

LAW MATTERS

April 2024

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2024 LAW Annual Awards Recipients



Martha Craig Daughtrey Award
Judge Robin Kimbrough Hayes



Rising Star Award
Rachel H. Berg

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2024 Martha Craig Daughtrey Award Recipient

Judge Robin Kimbrough Hayes



Judge Robin Kimbrough Hayes was elected to the bench in 2022 as Judge for Division V, General Sessions Court in Metro Nashville & Davidson County. During her time, she has implemented the Courtroom Buddy Program, staffed by volunteers, who provide court date reminders which has increased court attendance, and Court Officer of the Day to invite elementary and high school students to observe court proceedings. She has also launched the first Convenience Court Virtual Traffic Court which allows people to attend court without risking their jobs, incurring costs to attend court, and creating access for those with physical challenges.

Before becoming a judge, Judge Hayes served in the Tennessee Attorney General's Office as an Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Justice Division and was later appointed to the position of Associate General Counsel for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. After practicing with the Department of Children's Services, Judge Hayes stayed at home with her two children for a few years. She returned to the practice of law as Legal Counsel for the Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence. As Legal Counsel, Judge Hayes influenced, wrote, and trained on legislation having an impact on Tennessee's domestic and sexual violence laws. She is a past committee co-chair for LAW's Litigation and Legislation Committee and encouraged the DEI Committee to reinstate LAW's Diversity Essay Scholarship Contest in 2022-2023.

2024 Rising Star Award Recipient

Rachel H. Berg



Rachel Berg is a Staff Attorney at the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) working on impact litigation nationwide related to LGBTQ rights. She represents transgender youth and their families challenging state laws across the country that ban them from obtaining accurate identity documents, playing school sports, and receiving access to healthcare. Before joining NCLR, Rachel spent most of her career in private practice at large law firms in New York and Nashville, where she focused on class action litigation. While there, she also developed a substantial pro bono practice related to various social justice issues. Rachel clerked for the Honorable Eli J. Richardson of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee and the Honorable Alan C. Kay of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii. Rachel has served on the LAW board as a co-chair of the Mentoring/Member Development Committee and currently serves as Treasurer.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Emily Warth



It's hard to believe that I am already writing my last message as president of LAW. I went on a walk with my husband recently, and he asked me if I was glad I had served as president. With little hesitation, I said yes. I'll admit that at times it's been hard to juggle being the president of an organization, while working full time in a fairly demanding job, parenting two middle schoolers, and maintaining my relationships, along with my sanity. But it has stretched me in great ways. It's taught me new leadership skills and helped me build new and stronger relationships with the many incredible lawyers in this organization.

I've also been inducted into the sisterhood of LAW presidents, which is a very powerful thing. So many times this year, I've been able to pick up the phone or send an email to a former LAW president asking for help and advice, and been overwhelmed by the willingness of these many extraordinary women to help and provide guidance, even when I didn't know them personally. There's something so special about this particular group. They care so deeply about this organization and the group of women (and men) who keep it going strong, and they will do just about anything to help a fellow member. I plan to pay that forward and encourage anyone reading this who has considered getting more involved to do it! It will pay you back tenfold.

I also have been so very grateful to work closely with Melanie Grand in her last year as Executive Director. Additional better-written tributes to Melanie are included in this newsletter, but I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity in my final President's Message to sing Melanie's praises. Melanie has served as Executive Director of LAW since 2000. In that time, she has shepherded the organization's growth and development, and, frankly, shepherded many an LAW president, myself very much included, toward making the right decisions for the organization. Melanie has been the life blood of LAW and cares about it deeply. I am thrilled for her to go off on some amazing adventures in her retirement, but also thrilled that she will continue to serve the LAW Foundation and hopefully make an appearance or two at our events down the line. Melanie, thank you so much for your leadership, friendship and guidance. You made this an incredible year for me and this organization!

Finally, I want to welcome Janna Eaton Smith as our new Executive Director of LAW! While Melanie has left big shoes to fill, Janna is absolutely up to the task. When we interviewed Janna, we all knew she was the right fit. Janna understands intimately the obstacles that still stand in the way of women attorneys in Nashville, and is passionate about LAW's mission. She also is incredibly smart, driven, and creative, and ready to help our organization continue to thrive. We are in wonderful hands, and I can't wait to see what LAW does next. As a member of that aforementioned sisterhood of former LAW presidents, I stand ready to help when I'm needed.

Proposed Revisions to LAW Bylaws

Below is a link to copy of the proposed revisions to LAW bylaws for your review.

The bylaws will be voted on at the Annual Banquet and Awards Banquet.

Please direct comments to Emily Warth at emily.warth@asurion.com.

[Proposed Revisions](#)

Introducing LAW's Slate of Officers for 2024-2025

Pursuant to the LAW Bylaws, notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the membership for the election of board of directors and officers for 2024-2025 will be held on April 11, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at Music City Center, 201 Rep. John Lewis Way S., Nashville, Tennessee. Nominees for the officers and directors are introduced below. Other nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting.



President—Courtney Orr. Courtney is a Deputy Attorney General in the Criminal Appeals Division. She manages attorneys and staff in the Criminal Appeals Division, represents the State of TN in appellate litigation, advises other Attorneys General, argues cases before the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Tennessee Supreme Court, and much more. She received her law degree from the University of Tennessee College of Law in 2014 and holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Furman University. Courtney is an accomplished harpist and is a loving cat mom to Sonia (after Justice Sotomayor).



President-Elect—Leighann Ness. Leighann is Operations Counsel—Physician Services Group, HCA Healthcare. She received her law degree from The University of Memphis—Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law in 2012 and a BA from San Diego State University. Before attending law school, she managed collection litigation for Community Health Systems for many years. Leighann is a single mother. Her son is completing the 4th grade, and her daughter is finishing her first year at TN Tech. The family enjoys water and snow skiing, as well as traveling. Leighann also holds a RYT 200 yoga certification.



Secretary—Jessica Lim. Jessica works in Nashville for Lavin Rindner Duffield LLC. Prior to working with LRD, she worked in Nashville for Roberts Tate and was an Elections Attorney with the Tennessee Secretary of State. Before moving to Nashville in 2018, Jessica was in private practice in the Washington, DC area. She graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law in 2014 and holds a BA in Political Science from Samford University. Jessica and her husband, Jae, have three young children, which keeps them busy.



Treasurer—Rachel Berg. Rachel is a Staff Attorney for the National Center for Lesbian Rights. She works on NCLR's nationwide impact litigation and litigates the full range of NCLR's civil practices, including transgender rights, education, sports, youth, and discrimination. Rachel graduated from Fordham University School of Law in 2015. She holds an MSc from the London School of Economics and a BA from Vassar College. Rachel is LAW's 2024 Rising Star Award recipient. She and her husband, Benjamin, are parents to their two-year-old daughter.



Archivist—Kaley Bell. Kaley Senior is Corporate Counsel at Consilio LLC. She graduated from Belmont University College of Law in 2014, where she also earned a certificate in Entertainment Law. She holds a BS in English Literature (British and Commonwealth). Kaley also worked as an Associate at Leitner, Williams, Dooley & Napolitan and has other in-house counsel experience. She enjoys volunteering for organizations that work with children, families, and the arts and is a busy first-time mom.



Archivist—Shundra Crumpton Manning. Shundra is an Associate in Polsinelli’s Nashville office focuses on representing businesses and organizations in commercial litigation matters and disputes. She is a “Double Dore” as she received her law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School in 2018. Shundra was named in the 2023 list of “Ones to Watch” by Best Lawyers for Commercial Litigation and was LAW’s 2023 Rising Star Award Recipient.



Newsletter Editor—Morgan Bernard. Morgan is a Staff Attorney for the Davidson County Chancery Court, Part II. Morgan started her legal career as a Law Clerk to the Honorable Frank G. Clement, Jr. She was an Associate at Miller, Scamardi & Carrabba P.C. in Houston before returning to Nashville to work in-house at HCA. Morgan received her law degree from The University of Memphis—Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law in 2013.



