



# The YLD Review

THE STATE BAR OF GEORGIA | LAWYERS SERVING THE PUBLIC AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Volume 56, Issue 2 Young Lawyers Division Winter 2014

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## YLD Signature Fundraiser to Benefit the Augusta Warrior Project

by Kim Elle, Executive Director, Augusta Warrior Project



The Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia has announced that the Augusta Warrior Project (AWP) will be the recipient of proceeds from this year's YLD Signature Fundraiser event, to be held Feb. 28, 2015, at Terminal West, 887 W. Marietta St. in Atlanta.

"The mission of the AWP includes advocacy for our military veterans and connecting them to Veterans Administration-related benefits, which we have identified as one of the goals of our military support program for this year," said State Bar YLD President **Sharri Edenfield** of Statesboro, who made the announcement during a recent meeting of the Augusta Bar Association YLD. "We look forward to another successful Signature Fundraiser event to help provide AWP with the resources it needs to assist our veterans. We believe that this is a very promising project that could be replicated in other military communities across Georgia."

Edenfield added, "Another reason we selected AWP to benefit from our Signature Fundraiser is due to the organization's commitment to serving all veterans and their families, regardless of when the veteran served or if the veteran was injured. AWP has helped veterans who have served in WWII through Afghanistan. Other national charities' services are often limited to certain groups. For instance, the Wounded Warrior Project only provides services to injured Post 9/11 veterans. AWP is a local nonprofit and not a chapter of the Wounded Warrior Project, so all funds raised for AWP will stay here and benefit any veteran and his/her family who needs help."

AWP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to connect warriors with resources that improve their lives. According to its website, the AWP "has created a replicable model for the delivery of services to Warriors. In the Aiken, S.C., and Augusta, Ga., communities, this has resulted in very low veteran homelessness, success for veterans with employment, greater access to benefits and higher use of the G.I. Bill for education."

After visiting AWP's resource center on Ft. Gordon, Edenfield stated, "In addition to the quality of services offered, I was very impressed with the collaboration that goes on between AWP and other bases, like Ft. Stewart and Ft. Benning. It is exciting to think about what the YLD's support of this organization could mean in terms of expanding the reach of services

to veterans around the state, especially since Georgia has 11 military installations/enclaves and approximately 775,000 veterans." YLD members **Katie Dod**, Merbaum Law Group in Atlanta, **Quentin Marlin**, Ellis, Painter, Ratterree & Adams in Savannah, **Ed Piasta**, Law & Moran in Atlanta, and **Kristie Piasta**, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, are spearheading the YLD's efforts to encourage members from around the state to volunteer legal assistance to local veterans, especially those living near an installation/enclave.

AWP Executive Director **Kim Elle** shares Edenfield's excitement. "We were really excited to learn that the YLD of the State Bar of Georgia wanted to consider a successful nonprofit from outside the Atlanta area as its Signature Fundraiser beneficiary this year," Elle said. "It has opened up many opportunities for us to build relationships with lawyers from across the state who have reached out and want to be part of something much bigger than themselves."

Noting the national recognition that AWP has already received, Elle said the newly formed relationship with the YLD "has put us on the map in a whole different kind of way. I don't know what the end result will be, but we like to dream big. There are so many initiatives that we can take to the next level but have not been able to do so because of funding. Creating this relationship gives us the opportunity to expand the services we are able to provide to veterans as a small nonprofit."

Elle also pointed out that many veterans are in need of legal services support, and teaming with YLD members will enable AWP to put a bigger focus in that area.

"We just didn't have that resource at our fingertips before," she said. "Now we are able to reach out to so many people across the state who can provide that support." YLD



**02.28.15 @ Terminal West**



## From the President

# Succession Planning

by Sharri Edenfield

Practicing law in a small town is definitely not for everyone, but if you have practiced law in a smaller town, you know that it has its advantages. For instance, attorneys in small towns generally treat each other pretty well. It would be ridiculous to be rude to someone you will likely have cases with for the rest of your professional life. No one can hide behind a nasty email here. Another advantage of small town law practice is variety. When I practiced law in Atlanta, I did mainly personal injury work; however, practicing law in a small town required me to learn how to get someone divorced, how to draft a simple will, how to do a real estate closing, how to incorporate a small business, how to defend someone on criminal charges and how to probate an estate. Of course, I still do primarily civil litigation, but in a small town, when you're someone's lawyer for one thing, you're someone's lawyer for everything.

That's not to say I don't miss living and practicing law in Atlanta; I certainly do miss it sometimes. However, after thinking about it, what I think I really miss is not the easy access to culture and amenities, but rather I miss my co-workers and friends. Happily, my YLD involvement has allowed me to maintain and strengthen the professional relationships and friendships I made years ago as well as to develop new ones. And, I can still come to Atlanta for a show and shopping whenever I want.

