

## Champions of Justice Gala Benefiting Veterans Raises \$565,850

The Texas Access to Justice Commission, along with its co-sponsor, the State Bar of Texas, raised \$565,850 to help provide civil legal services to low-income Texas veterans during the Champions of



Justice Gala Benefiting Veterans April 25 at the AT&T Hotel & Conference Center in Austin. Proceeds from the gala will be distributed by the Texas Access to Justice Foundation. Supreme Court of Texas Justice Brett Busby, who serves as liaison to the TAJC, was master of ceremonies for the evening. He emphasized the importance of providing access to justice to veterans and presented the 2024 James B. Sales Boots on the Ground Award to John McDaniel Torti, the 2024 Harry M. Reasoner Justice for All Award to Elizabeth S. Pagel, the 2024 Emily C. Jones Lifetime Achievement Award to Harry M. Reasoner, and the 2024 Star of Justice Award to Sen. Judith Zaffirini. This year's "Macey and Harry Reasoner Access to Justice Lecture Series" featured retired Maj. Gen. Alfred Valenzuela. Over his 33 years in the U.S. Army, Valenzuela was highly decorated for heroism and valor. He holds the two highest peacetime awards: the Distinguished Defense and Army Service medals. For more information about the TAJC, go to [texasatj.org](http://texasatj.org).

### CHILD PROTECTION LAW SECTION PRESENTS TARA GRIGG GREEN WITH RUTLAND EXCELLENCE IN ADVOCACY AWARD

The State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section presented Tara Grigg Green with its Rutland Excellence in Advocacy Award during a luncheon at the section's sixth annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course in April in Dallas. One of the section's most prestigious awards, the Rutland Excellence in Advocacy Award honors a lawyer who demonstrates distinguished legal service in the area of child protection law. The recipient is selected from nominations made by the bar and received by the section's Awards Committee. Green, the co-founder and executive director of Foster Care Advocacy Center, has extensive experience consulting on child welfare policy issues for organizations such as Casey Family Programs, the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, the Texas Children's Commission, and the United States Children's Bureau. For more information about the section, go to [childprotectionlawtx.com](http://childprotectionlawtx.com).



The SMU Law team celebrates with the American Bar Association's 2024 National Appellate Advocacy Competition championship trophy. Front, from left: Matthew Mussalli, Johanna Pang, Jordon B.V. Smith, and coach Haleigh Jones. Back: coach Lance Caughfield. PHOTO COURTESY OF LANCE CAUGHFIELD

### SMU LAW TEAM WINS AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION'S 2024 NATIONAL APPELLATE ADVOCACY COMPETITION

The SMU Dedman School of Law team of Matthew Mussalli (3L), Jordon B.V. Smith (3L), and Johanna Pang (2L) won the American Bar Association's 2024 National Appellate Advocacy Competition on April 7 in Philadelphia. The team, coached by SMU adjunct professors Lance Caughfield and Haleigh Jones, captured the regional title out of a field of 31 teams in February in Brooklyn, New York, to advance to the championship round. SMU's second team of Bronwyn Tuff, Alan Cuff, and Rachael Briner also progressed to the final round of the regional competition. The NAAC is the largest moot court competition in the country, and over 178 teams competed in this year's event, according to an SMU press release. The competition emphasizes the development of oral advocacy skills and techniques through the experience of realistic appellate advocacy. Teams from each law school take part in a hypothetical appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court and write a mock brief as either a respondent or a petitioner before arguing their case before the mock court. Pang said both Caughfield and Jones provided daily, step-by-step support and guidance to help bring out the best in the group's performance. "When our arguments needed some fine-tuning, they would be there right alongside us, scouring the far corners of the internet."

### STATE BAR OF TEXAS LEGAL SERVICES TO THE POOR IN CIVIL MATTERS COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES ITS 2024 PRO BONO EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

The State Bar of Texas Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters Committee announced its 2024 Pro Bono Excellence Award winners. Retired Judge Lora J. Livingston, of Austin, received the Judge Merrill Hartman Pro Bono Judge Award; Nathaniel Peter Holzer, of Corpus Christi, received the Frank J. Scurlock Award; Lauren Joyner, of Edinburg, received the J. Chrys Dougherty Award; Methodist Justice Ministry, of Fort Worth, received the Pro Bono Award; Sylvia Chavez, of Plainview, received the Pro Bono Coordinator Award; Susan Davis, of Fort Worth, received the Pro Bono Support Staff Award; and Haynes and Boone, of Dallas, received the W. Frank Newton Award. **TBJ**