Newsletter Editor—Brooke Coplon. Brooke is Director, Senior Corporate Counsel Director, Senior Corporate Counsel at DaVita Kidney Care. Before joining Davita, Brooke worked in private practice in healthcare, medical malpractice, nursing home liability and conservatorships, civil litigation, and insurance defense. Brooke received her law degree from Vanderbilt University School of Law, a B.S. in Economics, and an M.A. in Applied Economics from the University of Alabama. She and her husband, Jonathan, have a very busy three-year-old son.



Newsletter Editor—Tabitha Robinson. Tabitha has worked at Nashville Electric Service since 2017 as a law clerk, staff attorney, and now attorney. She received her law degree from The University of Tennessee College of Law in 2017 and holds a BA, Summa Cum Laude in Political Science from Clemson. There is no end to Tabitha’s energy as a community volunteer. Her volunteerism has garnered her notice from the community as she is a recipient of the NBJ’s 30 Under 30, 40 Under 40, and Athen’s 2021 YP Award recipient. Tabitha is a self-proclaimed foodie, visiting new restaurants in the area and whipping up delightful dishes in her kitchen.



Second Year Director—Alaina Beach. Alaina is Director & Legal Counsel at UBS. Before joining UBS, she served as Special Counsel in the Nashville office of Lewis Thomason’s Nashville office. She practiced in the areas of medical malpractice, employment, workers’ compensation, and general insurance defense in Greenville, SC, before moving to Nashville in 2018. Alaina graduated from Davidson College and received her law degree from The University of South Carolina School of Law in 2010. She writes, performs, and records music in her spare time and is a mom to two small children.



Second Year Director—Jorie Zajicek. Jorie graduated from UTK, where she received her BS degree in nursing. She moved to Nashville and worked as an RN at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. While working as a nurse, she attended law school at Belmont and received her JD in 2021. Jorie practices Criminal Defense, Family Law, and Administrative Law in front of various professional boards, including the Board of Nursing. When she is not practicing law or nursing, Jorie enjoys spending time with friends, family, and her golden retriever, Sunshine.



First Year Director—Ellen Bowden McIntyre. Ellen is Deputy Civil Chief, Affirmative Civil Enforcement for the US Attorney’s Office. Spending her legal career in the government sector, she has decades of investigative, litigation, and negotiation experience in major plaintiff suits brought under the False Claims Act, the Controlled Substances Act, the FTC Act, the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act, and civil rights laws. Ellen received the DOJ’s Director’s and HHS’ Inspector General awards in 2021 for outstanding work and monumental recoveries. She received her law degree from Columbia Law School in 1994.



First Year Director—Princess Rogers. Princess is an Assistant District Attorney General in the Nashville District Attorney’s Office for the 20th Judicial District. Before joining the DA’s office, she spent over six years as a litigation attorney for the State of Tennessee. Princess received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Tennessee and her law degree in 2013 from the Thomas M. Cooley School of Law. She is the immediate past president of the Napier-Looby Bar Association.



Immediate Past President—Emily Warth. Emily is an Assistant General Counsel with the Lead Global Ethics and Compliance Team at Asurion. She oversees litigation matters and advises on other risk-related issues. Emily was in private practice for over eight years before joining Asurion in 2015. She graduated from Vanderbilt University School of Law in 2006 with a BA in Political Science and Music from Southern Methodist University. She and her husband, Drew, enjoy traveling in the US and internationally with their twelve-year-old twins.



A Tribute to Melanie Gober Grand: Executive Director for LAW from 2000 – 2024

by Morgan Bernard, Newsletter Editor, Staff Attorney for Chancellor Anne Martin

For almost a quarter of a century, Melanie Gober Grand has been LAW's Executive Director. Her longest relationship with an organization, she credits LAW as an exceptional one that has stayed true to its purpose of supporting women and addressing issues of concern with women in the legal profession. With her strong administrative skills and love of people, she felt well-suited to provide care and lend support to the professionals that she worked with during her career, and she is grateful for the relationships she has made throughout the years.

Born in Nashville at Vanderbilt Hospital and the oldest of three, her father was a Methodist minister. This caused her family to move quite frequently throughout middle Tennessee and forced her to make friends in new places. She always felt it was easy to connect with people and that, as the oldest, she needed to pave the way for her younger siblings. In LAW, she has played the role of big sister to many of LAW's presidents and members by providing advice and support, both personal and professional.

She attended Tennessee Tech and majored in music because she had taken piano and organ lessons since the first grade. Originally, her plan was to become a piano teacher and work from home after she got married. Fortunately for LAW, she ended up hating it. She decided to get into banking, and later, the legal field. Specifically, in 1978, a family friend who was also an attorney suggested that she apply as a legal secretary for Howell & Fisher and handle the firm's bookkeeping. Then, in 1982, she became the first full-time employee at Shipley & Behm, now historically known as Nashville's first all-female law firm. It was during that time she was introduced to new organizations created for women lawyers, including LAW and TLAW. As Nashville law firms began to hire more women lawyers, these organizations became a necessity for women in the legal field, as Melanie saw firsthand the struggles women lawyers faced working in a male-dominated career.

After encouragement from Margaret Behm and Marietta Shipley, she eventually went to paralegal school, graduating in 1987. In 1988, she began working as a bankruptcy paralegal at the law firm formerly called Manier, Herod, Hollabaugh & Smith. During this time, she was active in the Middle Tennessee Paralegal Association, serving in several board positions, as well as president, further improving her organizational and administrative skills.

In the meantime, she met her husband, Paul, at the Gold Rush while he was bartending. They had their first date in 1979 and got married in 1983. Five years after they married, Melanie made the decision to convert to Paul's religion, Judaism. On the day of her conversion, she found out she was pregnant with her first child, Stephen. Growing up, she had many Jewish friends. She stated the United Methodist Church had always opened its doors to the Jewish community in areas across the country without a house of worship, especially on the high holy days.

When Stephen entered kindergarten in the early '90s, she decided to quit her job and take control of her hours due to the growing "fad" of computers and the internet. Working for clients from home, she could be involved as PTA president during the school day and control her schedule, which allowed her more time with her family. She recalls working from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m., getting her boys up for breakfast and getting them on the bus, then be at the school by 9:00 a.m. In the early days her clients were primarily small businesses who needed a bookkeeper, and she remembers having a laundry operator client who would sometimes pay her in quarters!

During that time, an attorney friend, who was a member of MAT, the Mediators Association of Tennessee (now the Tennessee Association for Professional Mediators or TAPM) informed her that MAT needed an administrator to help with the daily duties of running the association, including organizing their meetings and training sessions. After working with MAT, Melanie found her calling—she really enjoyed organizational work and lending support to professionals. As a result, in May of 2000, that same attorney friend advised her that LAW needed an administrator, and she immediately applied. The rest is history.

During her tenure with LAW, she has helped to increase membership, obtain sponsors, organize CLEs, publish the newsletter, plan and organize the annual breakfast, the symposium and annual banquet, and has done so with her natural finesse and grace. Not only has she helped this organization thrive, but she has helped countless lawyers by providing advice and lending support, acting as a "FUNT" (fun aunt) to many of the organization's younger members. She is grateful for her time with LAW, commenting that the legal field has come a long way from how it used to be. While she has managed many groups, LAW has been her longest-lasting relationship. She believes that LAW has continued to succeed due to its strong board leadership, being good stewards of the organization's money, and lack of any hidden agendas.

One of the biggest challenges LAW faced was COVID—she remembers several meetings with then-president Sara Ann Quinn about keeping members engaged during the pandemic. That's when LAW started the morning CLE programs and offering more opportunities for people to be together online. Melanie had to learn how to run a Zoom meeting and figure out running the symposium virtually. Ultimately, LAW made it through with flying colors and learned that its members enjoy having online CLE opportunities. While LAW membership ebbs and flows, the organization continues to maintain around 400 members, but Melanie believes every female attorney in Nashville should join because it is an inclusive group where women can readily find mentorship. Specifically, she recalls Justice Clark attending all of LAW's meetings down on Second Ave., as well as several founding members including Judge Daughtrey and Judge Trauger, demonstrating the investment these women have made to this organization and their continued belief in its purpose decades later.

Of all LAW's accomplishments, she is especially proud of establishing the LAW Foundation to further promote and foster charitable programs and services that advocate for the inclusion of women in the legal profession. She also appreciates that LAW continues to keep members engaged, especially those who have left to care for their family and small children, and then return to LAW after their children have grown to help mentor the younger women.

Fast forward to November 2021, when her mother was in rehab after a fall, and they had a conversation that planted the seed of retirement in her mind. Her mother expressed her wish for Melanie to retire soon because she had done so much for many people. While she had not thought much about retirement at that time, with her mother's words in the back of her mind, she decided to create an exit

strategy from LAW. Her deep roots with LAW date back to '81 and '82, when she began many friendships with founders and other attorneys heavily involved in LAW.

In her retirement, she plans on traveling with her husband and spending time with her great-nieces and great-nephews, as her sister has nine grandchildren ranging from the ages of 17 to 1. For her first trip, she is headed to Portugal for a few weeks and then wants to travel state-side to see her relatives living on the east and west coasts. She also loves to cook and plans on restarting her vegetable garden. She currently has two sons who both live in Nashville, Stephen and Philip. Also, during retirement, Melanie plans to pursue various volunteer opportunities and continue to serve the Nashville community. On April 1, 2024, she began the first of her volunteer endeavors by joining the LAW Foundation board.

While her time with LAW comes to a close, this organization will not forget the hard work and support Melanie has provided over the years. LAW thanks you and wishes you well as you enter this next chapter of your life!

Melanie and LAW Throughout the Years



**Thirty & Thriving:
LAW's 30th Anniversary Celebration**

President Donna Roberts and Melanie.

2011



**Tennessee Economic Council on Women Event
Honoring Judge Daughtrey**

2009

(From L) Melanie Gober Grand, Candice Reed, Judge Daughtrey, Jane Harrison, Bernadette Welch, Jan Bossing, Martha Boyd, Pat Moskal, Jane Stranch and Patty Stranch.



New Admittees Breakfast

Melanie with Chancellor Pat Moskal and President-Elect Donna Roberts.

2009

New Admittees Breakfast

From left, Co-chairs Chancellor Anne Martin, Bernadette Welch and Melanie.

2010



New Admittees Breakfast

Melanie with Co-chairs Bernadette Welch, and Chancellor Anne Martin

2011





New Admittees' Breakfast

Melanie with Co-chairs Chancellor Anne Martin, Bernadette Welch and Rachel Levinson Graeber.

2012



Judge Linda Jones and LAW Executive Director Melanie Gober Grand



Breakfast Co-Chairs Sara Anne Quinn and Erin Palmer Polly with LAW Executive Director Melanie Gober Grand

New Admittees' Breakfast 2016



Unveiling of the Suffragist Monument at Centennial Park with Becky Nunley McClellan (Candice's mom), Candice Reed, the late Keltie Peay and little SRK.

August 26, 2016



May 2016—LAW's first Meet the Board Happy Hour, with Martha Trammell and Abby Sparks.



September 2017—Membership Meeting, with Christen Blackburn and Liz Sitgreaves.

Inaugural Marion Griffin Women's Symposium 2017



(From Left) Meera Ballal, Candi Henry, Laura Smith, Laura Baker, Liz Sitgreaves, Melanie Gober Grand, Andrea Perry, Nikki Smith-Bartley, Terri Costonis (not pictured Carrie Daughtrey, Kay Caudle and Ashonti Davis)



August 2021—101 Years of Women's Suffrage at the Hermitage Hotel, with Laura Baker, Margaret Behm and Christen Blackburn.



May 2022 Membership Meeting at the Downtown Public Library (From L) Abby Sparks, Liz Sitgreaves, Melanie and Paul Grand, Amanda Bradley, Courtney Orr and Judge Lynda Jones.

Thoughts and Well Wishes

Now that you are retiring, we will have to get our could-be-twin dogs, Lucky and Rose, together for a puppy play date! You have seen this organization change and grow over the years during your capable and steady leadership. Always classy, always lovely, and always prepared, you will definitely be missed in LAW. Congrats on a well-deserved retirement!

-Amanda Bradley, Archivist

Melanie has been such a huge part of LAW's success from the very beginning of LAW. I wish her a very happy retirement but will miss her a lot!!

-Former LAW President Brenda M. Dowdle

Melanie has been a trusted resource for all things LAW. I love that she has been reliable, thoughtful, and motivated to advance the missions of our organization throughout her tenure. Additionally, Melanie has always been a trusted friend! She has been a listening ear and provided no-nonsense advice as I have navigated life over the past 12 years!