Have you ever thought about practicing law in a small town? Here's some food for thought: There are six counties in Georgia that currently have no lawyers and there are 60 counties that have 10 or fewer lawyers. In the next 10 years, assuming no younger lawyers move into the 66 counties that presently have zero to 10 lawyers, and assuming that lawyers who reach the age of 65 either completely retire or cannot represent private clients (e.g. judges, district attorneys, in-house counsel, public defenders, etc.), the number of counties with no attorneys will more than double to 13 counties. Further, out of the 60 Georgia counties that presently have one to 10 active available lawyers, there will be seven counties where all of the lawyers will be at least 65 years old.

I recently attended the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism's convocation on "Aging in the Law," and learned that Georgia is about to be hit with the "grey wave" as baby boomer lawyers start to retire en masse. This makes the shortage of attorneys in rural Georgia even more important to address. To be sure, the shortage of lawyers in rural areas presents both opportunities and challenges. Older rural lawyers are often reluctant to fully retire because they feel they cannot afford retirement and/or the need for private attorneys in rural areas is so great and there are often limited numbers of (or no other) lawyers in the immediate area who can fill that gap. At the same time, young attorneys are often too timid to move to rural areas because they worry their families would be unhappy living in an area without the amenities, school systems, etc., they could enjoy in a larger city and/or they worry about their ability to make a living without a thriving law practice waiting for them.

As the first female Georgia YLD president from a rural area, I am excited about the Succession Planning Program because I think it has the potential to alleviate many of the concerns that older and younger attorneys may have with regard to a rural law practice. Based on the successful Texas model, the Succession Planning Program will link new and recent law graduates with seasoned attorneys who are working on succession plans. Older attorneys may want to hire a law clerk until graduation and if it works out, hire the clerk on in their practice, gradually shifting their clients to them. Perhaps the more seasoned attorney will want to send referral work to a recent graduate who is considering solo practice. Maybe the older attorney is looking to hire an associate to eventually take over the practice. Whatever the need, older attorneys can contact the law school career services consortium, work out a plan and dramatically expand the number of potential candidates to fill the need. The Georgia YLD will promote the program through outreach and written materials to all Bar members. It is my hope that this program will give older rural attorneys and interested younger lawyers an opportunity to find just the right fit for them, which will help soften the blow of the grey wave in rural areas while assisting younger lawyers in finding meaningful employment at the same time. YLD

# From the State Bar President

by Patrise M. Perkins-Hooker



In the Fall 2014 edition of *The YLD Review*, I introduced an exciting initiative called iCivics. The program is an outreach effort involving the State Bar and YLD members who have teamed up to reinforce Georgia middle and high school students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the United States.

As a part of the 2014-15 State Bar agenda, I urged Bar members to volunteer to assist with organizing and implementing the iCivics instruction that will be used in Georgia's schools. This program is already making a positive impact on Georgia's youth, teachers and volunteer lawyers. The YLD Law-Related Education Committee members were moved to action when I asked them to help provide classroom assistance

to high school teachers and aid them with online support materials in order to reinforce the importance of civic engagement to young people throughout Georgia.

Getting involved is exactly what is happening around the state to promote this very important interactive computer-based instruction program. The process has been amazing!

As of November 2014, more than 150 volunteer lawyers have contacted the YLD committee to offer their time as classroom resource lawyers. These school systems include: Atlanta Public Schools, Harris County Schools, Liberty County Schools, Muscogee County Schools, Savannah-Chatham County Schools and Wilkinson County Schools. We will also place volunteers in Tift County Schools in the fall of 2015.

The number of teachers trained by school districts during the summer and fall of 2014 are as follows: 22 teachers in the Atlanta Public Schools, 23 teachers received instruction in Muscogee County, one teacher from Harris County and 19 teachers in Savannah-Chatham County.

In an effort to increase teacher awareness and utilization of iCivics in their classrooms, YLD local coordinators and Program Consultant **Jane Brailsford** staffed a booth at the Conference of Social Studies Council in Athens in October to distribute information about the program. We were also able to reiterate the Bar's commitment to providing lawyers in classrooms to assist with implementing the iCivics initiative. An overwhelming 97 teachers signed up to participate in the program. Each will be paired with available volunteer attorneys to invigorate students' civic learning through interactive and engaging resources.

With more than 30 school systems throughout the state of Georgia expressing an interest in participating in the iCivics program, planning is underway to include more schools in the program for next year. The program is off to a great start, and we look forward to hearing from the volunteers about their experiences in the classroom.

If you know of any additional schools that may be interested in learning more about the program, please contact iCivics Co-Chair **Shiriki Cavitt** at shiriki8@gmail.com. We look forward to expanding the iCivics volunteer campaign throughout Georgia! Won't you join us? There is still time for you to volunteer your services. YLD



# A Word From a Lawyer-Legislator

by Sen. Charlie Bethel



I was asked to write about the impact of lawyers in the Legislature. In doing so, I suspect the editors hope that I might fan in to flame the spark in some of your hearts to explore and pursue service in the Legislature. To the extent I am successful, I hope your clients and families will forgive me for my part. I begin with the disclaimer that I rarely know with certainty if I am following the right path and hold no claim to any great skill in delineating a proper path for others.

