



Pro Bono Prom



Alex King, Nikki George, Jacqueline Wilson, Mary Escamilla, Chari Kelly, Jessica Mangrum, and Sally Pretorius having fun for a good cause at Austin's first Pro Bono Prom.

An official proclamation by Austin Mayor Lee Leffingwell declared Sept. 22 Pro Bono Prom Day. It was a gesture appreciated by the Austin Bar Association and the Austin Young Lawyers Association who, through their newly created Leadership Academy, hosted the first Pro Bono Prom benefitting Texas RioGrande Legal Aid.

What began as an optional service project for the 35 members of the inaugural Leadership Academy class turned into an event that will not soon be forgotten. Nine Austin-area lawyers, representing a variety of ages and practice areas, were selected by the class to participate as Royalty in the first Pro Bono Prom which combined philanthropy with rivalry. Each nominee had his or her own online Greater Giving fundraising page to collect donations. The Pro Bono Prom King and Queen were determined by the nominee who raised the most money. Nominees used any means necessary to garner donations — including Facebook, email, and old-fashioned in-person campaigning. Each week, a different nominee was highlighted on the Austin Young Lawyers Association event page, which helped to both increase donations and escalate the competition. As the event drew nearer, some nominees in good fun even turned to bribery — one promising, should he or she win, to wear the crown for an entire week.

Fundraising benefited Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, an organization which provides free legal services to low-income residents of Southwest and Central Texas. It is the third largest legal services provider in the nation and the largest in Texas. Because many attorneys are often limited in the amount of pro bono work they can accept, class members decided that they wanted to support an organization that dedicated itself to ensuring access to justice to low income Texans.

While the nominees raised money, the members of the Leadership Academy worked feverishly to plan the prom. Almost everything was donated — from food and drinks to photography, music, and the location, Austin City Hall, which was graciously arranged by Mayor Leffingwell. “I have never been more inspired by a group of people,” said **Sally Pretorius**, a Leadership Academy team member. She credits the diversity of the group of leaders for the success of the event, as members used a variety of personal contacts to collect sponsorships and donated items.

While Austin lawyers **Colin Newberry** and **Mindy Montford** were crowned the first Pro Bono Prom King and Queen, they were not the real winners that night. The real winners are the many Texas residents who will receive the legal services they need with the help of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, which received the \$26,500 raised through the event.



PROJECT BRAVO PAINT-A-THON

Community service is so important to the El Paso County Attorney's Office that it is included as part of the employee evaluation process. According to County Attorney **Jo Ann Bernal**, it is a tradition that began with her predecessor, State Sen. **Jose Rodriguez**, who instilled in the lawyers of the County Attorney's Office a strong public service work ethic.

For more than ten years, staff members have gathered to serve the community through the Project Bravo Paint-a-Thon. This yearly event unites volunteers from across El Paso to rejuvenate the exterior of the homes of low-income elderly and disabled residents. Funded entirely by donations, this year's event hosted 145 volunteers and repainted 13 homes. The consistency of the County Attorney's Office has not gone unnoticed. "We always love having them because they are always there, always having a good time, and always do a great job for the homeowner," said Project Bravo Executive Director Laura Ponce.

Apolonia Cedillo is one of those residents. She is 69 years old and lives in the nearly 100-year-old home where she grew up. Like many Texas residents, with increasing age and the difficult economy she has struggled to maintain the upkeep



El Paso County Attorney JoAnn Bernal and her staff repainted the home of Apolonia Cedillo for the Project Bravo Paint-a-Thon.

on her house. However, in just four short hours, 23 members of the County Attorney's Office repainted her home.

Bernal sees community events like the Paint-a-Thon as a continuation of her work as County Attorney. "A lot of the people who qualify for assistance through Project Bravo are the same clients we see in our office every day," she said. "The Project Bravo Paint-a-Thon gives us the opportunity as lawyers to get to know our clients on a human level."

TEXAS PEOPLE



Judge Maria Salas Mendoza
120th Judicial District Court
Judge, El Paso

Honored as one of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center's "Border Heroes" for her dedication to making the border a more just and humane place.



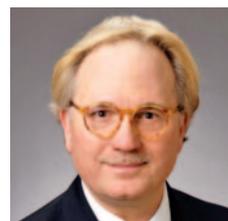
Jon Nelson
Attorney,
Fort Worth

Elected president of Fairness Fort Worth, an advocacy group for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender members of the community.



Jarvis V. Hollingsworth
Partner, Bracewell & Giuliani
LLP, Houston

Elected vice chair of the University of Houston System Board of Regents for fiscal year 2013.



Don Glendenning
Managing Partner,
Locke Lord LLP, Dallas

Named the 2012 recipient of the Hope for Humanity Award from the Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance.