaired the Community Service Projects Committee.

Treasurer



Joshua C. Bell received his bachelor's degree, a Masters in Public Administration and a law degree from the University of Georgia. Josh is a partner with the law firm of Kirbo, Kendrick & Bell, LLC, in Bainbridge, Ga. He also serves as Municipal Court judge for Cairo and Whigham and Assistant Magistrate Court Judge for Grady County.

Secretary



Amy Howell is the director of legal services for the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. She received her B.A. from Connecticut College and her J.D. from the Temple University James E. Beasley School of Law. Previously, Amy was an assistant public defender with the Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit in the DeKalb County Juvenile Court. Amy also previously served as the managing attorney for the Southern Juvenile Defender Center at Emory School of Law.

Immediate Past President



Damon Elmore is a 1996 graduate of the Emory University School of Law and a 1993 graduate of Savannah State University. Upon graduation, he began his career with the City of Atlanta's Law Department. He then joined the firm of Gorby, Reeves, Peters & Burns, where he worked as an associate until 2002. Currently, Damon serves as director, Diversity and Employment Practices, for Genuine Parts Company.

The YLD Review Co-Editor



Stephanie Kirijan is an assistant district attorney in the Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit. She previously served as District Attorney Gwen Keyes Fleming's public information officer, press secretary for Governor Roy Barnes' re-election campaign, Governor Barnes' deputy press secretary and Secretary of State Cathy Cox's public information officer. She graduated with a journalism degree from the University of Georgia and received a law degree from Georgia State University.

The YLD Review Co-Editor



Stacy Silverstone is the legal recruiting manager in DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary's Atlanta office. She previously was a litigator with two law firms, one here in Atlanta and one in her native Chicago. She received her J.D. from the University of Chicago, her M.A. in Literary and Cultural Theory from Carnegie Mellon University and her B.A. in English from the University of Michigan.

YLD Family Law Committee Presents 'Supreme Cork'

By Pilar Prinz
Family Law Committee

On July 27 guests of the YLD Family Law Committee were summoned before The Supreme Cork to appear and participate in a wine tasting and silent auction held at Vinocity in Atlanta. By all accounts, the event was a tremendous success and afforded an opportunity for the less experienced attorneys to have a good time and to mingle and network with more experienced attorneys and other professionals present to raise money for a common cause. Once the dust settled, and all was said and done, the event raised \$14,219 to benefit The Bridge, a center for severely abused teens in metropolitan Atlanta.

The Family Law Committee would like to thank the members of the Family Law Section who devoted their time and talent organizing the event. Special recognition should be given to the following: Jonathan Tuggle, Pilar Prinz, Pia Koslow, Alyson Lembeck, Eileen Shuman, Whitney Mauk, Rebecca Crumrine, Leigh Cummings and Katie Connell for their efforts in organizing the event, including finding a location and entertainment, and acquiring items for the silent auction. Also, special thanks go to everyone at Vinocity, Trial Graphix and The Bridge who helped make this event such a success.

The committee would especially like to thank the event sponsors: Cohen, Pollock, Merlin & Small, P.C.; Davis, Matthews & Quigley, P.C.; Warner, Mayoue, Bates & Nolen, P.C.; Bennett Thrasher & Co.; Boyd, Collar & Knight, LLC; Business Consulting and Investigations, Inc.; Huff, Woods & Hamby; Pachman Richardson, LLC; Anderson, Tate McGarity & Carr, P.C.; Kessler, Schwarz & Solomiany, P.C.; Law Office of Christy Draper; Patterson & Hansford, P.C.; Peachtree Legal Recruiting; Professional Document Services; The Investigative Accounting Group, LLC; Thurman Financial Consulting, Inc; Weinstock and Scavo, P.C.; Bogart & Bogart, P.C.; Geiger & Associates, LLC; Gwenn D. Holland, Esq.; H. Elizabeth King, Ph.D., P.C.; Koslow Law Offices; Levine & Smith, LLC; Moore Ingram Johnson & Steele, LLP; Schulten Ward & Turner, LLP; Shriver & Gordon, P.C.; Smith, Gilliam, Williams & Miles, P.A.; The Collaborative Law Office of Lauren G. Alexander; Tower Mortgage Corp.; and Vargas Reporting Services. Without their support this event would not have been possible. The committee cannot thank them enough. 🍷



Fall Meeting

October 6-8, 2006

Hilton Garden Inn

Athens, Ga. — UGA vs. Tennessee football game

Midyear Meeting

January 18-20, 2007

Hyatt Regency Hotel

Savannah, Ga.