As an attorney who is several years removed from the traditional practice of law (I work in-house at a flooring manufacturer), I am particularly sensitive to the reality of the prospect of legislative service on those who live in the world of the billable hour. The sacrifices of my co-workers and employer in support of my service is significant. I can only imagine the dynamics of trying to balance legislative service with the demands of firm life. But, before you turn the page and stop reading, please hear me out.

As members of the Bar, we are called upon to be advocates of and for the law. The adversarial nature of our system has a tendency to create a spirit of war within our profession. I offer that we are at our best when we are advocates of peace. Law is meant to allow people to live prosperously, predictably and peacefully with one another. Good law meets these aims and goes the extra step of promoting and ensuring justice for the people who are governed by the law. This is the purpose of our system of laws; and, I offer, working in the legislative process is a duty owed by our profession to the people and system.

I am not an advocate for “packing” the legislative branch with attorneys. Nevertheless, it must be noted that attorneys bring an extremely valuable skill and knowledge set to the

legislative process. Your training in reading and interpreting legal language is not shared by most citizens. Your experience in rules- and procedure-based processes creates a significantly shorter learning curve when “learning the ropes” of the legislative process. Additionally, for those who have a broad practice background, your knowledge of different issues and professions gleaned from your representation of a myriad of citizens prepares you to quickly engage and think critically on the diverse and sometimes heavy topics that make their way through the legislature.

I know you can think of countless reasons to avoid public service. I ask only this: think about how you can best be of service to the larger community (local, state or federal). Talk to your friends and family about your thoughts. Talk to your employer. If your employer’s immediate response to your willingness to serve is negative, go dust off and send out your resume—you are working somewhere where they have forgotten the true nature of our profession. Lastly, whether it involves a ballot or not, make sure some part of your life is dedicated to serving others without a profit motive. It is what you were made for. YLD

## Tips for a Young Lawyer: A Prosecutor’s Point of View

by Meg Heap, Chatham County District Attorney



I learned some of my most valuable life lessons very early in my career. As a young prosecutor, I learned that the most important part of my job is to remember why the case is being tried. The bottom line is the victim. Every case has one. As a prosecutor, you are the only voice that victim has in the criminal justice system.

There are some responsibilities that go with being the voice of the victim. Some are obvious, some aren’t.

Always display the utmost in professionalism. Whether through your dress, courtroom demeanor or ability to stay cool in the worst courtroom catastrophes, there should never be any question that you are an officer of the court. If you don’t look and act the part, the victims and witnesses will not be as responsive and your cases won’t be as strong.

Honesty is number one. Never promise something you can’t deliver and don’t lie in order to get something you need. Rather than taking the easy way out, be creative to find alternative solutions. No one case is worth your credibility. It takes years to build and only a minute to destroy.

Always remember that you are dealing with victims and witnesses at the worst moments of their lives. Many of them are reluctant, traumatized, scared and even angry. There may be underlying addiction and mental health issues as well as complicated family dynamics and dysfunctions. And to top it off, you are asking them to share some of the most painful and personal experiences they possess.

No two victims are the same. Even if the crime is the same, differences in generation, culture, education and personal life will affect the way each victim handles their experiences. You should try to take those into consideration when working with them. Always show them the utmost in respect, addressing them as Mr. or Ms., unless otherwise directed.

As a young attorney, you will be expected to manage cases that might seem unimportant. Remember that no case is too small. Treat every case the same, no matter the size. That attention to detail will help build your credibility and will not go unnoticed.

Find a mentor. In every office, there are lawyers who excel at what they do. Spend time with them. Figure out what makes them successful. While you will need to figure out what works for you, it helps to have someone who can share some helpful tips and give some direction.

All new lawyers go through the same feeling of being unprepared. Don’t go through it alone, ask for help. Experienced attorneys can point you in the right direction. Whether it is motions, plea negotiations or preparation for trial, there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

No prosecutor works in a vacuum. In my office, there is an administrative assistant, an advocate and an investigator assigned to work each case. Teamwork is key in the successful prosecution of that case. Make sure you communicate with the team members and establish a protocol.

Bottom line, treat each victim and case with the care and respect that they deserve. Follow that rule and success will follow. YLD

YLD Spring  
Meeting  
March 19-22, 2015  
Hyatt French Quarter  
New Orleans, La.

# Committee Updates

## Public Interest Internship Program

by *Kerry A. Nicholson*

On Nov. 3, the Public Interest Internship Program (PIIP) committee held a reception to honor the 2014 PIIP finalists. Top finalist, **Leyna Palmer**, spoke about her summer internship at the Georgia Poverty Law Center. PIIP Co-Chairs **Jennifer Fleeman** and **Kerry Nicholson** hosted the reception and were joined by YLD President **Sharri Edenfield**, finalist **Caitlyn Wade**, members of the State Bar of Georgia Executive Committee, members of the YLD Executive Council, PIIP committee members and members of the public interest community. <sup>YLD</sup>



(L-R) YLD President-Elect Jack Long; YLD Past President Amy Howell (2009-10); State Bar Treasurer Rita Sheffey; YLD President Sharri Edenfield, State Bar President-Elect Robert Kauffman; 2014 PIIP Finalist Caitlyn Wade; 2014 PIIP Top Finalist Leyna Palmer; PIIP Committee Co-Chair Jennifer Fleeman; YLD Secretary Nicole Leet; and PIIP Committee Co-Chair Kerry Nicholson at the reception honoring the 2014 PIIP finalists.

