



Take a Lawyer to Lunch **AND SAVE A LIFE**

I AM COMMITTED TO WORKING TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF SUICIDES in our lawyer community. I am also committed to raising money for the Sheeran-Crowley Lawyer Wellness Trust. Our community is especially susceptible to stress and anxiety, depression, burnout, secondary trauma, substance use issues, cognitive impairment, and suicide.

Ninety-six percent of law students report having problems with stress as compared to medical students who reported at 70% and graduate students who reported at 43%.

In a 2015 American Bar Association study of almost 13,000 attorneys, 32% of attorneys under the age of 30 reported having a drinking problem as compared to 21% of all attorneys and 6.5% of the general U.S. population over the age of 25.

These numbers were bad before COVID-19 and what the bar is seeing is that attorney stress is at all-time levels.

In the 2020-2021 bar year, the trust saw demand like never before. The 2022-2023 budget, which was passed by the Texas Supreme Court on June 3, 2022, includes \$500,000 to replenish the trust. I am concerned that it will not be enough to help all of the lawyers who need help.

The trust provides financial assistance to lawyers, law students, and judges who are experiencing mental health or substance use challenges and find cost as a barrier to obtaining the professional treatment they need. Qualified individuals can receive up to \$3,000 for counseling and medication; up to \$4,000 for intensive outpatient treatment and medication; and up to \$10,000 for in-patient treatment.

If you are in a position to give back to our profession, you can make a tax-deductible donation to the trust by credit card or PayPal at sheerancrowley.org/donate or by mailing your check to the Sheeran-Crowley Lawyer Wellness Trust, c/o Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program, P.O. Box 12487, Austin, Texas 78711.

Whether you are able to make a donation to the trust or not, you can help the lawyers in your community by asking a fellow lawyer to lunch. Loneliness is killing us. People who have contemplated suicide have indicated that they wouldn't have if they believed that even one person cared about them.

Back in the 1950s and continuing through the late 1970s, in Houston where I practice, I have been told that lawyers showed up at the courthouse every Friday for docket call. Lawyers who practiced then have told me that it was a perfect opportunity to interact with fellow lawyers and visit with them about what was going on in their lives and their practices.

With courthouses shut down for much of the pandemic and in light of the vanishing jury trial, it is not that common to see many lawyers in the Houston courthouse on floors where civil cases are tried. We need to bridge the gap by reaching out to our lawyer friends and inviting them to lunch.

I know that I routinely have lunch with many of my law school classmates including Steve Ferrell, my mock trial partner. On the Friday before the Fourth of July holiday, he and I met for a late lunch and had a wonderful time sharing stories and talking about our families. I know that spending time with my dear friend improved my mental state and I believe that it did the same for Steve.

I bet that if we each reached out to lawyers we know and got together for lunch that it would improve our mental health. Don't wait. Call one of your lawyer friends and invite them to lunch. Tell them that you care about them and offer words of encouragement. Your simple act could save a life.

I hope that you will work with me to save a lawyer's life. Thank you for your time, attention, and most of all, your support.

LAURA GIBSON

President, 2022-2023

State Bar of Texas