

STATE BAR *of* TEXAS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

January 13, 2006

The holidays are over and everyone is back to work, which means lots of meetings. The Council of Chairs held a productive meeting at the Texas Law Center today. On Wednesday, the State Bar Executive Committee met in Dallas, which provided the opportunity to meet with several directors of the Dallas Bar Association. The input we are receiving from local bar associations is invaluable as we work to build better partnerships with local bars throughout the state. We look forward to seeing the State Bar Board of Directors in Houston next week, as it meets with a full agenda.

Emily Is Back! — We are thrilled to report that Emily Jones is back in the office and working full time. She came through all of her treatment with flying colors and will attend the Houston board meeting.

Judicial Poll — Beginning Jan. 23, the State Bar will conduct a judicial poll on selected judicial races. Online voting will be conducted from Jan. 23 to Feb. 1. Attorneys who do not vote online will be mailed a paper ballot on Feb. 8. Blast e-mails will be sent to attorneys starting Jan. 23, inviting them to vote on the State Bar website. Cast your vote at www.texasbar.com.

Lend-A-Lawyer Program — To help meet the mounting legal needs of low-income victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Texas Appleseed and the Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation announced plans to implement a Lend-A-Lawyer program to add staff to overburdened legal aid offices in Texas. Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw L.L.P. will underwrite a yearlong fellowship position in support of the Lend-A-Lawyer program. The fellow will be housed at Texas Appleseed and will design and coordinate the program.

Trial Academy Accepting Applications — Announcements went out this week to legal aid lawyers inviting them to apply for two Texas Access to Justice Commission programs this spring: (1) the Texas Trial Academy, a weeklong litigation skills training at the University of Texas School of Law taught by members of the American College of Trial Lawyers; and (2) the Motions Advocacy Academy, a two-day training at UT taught by members of the State Bar Appellate Section. The trainings are free to the legal aid attorneys accepted.

Poverty Law Section — The newly created Poverty Law Section already has 250 members. Its council will have its first meeting next week.

Texas Pattern Jury Charges — TexasBarBooks launched the new TexasBarBooks Forum web service to the public after nearly a year's work on the project with PJC Oversight Chair Dan Pozza and Vice-Chair Kent Sullivan. The Texas Pattern Jury Charges committees will use the web service to post proposed revisions for public review and comment. Anyone accessing the service can immediately post a comment directly on the website. Access to the web service is free, and the only requirement for access is to register as a user of the TexasBarCLE website. Ideally the PJC committees will be able to use the Forum as a platform for a statewide dialogue on how to make the PJs better.

Record Online CLE in December — TexasBarCLE’s Online Classroom had a record month in December — 4,699 sales of programs, up 550 from 2004. The surge in December is the result of board certified lawyers and members of the State Bar College getting their hours before the end of the calendar reporting year. TexasBarCLE also handled 1,034 customer support inquiries relating to online programming in December to make sure that those needing last-minute CLE got exactly what they needed.

Prairie Dog Lawyers — On Friday, Jan. 6, TexasBarCLE co-sponsored the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association’s annual “Prairie Dog Lawyers Advanced Criminal Law Course.” TexasBarCLE webcast the program, which was held live at Texas Tech. We are grateful to TCDLA Executive Director Joseph Martinez for his help in arranging the collaboration.

We the People — On Jan. 7, high school teams participated in the state competition of “We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution,” a program promoting civic competence and responsibility. State Bar President Eduardo Rodriguez presented trophies to the winners: Lamar Academy (first place); Calhoun High School (second place); and Elkins High School (third place). Lamar Academy will represent Texas at the We the People national finals, Apr. 28 to May 1, in Washington, D.C.

Bring Your Books to Houston — The Women and the Law Section will again coordinate a book sale at the State Bar Annual Meeting to benefit the Women’s Advocacy Project. If Board members or their spouses wish to donate books, they should bring them to Houston when they come in next week.

Disaster Response Training — Director Roland Johnson and Law Practice Management Director Gisela Bradley have been participating in a seminar this week for nearly 150 Louisiana attorneys as they try to reestablish their practices after Hurricane Katrina. Law Practice Management helped with a similar program in October.

MCLE Accredited Sponsor Status — The MCLE Department offers Accredited Sponsor status to various local bars and other CLE providers that provide high-quality CLE activities on a regular basis. Accredited Sponsors benefit by receiving presumptive approval of CLE activities and access to the MCLE online accreditation site to add course information and maintain attendance records. Contact the MCLE department at (800)204-2222, Ext. 2106 or mcle@texasbar.com for more information about benefits and responsibilities.

Texas Law Center Ceiling Update — The ceiling on 4th floor will be removed this weekend. The ceiling on 5th floor will be completed next week after the hydrostatic test of the sprinkler system. The ceiling on 3rd floor should be substantially completed during the next two weeks. This updating progresses with minimal disruption of the work day but staff agrees they are learning a lot about each other and learning to whisper information they don’t want broadcast!

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the State Bar of Texas is to support the administration of the legal system, assure all citizens equal access to justice, foster high standards of ethical conduct for lawyers, support and provide services to its members, enable its members to better serve their clients and the public, and educate the public about the rule of law.