## Family Law

by *Annie Jordan*

The YLD Family Law Committee hosted its ninth annual Supreme Cork Silent Auction and Wine Tasting fundraiser on Oct. 16, at 5 Seasons Brewing Company Westside. The event was a great success for the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation’s (AVLF) Guardian ad Litem and Domestic Violence Programs.

Committee Co-Chairs **Jamie Perez**, Holland Roddenbery LLC, **Katie Kiihnl**, Boyd Collar Nolen & Tuggle, LLC, and **Kelly Reese**, Stern Edlin, PC, attribute the overwhelming success of this event to the service and dedication of their committee members in mobilizing the legal community in support of this cause. The event would not be possible without the contributions of the committee members and sponsors, the merchants who provided items for the silent auction, and the family law community as a whole. The committee and AVLF extend their sincere appreciation to all of this year’s sponsors:

### Platinum

Dr. Allison B. Hill  
Hawk Private Investigations  
Holland Roddenbery LLC  
Stern & Edlin Family Law, P.C.

### Gold

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Mayoue Gray Eittreim, P.C.  
Ordway Law Group, LLC  
Professional Document Services  
Thurman Holder Gibbon, LLC  
Whitney D. Mauk, PC

This is the third year AVLF has been named as the beneficiary of the Supreme Cork, with the funds raised specifically for its family law programs. AVLF’s Guardian ad Litem Program provides attorney volunteers, trained and supervised by AVLF, to serve as guardians ad litem for children from low-income households in contested custody cases. The Domestic Violence Program operates the Safe Families Office in conjunction with Partnership Against Domestic Violence, providing free legal and safety planning assistance on a walk-in basis at the Fulton County Courthouse to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. The program also trains and places volunteer attorneys to represent survivors at 12-month temporary protective order hearings. <sup>YLD</sup>

## Ethics & Professionalism

by *Jake Evans, Neal Weinrich and Ami Koldhekar Rodrigues*

Professionalism embodies the desire to hold oneself to the highest standard of integrity and respect. The YLD Ethics & Professionalism Committee seeks to further these aspirational standards by creating a collaborative environment in which young lawyers can grow in a focused and integrity-rooted manner. With this backdrop, the YLD Ethics & Professionalism Committee holds frequent meetings to plan events advancing these principles.

The committee co-hosted a lunch-and-learn with the YLD Real Estate Committee in December, featuring discussion on ethical issues in real estate transactions. The committee will also be co-hosting an event with the YLD Litigation Committee’s War Stories Lecture Series in February. Lastly, the YLD Ethics & Professionalism Committee will host its annual Ethics CLE in March. The CLE will feature a panel of distinguished speakers who will address timely topics in the area of ethics and professionalism.

In addition, the committee will be diligently working to select a deserving young lawyer who demonstrates outstanding ethics and professionalism as the recipient of the annual YLD Ethics & Professionalism Award to be presented at the Annual Meeting in June.

The YLD Ethics & Professionalism Committee encourages all those interested to attend these meeting and events. For more information please contact Co-Chairs **Ami Rodrigues** at amikoldhekar@gmail.com or **Neal Weinrich** at nweinrich@bfvlaw.com. <sup>YLD</sup>

## Intellectual Property

by *Sonia F. Lakhany*

The YLD Intellectual Property Committee hosted a Happy Hour Social at Shout on Oct. 14. The event was well attended and hosted by Committee Co-Chairs **Sonia Lakhany** and **Tiffany Logan**.

On Dec. 6, the YLD Intellectual Property committee participated in the Saturday Lawyers Program (SLP) hosted by the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation (AVLF). During the SLP, committee members interviewed potential AVLF clients to assess legal claims in areas such as landlord-tenant law disputes and debt-related issues. For more information on the committee, please contact Sonia Lakhany at slakhany@brawwlaw.com or Tiffany Logan at tlogan@parksiplaw.com. <sup>YLD</sup>



(L-R) Allen Chang, Aamir Kazi, Kevin Patrick, Couri Wolfe and Koji Noguchi at the Saturday Lawyers Program on Dec. 6, hosted by the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation.



## Minorities in the Profession

by *Morgan Clemons*

On Tuesday, Nov. 4, the Minorities in the Profession Committee held an Election Watch Party at Hudson Grille Midtown sponsored by RICOH Legal. For more information on the committee, please contact Co-Chairs **Alex Barnett** at alex.barnett@alston.com or **Morgan Clemons** at mclemons@dbf.state.ga.us. <sup>YLD</sup>



(L-R) Norman Barnett, Shalamar Parham and Ichechi Alikor at the Election Watch Party sponsored by RICOH on Nov. 4, at Hudson Grille Midtown.