Spring Meeting

April 26-29, 2007

W New Orleans

New Orleans, La. — First weekend of Jazzfest

Annual Meeting

June 14-17, 2007

Sawgrass Marriott Resort

Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

2006 Celebration of Excellence Recognizes Graduates Living in Foster Care

By Elizabeth Reimels
Juvenile Law Committee

On June 12 the 14th Annual Celebration of Excellence recognized 337 high school graduates and 29 college graduates in the Egyptian Ballroom of the Fabulous Fox Theatre in Atlanta. The Celebration of Excellence Scholarship program awarded a record-breaking \$108,000 in scholarships, which includes four scholarships presented to graduate students.

The Celebration of Excellence is an annual statewide graduation event and scholarship program that recognizes the academic achievements of youth who have grown up in Georgia's foster care system and who have graduated from high school, a GED program, vocational school or college. Youth who grow up in foster care face many educational challenges. They change foster care placements and schools often — sometimes in the middle of the school year. A study by Child Welfare League of America suggests that it takes a child from four to six months to recover academically from the disruption of changing schools. Other studies have found that children living in foster care are twice as likely as the rest of the school population to drop out before graduation.

Frank Ski, V-103 morning personality emceed the event. Gov. and Mrs. Perdue provided words of congratulations and encouragement to the students. Donnie Olajuwon, former foster youth and *cum laude* graduate of Georgia State University delivered a rousing inspirational message to the audience, and the Inner Harbour EXCEL African Drum Ensemble rocked the house during the ceremony and throughout the reception. Mary Dean Harvey, director of the Division of Family and Children Services presided over the recognition of the graduates, calling each student's name as he or she crossed the stage to receive a certificate of recognition and a gift bag presented by YLD Juvenile Law Committee Co-Chairs Ari Mathé and Lea Thompson. After the ceremony, Jasper Family Steakhouse once again provided a delicious down-home feast for all to enjoy.

The Celebration of Excellence was founded in 1992 by child advocate attorney and then YLD member, Dorothy Murphy and case managers from DeKalb

County DFCS as a project of the Juvenile Law Committee of the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia to celebrate and honor the significant accomplishments of Georgia's youth in foster care. It has grown over the years and is now organized by a part-time paid project director who is assisted by multiple community partners in Georgia's child welfare system, including the Young Lawyers Division, the Division of Family and Children Services Independent Living Program, the Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children Foundation, and the volunteer and non-profit community.

The Celebration is made possible by generous donations from organizations, individuals, corporations, and foundations including the State Bar of Georgia YLD.

The members of the Juvenile Law Committee would like to offer special thanks and congratulations to the hard working Celebration of Excellence Volunteer Committee and to the Celebration of Excellence Project Director Susan Allison. 🙏



Above: Committee Chairs Lea Thompson and Ari Mathé address the graduates.



Left: Student speaker Donnie Olajuwon.

Photos by:
Carol Cole/Heart Gallery Georgia

Lawyers Promoting Competency in Juvenile Court

By Leigh S. Schrope
Lawyers Challenge for Children

What happens to children in our juvenile justice system when they are declared to be mentally incompetent to stand trial? Are their cases closed without the benefit of services? Are they written off by our juvenile justice system as beyond hope? Do they have the benefit of a lawyer who is responsible for looking out for their best interests?

Thanks to Lawyers Promoting Competency in Juvenile Court (LPC), a project that is currently being implemented at the Fulton County Juvenile Court, children in Fulton County are not written off as helpless and hopeless. Rather, when a child is declared to be incompetent, he or she is assigned a *guardian ad litem* (GAL) who participates in the development and implementation of a mental competency plan that helps the child, whether that means assisting the child with becoming competent or, for those children who will always have competency issues, helping the child stabilize in the best environment possible.

Currently, Hunton & Williams lawyers, and other attorneys in private practice, serve as GALs for mentally incompetent youth in Fulton County. The number of mentally incompetent youth, however, has significantly increased. In response, LPC is seeking a pool of skilled, compassionate attorneys who are willing to protect the interests of these youth.

Involvement in a case begins when Dr. Constance West, coordinator of the Fulton County Juvenile Court's Mental Health Clinic, contacts the GAL regarding a child who has recently been declared incompetent. From that point forward, the GAL is the person responsible for looking out for the best interest of the child. This means participating in competency plan meetings to discuss what steps and services are necessary to protect the child and the community,

including educational services, mental health and/or substance abuse treatment services, supervision etc., participating in any meetings to discuss the child's progress in his or her plan, and attending any court hearings related to the child's plan. Of course, to effectively represent the child's best interest, the GAL also meets with the child and learns about him or her and his or her needs.

