



ATJ GALA RAISES FUNDS FOR VETERANS



On May 4, the Texas Access to Justice Commission hosted the Champions of Justice Gala for Veterans, which raised nearly \$270,000 for civil legal services for Texas veterans. As part of the festivities, ATJ Commission Chair **Harry M. Reasoner** (left) presented the Cy Pres Impact on Justice Award to Austin lawyer **J. Hampton Skelton**. Skelton was instrumental in designating an estimated \$4 million in residual funds from a class action settlement to support civil legal services to Texans with disabilities. The Commission presented lifetime achievement awards to retiring Texas Supreme Court Justice Harriet O'Neill and former ExxonMobil General Counsel Charles Matthews. Legendary Texas trial lawyer and World War II veteran Joe Jamail delivered the keynote address.

TEXAS HOLDS FIRST PRO SE LITIGANT FORUM

Texas judges, county clerks, attorneys, and court staff who attended the first Texas forum on self-represented litigants agree: More needs to be done to educate self-represented litigants on the legal system. Enabling pro se litigants to access forms online and giving them an idea of what to expect in court are part of the answer to helping those who represent themselves in court, but the bigger question posed at the forum was, "Why are so many people showing up to court without attorneys?" Mississippi Supreme Court Associate Justice Jess Dickinson, the forum's keynote speaker, said it is important for those who cannot afford an attorney to gain access to the courts, otherwise we risk jeopardizing equal justice for all. Those at the forum, held April 8-9 at the Belo Mansion in Dallas, also explored the possibility of starting self-help centers in Texas counties.



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A NOVEL APPROACH

The Texarkana Young Lawyers Association presented local seventh graders with a copy of James Grippando's *Leapholes*, a young adult novel published by the American Bar Association. Through an ABA grant and an innovative fundraiser, young lawyers raised \$2,700 to purchase copies of the book. The fundraiser involved local attorneys donating money to nominate fellow lawyers to play the role of the Easter Bunny at the second annual Easter Egg Hunt on the Miller County Courthouse lawn. **David Carter**, of Mercy, Carter & Tidwell in Texarkana, received the most nominations to play the Easter Bunny.



LAW DAY, YOUTUBE CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

On April 30, the State Bar recognized the winners of its Law Day editorial, photography, and poster contests. The winners of the State Bar's YouTube Video Contest also were announced. Callie Eichner, of Dallas, won the under-18 category and Eduardo Ruiz-Healy, of San Antonio, won the over-18 category. Robbie Ryan, of McKinney, took the People's Choice award and honorable mentions went to Raphael and Alexandre Chaumette, of Sugar Land, and Henry Spellings of Dallas. Entrants created 30-second videos on the importance of the legal system. To view the winning entries, go to www.texasbar.com/texansonjustice. Pictured above: 2009-2010 State Bar President **Roland Johnson** presents an award to poster contest winner Ramsey Grace Ruffeno.



TEXAS LAWYERS FOR TEXAS VETERANS

On April 12, the State Bar and the Texas Veterans Commission hosted a training session at Baylor Law School in Waco about how to appeal when a veteran's benefits are turned down. The program is part of *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans*, an initiative to develop pro bono legal clinics to help veterans throughout the state.