## High School Mock Trial

by *Will Davis*

The High School Mock Trial (HSMT) Committee is maintaining a busy schedule as it prepares for this year's upcoming regional and district competitions in January and February of 2015. Under the leadership of HSMT Director **Michael Nixon** and Co-Chairs **Kevin Epps** and **Lee Ann Feeley**, the committee is actively seeking attorney volunteers to serve as evaluators in the upcoming competitions. Interested volunteers should contact Michael at michaeln@gabar.org or Will at will.davis@gmhc360.com if they are available to serve as evaluators over the course of the competition weekends.

On Sept. 20, the committee hosted its annual Law Academy for participating high school students at the State Bar Center in Atlanta. Students traveled from across the state to learn how to prepare for a trial including the development of opening statements, closing arguments and witness preparation. The Law Academy gives participants a glimpse at what it takes to be a practicing attorney, and many of the students made it clear that their career goal was to be a Georgia lawyer. YLD President **Sharri Edenfield** and Board of Directors member Will Davis gave a brief presentation on the history of civil law and how many landmark civil cases, such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, have impacted society throughout history. Students



visited the Supreme Court of Georgia and the Court of Appeals of Georgia and were able to meet Justice **Keith Blackwell** and Judge **Stephen Dillard**. Participants also had the opportunity to meet with Attorney General **Sam Olens**. Volunteers throughout the weekend included Kevin Epps, Lee Ann Feeley, **Jon Setzer**, **Bonnie Smith**, **Joseph Wilson**, **Mike Dunham** and Hon. **John Carbo**. <sup>YLD</sup>

## Juvenile Law

by *Mark Brooks and Joshua Lingsch*

The Juvenile Law Committee held its second annual winter gift drive for foster youth this year. More than 8,000 children are currently in Georgia's foster care system. Foster youth often spend the holidays displaced from their relatives and may not receive any presents during the holiday season. The traumatic experiences endured by abused and/or neglected children are often compounded with the uncertainty these youth face in the child welfare system. The committee hoped to restore some sense of normalcy by providing gifts to the children. The committee has partnered with the Child Protection & Advocacy Section of the Bar, Children and the Courts Committee of the Bar and the YLD Family Law Committee to bring awareness to this effort among Bar members. Once all the gifts were collected, the committee hosted a wrapping party.

If you would like to get involved with the committee or be involved with future service projects, please contact **Mark Brooks** at mark.brooks@fultoncountygga.gov or **Joshua Lingsch** at joshua.lingsch@fultoncountygga.gov. <sup>YLD</sup>

## Litigation

by *Kevin Patrick and Ryals Stone*

The Litigation Committee was honored to host its annual Clerks' Luncheon at our traditional location, Maggiano's in Buckhead on Dec. 3. The clerks of court deserve to be recognized for playing such a pivotal role in the efficient administration of justice. They are tirelessly committed to the public and profession. Most importantly, this luncheon benefitted Youth Villages. This wonderful charity assists children that face behavioral challenges, as well as their families.

Additionally, the Litigation Committee has planned a number of other exciting upcoming events for the Bar year. In keeping with the goals of involving young litigators and law students throughout our entire state, we will be taking our War Stories Lecture Series on the road for 2015 at various law schools. We will update everyone about the distinguished speakers and dates for the series in upcoming newsletters. For more information on the committee, please contact the Co-Chairs **Kevin Patrick** at kpatrick@gmlj.com or **Ryals Stone** at ryalsstone@booneandstone.com. <sup>YLD</sup>

## Wills Clinic

by *Katie Willett and Brandon Elijah*

On Aug. 9, the YLD coordinated its third First Responders Wills Clinic for the first responders of Cobb County. The YLD First Responders Wills Clinic is a pro bono service project where attorney volunteers assist first responders in the preparation and execution of basic estate planning documents. The documents offered by the Wills Clinic include a last will & testament, a financial power of attorney and an advance health care directive.

At the First Responders Wills Clinic in Cobb County, 20 volunteer attorneys and two non-attorney volunteers assisted 57 first responders and their spouses, preparing 171 estate planning documents and providing more than 110 pro bono hours. To date, the YLD First Responders Wills Clinic has prepared 354 estate planning documents for 118 first responders and their spouses in more than 332 pro bono hours.

This YLD First Responders Wills Clinic of Cobb County was sponsored by The Legal Justice Foundation of Cobb County, The Cobb County YLD, RICOH, King & Yaklin, LLP, the Merbaum Law Group, PC, and Burroughs Elijah, LLC.

Currently, the YLD Wills Clinic Committee, co-chaired by **Brandon Elijah** and **Katie Willett**, is in the process of planning future Wills Clinics throughout the state. The next Wills Clinic will take place this fall in Macon.

For more information on joining the YLD Wills Clinic Committee, please contact Katie Willett at kwillett@merbaumlaw.com or Brandon Elijah at belijah@burroughselijah.com. <sup>YLD</sup>



Attorney Tiffany Coleman (right) assists two first responders at the First Responders Wills Clinic on Aug. 9.