This is an exciting time to be a GAL assisting children who have been declared to be mentally incompetent to stand trial because this is a developing area of law that continues to be defined. The GALs may have input into how the court system should supervise, rehabilitate and protect children who have competency issues.

As our system has begun to recognize mental competency issues in children, more children are in desperate need of a guardian to protect their interests. If you are interested in volunteering to be a GAL, please contact Christopher Yokom, the intake attorney at the Fulton County Juvenile Court, at Christopher.Yokom@co.fulton.ga.us or 404-224-4537. 🙏

This is part of a series dedicated to raising awareness of, and pro bono support for, critical legal services programs for Georgia's children and youth. The Lawyers' Challenge for Children, an initiative of the YLD and the Juvenile Law Committee, has been created to highlight innovative programs that serve Georgia's most vulnerable populations. The need for appropriate legal representation is particularly profound for children. Please look for ways to offer your support throughout the coming year. For more information about the Lawyers' Challenge for Children Campaign, please e-mail Leigh Schrope, at leighstevensoh@hotmail.com.





from the
Editor

Make a Difference — Vote

By Stephanie Kirijan

In the first editorial column of the new Bar year, I encourage all of you to make a difference in your community by going to the polls on Nov. 7 to cast your ballot in the Georgia General Election. Major races on the ballot include all Georgia constitutional officers including Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, as well as all contested Congressional seats, all contested House and Senate seats in the Georgia General Assembly and numerous local contests.

At the YLD Legislative Affairs breakfast in January, state Sen. Kasim Reed encouraged young lawyers to get involved in politics, not just by voting, but also by running for office, as the number of lawyers in the legislature has dwindled to less than 15 percent. Only 31 of the 236 members of the Georgia General Assembly identify themselves as attorneys. Sen. Reed reminded us that as lawyers, our training gives us the foresight to see the long reaching effects of new laws. Our training also makes us both analytical and thorough, which are important tools to ensure that the General Assembly passes sound legislation.

Several young lawyers were inspired by Sen. Reed's remarks and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their courage to embark on their first campaigns for political office. These races were decided in the July 18 Georgia primary election: Shyam Reddy and Scott Holcomb ran for Georgia Secretary of State. Ashley Harris, Stebin Horne and Elena Kaplan all ran for House seats in the Georgia General Assembly and James Freeman ran for Macon City Council.

We should all be proud of the young lawyers who have heard the call and run for office, but as lawyers, we all have a greater duty to get involved. As Cobb County Superior Court Judge Mary Staley reminded the YLD Leadership Academy, lawyers have a higher civic responsibility than members of other professions because we are the only professionals who take an oath to support and defend the U.S. Constitution. Before the upcoming November election, we should educate ourselves about the

candidates and the issues. It is not only our obligation to go to the polls, but also to be leaders in our community, educating others on the issues and encouraging them to vote.

Quality of life in any community depends on the quality of leadership, and this is also true for the legal community. In a time when we should all be concerned about the public perception of lawyers, we need to step out into our communities as civic leaders. At the YLD Summer Meeting in New York City, Georgia Court of Appeals Judge John Ellington and former Congressman, former District Attorney, and former state Rep. Buddy Darden spoke about young lawyers getting involved in their local communities and politics. It is incumbent upon us as lawyers to provide leadership to our local communities through participation in elections, as candidates or volunteers, or lobbying our elected officials. Judge Ellington encouraged young lawyers to take advantage of the resources available to us through veteran lawyers who hold leadership positions throughout the state.

It is especially important for lawyers to get involved because, although legislation impacts the daily lives of Georgia citizens, lawyers are disproportionately affected by any and all changes in the law. Legislation not only affects our own families, it affects our livelihood and the freedoms of our clients depending on what bills are passed each session. Some of the past legislative activities of the Bar include revising the Georgia code in the areas of corporation and criminal law. More recently, the Bar has been active in changes to child support guidelines and revisions to the code in the areas of evidence and the licensing of lawyers. As lawyers, we should take the lead and be proactive to ensure the integrity of our profession.

We all have hectic schedules, but that should not stop us from going to the polls. Advance voting permits Georgians to vote early, in person, at their county registration office. Advance voting for the Georgia general election will take place Oct. 30 – Nov. 3. 🗳️

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