# Affiliate Updates

## Houston County YLD

by **Ryan English**

The Houston County YLD recently held a social outing at the home of **Jacob Poole** in Perry. In attendance were about 12 of the 20 registered members of the Houston County YLD as well as a few other local young lawyers. Future events are being planned including scholarship fundraisers to benefit the Houston County Bar Association's Annual High School Scholarship Awards and toy drives to benefit local outreach organizations. The Houston County YLD is also looking to make visits to local schools to present programs in support of Law Day 2015. For information concerning membership in the Houston County YLD, or for specifics concerning any information listed above, please contact President **Ron Daniels** at [ron@burkelaseterllc.com](mailto:ron@burkelaseterllc.com) or President-Elect **Ryan English** at [ryan@longandhall.com](mailto:ryan@longandhall.com). YLD

## Savannah YLD

by **Bryan Schivera**

The Young Lawyers Division of the Savannah Bar Association began the 2014-15 year on Sept. 18, with its Kick-Off Happy Hour at Congress Street Social Club, generously sponsored by ProLegal Copies. The Savannah YLD welcomed those lawyers new to the State Bar of Georgia, those awaiting bar exam results and those only new to Savannah. On Oct. 17, the year continued with a tour of Savannah's newest brewery, Service Brewing Company, graciously sponsored by Coastal Court Reporting. YLD members and guests enjoyed sampling various brews and learning about an exciting growth industry in Georgia.



Savannah YLD members tour Savannah's newest brewery, Service Brewing Company, on Oct. 17.

On Friday, Oct. 31, the Savannah YLD sent President **Colby Longley** and Board Member **Carson Penney** "Over the Edge" to raise money for the Boy Scouts of America Coastal Empire Council. Longley repelled off the top of the Manger Building at Johnson Square, boldly confronting a lifetime fear of heights and successfully navigating his way to safety.

November and December continued to be just as busy for Savannah young lawyers. On Thursday, Nov. 13, the YLD hosted a trolley ride and ghost tour of downtown Savannah, one of the South's most haunted cities. On Friday, Nov. 14, the Savannah Bar Association and the Savannah YLD welcomed its newest members at the annual Chatham County Swearing-In Ceremony. Chatham County Superior Court Judge **Timothy R. Walmsley** presided over the ceremony, and a reception open to the families of the new attorneys was held afterward. In December, the annual "tacky sweater" Christmas Party was held at President Colby Longley's home.

Anyone interested in joining the Savannah YLD should contact Membership Chair **Kate Lawson** at [klawson@huntermaclean.com](mailto:klawson@huntermaclean.com). YLD

# Four Dimensions of Trial

by **Titus Nichols**, Assistant District Attorney,  
Augusta Judicial Circuit

I was an English major in college, so physics was never my strong (or even medium) suit. However, I do recall discussions that scientists believe that our universe is made up of 10 dimensions. However, the four that we are most familiar with in our daily lives are length, width, depth and time. So what does this brief tutorial on quantum physics have to do with trial law? Whether you are arguing a motion for summary judgment or trying a murder, the same underlying principles of dimensions can be applied to the courtroom.

The first two dimensions of length and width can be analogized to the black and white pages of our law school books. We are trained to focus on the black letter law and the facts within the voluminous amount of cases that we are required to read for three (possibly four) years. Even during trial advocacy competitions, we are restricted to the facts within our case packets. For the most part, this basic method of training is sufficient because everything is based upon a fixed structure that does not change, until you step out into the real world and begin to practice.

In the real world, that two-dimensional dynamic does not apply because you must deal with real people and the third dimension that they represent: depth. Judges, juries and even your court reporter all possess a particular depth that makes them an important part of your case and overall presentation. Is your judge traditional and wishes for every case to be printed and shared in court, or is she more modern and merely requires a case citation so she may pull it up on her iPad and review it herself? Do you understand the jury before you? That anecdote about hunting wild hogs worked great with your rural jury, but will that same story work with a panel of city-dwellers in a more urban jurisdiction? If you are calling witnesses with unique or uncommon names, did you take the time to type up a witness list for the court reporter before the hearing? Are you torturing the court reporter by talking too fast or too low for her to record what you are saying?

The final dimension is time, the most valuable thing we possess. Shakespeare said it best when he wrote, "brevity is the soul of wit." Your judge has an ever-increasing docket to control. Juror number three has to pick up her children from daycare and your expert witness has a plane to catch in less than an hour. Can you still prove your case with six witnesses instead of eight? Can you deliver a poignant argument in five words instead of 10? The more effective advocate puts a premium on respecting the time of everyone affected by his case.

Hopefully the concept of four trial dimensions will help other lawyers refine their technique in order to get the most out of their precious time in court. YLD

# Solo-Small Firm Institute/Affiliates Conference

by **Rachel Wilson**

Are you a solo/small firm practitioner now or are you thinking about hanging out your own shingle? Are you a member of one of the YLD's 13 affiliate/local YLDs around the state? If so, be sure to register to attend the first-ever "Solo-Small Firm Institute/Affiliates Conference," in Macon, Saturday, Feb. 21, 2015. Enjoy earning CLE credit in topics like solo/small firm management, solo startup, solo/small trust accounting and compliance, and employment musts. Additionally, YLD affiliate members will have a roundtable discussion on best practices and the

yearly competition to be the State Bar YLD's Affiliate of the Year. Current and future affiliate leadership are encouraged to attend to represent the interests of your local YLD Affiliate Chapter. Meals and social/networking opportunities are included in this day-long event. Please RSVP to [marym@gabar.org](mailto:marym@gabar.org) and more information will be provided. YLD



# The Convergence of Community and Collaboration

by **LaToya S. Bell**, Assistant Public Defender, Houston Judicial Circuit

On Friday, Oct. 31, Jekyll Island welcomed a group of energetic, enthusiastic young lawyers for the YLD Fall Meeting. These young lawyers, who crowded the beautiful grounds of the Jekyll Island Club Hotel, were looking to equate leadership and networking with success. These young lawyers recognize community, collaboration and relationships make them successful. These young lawyers, who have an enthusiasm for fun, had to take care of a little business in the YLD General Session before attending the Georgia-Florida football game on Saturday.

During the YLD General Session, YLD President **Sharri Edenfield** presented two major initiatives that she would like to have installed during her tenure. The Attorney for Rural Areas Assistance Legislative Initiative is one that Edenfield discussed in detail. A native of Statesboro, she is passionate about “making sure the entire state feels connected to YLD” and that an effort is made to attract young lawyers to practice law in smaller Georgia towns. Edenfield shared that there are six counties in Georgia that have no attorneys at all, and twenty-five counties only have one to five attorneys. One way to address this concern would be to make it affordable and attractive for young lawyers to move to rural Georgia to live and work. Edenfield vowed that she would

continue work with strategic partners throughout the state and within the State Bar of Georgia to make sure this initiative is realized.

The Military Support Initiative was discussed as an effort to assist with military clinics and VA appeals. This initiative is much needed in areas with military bases and enclaves. The Signature Fundraiser will be held on Feb. 28, and will benefit the Augusta Warrior Project. **Kim Elle**, director of the Augusta Warrior Project, addressed the group and stated that this remarkable organization serves “anybody who’s ever raised their right hand and their families—wounded or not.”

The General Session was followed by three well-organized CLE seminars. YLD Past President **Damon Elmore** led a panel discussion with past YLD leaders who talked about and encouraged participants to run for office or to take active leadership roles in the YLD. The Military Legal Assistance Program conducted a CLE outlining various legal assistance volunteer efforts for military veterans. The final program was presented by Chief Justice’s Commission on Professionalism Executive Director **Avarita Hanson**, who led a CLE on “Professionally Communicating in the Digital Age.”

Many participants enjoyed dinner at the landmark diner Bennie’s Red Barn on St. Simon’s Island followed by a YLD after party at the home of legendary Georgia attorney **Bobby Lee Cook**. Several YLD members were present at the Board of Governors meeting on Saturday morning, where Sharri Edenfield delivered a well-received speech to the general body on the state of the YLD and outlined her vision for the organization. YLD



YLD leadership at the 2014 Fall Meeting. (Front row, L-R) Ryals Stone, Kevin Patrick, Katie Willett, Will Davis, Jessica Fagan, Lacey Houghton and Heather Riggs. (Back row, L-R) Katie Kiihnl, Janene Browder, Shalamar Parham, YLD President Sharri Edenfield, YLD President-Elect Jack Long, Sean Ditzel, Patrick Powell and Melissa Cruthirds.



(Top, L-R) YLD Past President Damon Elmore (2005-06), State Bar Past President Lester Tate (2011-12) and YLD Past President Josh Bell (2008-09) at the 2014 Fall Meeting.

(Bottom) A YLD pumpkin rides high atop bales of hay.



(L-R) YLD Representative André Dennis and Donna Carswell enjoy dinner at Bennie’s Red Barn on St. Simons Island at the 2014 Fall Meeting.

## Justice Jam ’14

by **Jessica Reece Fagan**



The famous Earl Smith Strand Theater in Marietta played host to the hopefuls battling it out on Sept. 25, for the coveted title of Justice Jam Band of the Year. Close to \$10,000 was raised to benefit Legal Aid of Cobb County and the Cobb Justice Foundation.

These organizations are dedicated to helping low-income residents with civil legal issues ranging from domestic violence to wills and advance directives.

Four bands (listed to the right) competed for votes, costing \$1 each, from the 200-member audience and the attention of three “celebrity” judges: Cobb Superior Court Judge **J. Stephen Schuster**, Cobb County State Court Judge **Irma Glover** and District Attorney **Vic Reynolds**.

- **Bellwether Station:** Chris Fox, David Garner, Bobby Johnson and Chris Kelly
- **Escape Vehicle:** John Dinos, Grant Duffy, Scott Lofranco, Ryan Marcus, Kevin Moore and Danny Piedrahita
- **NDA:** Gene Cosby, David W. George, Thomas M. Riddick, Stephen Steele and Markham White
- **Specific Deviations:** Jeremey Abernathy, Marc Bishop, Hannibal Heredia, Judge LaTain Kell, Steve Steele and Vic Valmus

The judges praised all the bands, but the winner was Specific Deviations fronted by Judge Kell, who filled in as lead singer in a last-minute substitution, but won the hearts—and votes—of the crowd. YLD



(L-R) YLD members Katie Kiihnl, Will Davis, Meredith Sutton, Matthew Gettinger, Jessica Fagan and Sean Ditzel attended the Justice Jam on Sept. 25.





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## Editor's Block

## He Said

by Yari D. Lawson

I was born in Eatonton, Ga. I lived in rural in Jones County. Before attending college at Morehouse in Atlanta, I had never spoken to an attorney—not at church, not even at a school career day. Even today, when I travel down Eatonton Highway to stop at my parents' home, I see very few law offices in places like Eatonton, Gray, Monticello or McIntyre. Unquestionably, these are small, rural Georgia towns that offer a far different lifestyle than Atlanta or even places like Savannah, Macon, Augusta, Columbus or Athens, the six towns in Georgia where nearly 75 percent of all Georgia lawyers are concentrated.

In six Georgia counties, there is not a single attorney. In several other counties, the only attorneys eligible to practice law are the sitting judge(s) or district attorney. Despite the lack of lawyers in these places, there is no question that families fall apart, families buy property, juveniles get into trouble, adults get into deeper trouble and forward-thinking citizens want to express desires on how to divide their estates upon their passing. This means that lawyers to draft wills, handle divorces, protect the rights of the accused or help a rural farmer through tax, contract or regulatory compliance are often further out of reach to many of these Georgia citizens than perhaps the lawyers should be.

The attractive draw of the prestigious law schools in Georgia coupled with the lure of the metropolitan Atlanta area bring many law students and consequently lawyers into Georgia who are not from Georgia, who have never lived in rural Georgia or who may otherwise express no interest in rural Georgia except that it may be a consequence of their jobs. This dynamic creates an opportunity for impassioned lawyers to locate their expertise in pockets of this great state remote from metro-Atlanta.

A lawyer born in Vidalia, Ga., graduated from the University of Georgia School of Law in 1985 and became a partner in a small firm located in rural southeast Georgia. In 1999, that lawyer, **John Ellington**, was sworn in as the 66th judge of the Court of Appeals of Georgia. About three and a half hours from Vidalia in another small Georgia town, a lawyer by the name of **Robert Benham** became the first African-American to establish a private law practice in his native Cartersville. In 1989, he became the first African-American justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia.

Both Judge Ellington and Justice Benham were young lawyers when they began their legal careers in small Georgia towns. At a time when record numbers of Georgians are entering the criminal justice system and the Georgia population outside of metro-Atlanta continues to grow, prompting increased demand for various legal services, young lawyers are ideally suited to build brands, fight for justice and help rural Georgians petition the courts. There is no denying that metro-Atlanta offers to a young lawyer many more benefits outside of the practice of law. But the state of Georgia is currently asking for all of the benefits of having so many talented and passionate young lawyers in this state. I am confident that a young lawyer considering a move to practice law in small-town Georgia may be pleasantly surprised at how well she may do for herself and her clients. <sup>YLD</sup>

## She Said

by Rizza O'Connor

If you are not attending the YLD's General Sessions, you are missing out on numerous opportunities. In this issue of *The YLD Review*, I would like to highlight two initiatives being advanced by your YLD.

First, is an initiative to encourage young lawyers to seek elected office in Georgia. You may have heard people outside of our profession complain that too many of our elected representatives are lawyers, but perhaps the problem with much of our legislation is that it is the product of non-lawyers. Lawyers bring to the legislative process a professional perspective necessary for the drafting of laws which pass constitutional muster and which lack crippling ambiguity. The YLD and the State Bar have sponsored numerous legislative enactments in recent years: the new Juvenile Code, adoption of the Federal Rules of Evidence and others. Without lawyers advocating for change both within and outside the General Assembly, these enactments would have never been pushed to law. The YLD and the State Bar at large recognize that lawyer representation is essential and are committed to promoting an increase in the number of lawyer representation at all levels of government in our state.

Second, is a proposed plan to give an incentive for lawyers to practice in underserved rural areas. At the fall General Session on Jekyll Island, YLD President **Sharri Edenfield** gave a presentation which highlighted the fact that 29 Georgia counties have fewer than five attorneys and six Georgia counties have no lawyers. This forces residents in those counties to seek counsel from attorneys who may have to travel a great distance to attend a hearing in an underserved county, thus greatly increasing the cost of legal services. At the same time, law students with a heavy loan burden may not be able to afford to open a practice in some rural areas despite the fact that many young attorneys are unemployed or underemployed. To our YLD president's credit, she is pushing for a pilot program that addresses both of these problems. Under the working proposal, which will ultimately require legislative action, the state would provide student loan forgiveness to attorneys who choose to practice in certain underserved areas and who make a commitment to keep their practice in that county for at least five years. Ideally, this will promote employment of young lawyers while also allowing them to be the Atticus Finch which several communities in our state may lack.

If you are not engaged with the YLD, you may not hear about these and other initiatives that are relevant to you and which provide you with an opportunity to give back. Consider attending the next YLD meeting so that you have a better opportunity to be on the cutting edge of the good work that your Bar is doing. <sup>YLD</sup>



## Editor's Block