-Leighann Ness, Newsletter Editor

During the year I served as President of LAW, we had in place all of the preparations for the LAW New Admittees' Breakfast in November, LAW's signature annual event. I was so excited to host the Breakfast as President, and we were especially delighted to welcome Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Connie Clark as our keynote speaker. The week before the Breakfast, I developed a kidney stone, which unfortunately landed me in the hospital the weekend before the Breakfast with a dangerous infection. I was heartbroken when my health care provider told me I was not going anywhere and would remain in the hospital through at least Tuesday, the day of the Breakfast. I frantically called Melanie and we had a telephone conference call with LAW's leadership from my hospital room to come up with "Plan B" for the Breakfast.

Without missing a beat, Melanie quickly and smoothly shifted gears, pulled our Plan B together, confirmed our President-elect to host the Breakfast in my stead, and picked up and delivered my Breakfast program notes and LAW's thank you gift to be presented to Justice Clark. And, of course, the Breakfast was a huge success, just as it is every year. The Unflappable Melanie Gober Grand!

I am so very grateful for Melanie's unending dedication and love given to LAW. She has calmly kept LAW running smoothly over many years, through many Presidents, and over many bumps in the road. We will miss you.

Congratulations and warm best wishes on your retirement.

-Former LAW President Pat Moskal

Melanie Gober Grand's leadership of LAW was phenomenal and instrumental to the ongoing success of LAW. LAW would not be the well-respected organization it is today without Melanie! While Melanie has provided unparalleled service to our members and the greater legal community, she has also been a confidant, friend, and mentor to many of us. Whether the need was for parenting advice, home renovation suggestions, or just a friendly, listening ear, Melanie has been there. I wish her all the good things in this well-deserved retirement.

-Former LAW President Jacqueline B. Dixon

Melanie has helped create the LAW “family.” For years, she welcomed and assisted all of us in supporting each other. Thank you, Melanie!

-Founder Marnie Huff

I will always be thankful for everything Melanie did for me the year before and during my Presidency. Not only was she helpful and informative, but she was encouraging and boosted my confidence. She was there for me professionally and personally, just as she has been to many, many others in LAW over her tenure.

-Former LAW President Kimberly Faye



Melanie embodies the meaning of the quote “Behind every great woman ... is another great woman.” For 24 years, she has worked behind the scenes to support, encourage, promote, and champion women lawyers in Nashville. She has been a driving force in identifying and cultivating leaders in LAW. But Melanie’s dedication to women lawyers goes beyond the confines of LAW. Her support of women lawyers is all encompassing. She deeply cares about our hopes, our dreams, our successes, and our struggles. She knows us and she knows our stories. I will be forever grateful to Melanie for her professional support, but more importantly for her friendship. She was there when my Dad died. She was there when I had my children (see Exhibit A, photograph with Claire Baker). And she’s been there for all the milestones in between and beyond.

Melanie, thank you for your tireless efforts for LAW and women lawyers. You have made a lasting mark on all of us. We will truly feel your loss, but I am wishing you a retirement filled with relaxation, joy, family, and friends.

-Former LAW President Laura Baker

When I joined LAW right out of law school, Melanie was always the first person to welcome me and make me feel like I was always part of LAW. Since then, she's become one of my closest friends and mentors. She's welcomed me into her family, invites me over for the High Holidays, and has become part of my Nashville family. During my year as President, we became even closer and she continues to be one of my biggest cheerleaders today. I'm forever grateful for her support, encouragement, and guidance over the years. LAW would not be the same organization it is without you, Mel! Enjoy your well-deserved retirement!

-Former LAW President Shellie Handelsman

Under Melanie’s steadfast leadership, LAW has significantly progressed over the years, becoming more sophisticated and advanced, which has allowed LAW to expand its reach within the legal community. Melanie’s hard work and dedication has propelled LAW’s growth, leaving an indelible mark on this organization. Serving as Melanie’s inaugural president was an honor, and I extend my heartfelt wishes for her retirement journey ahead.

-Former LAW President Chancellor Anne Martin



Retirement Reception March 26, 2024

Past Presidents From Left, Mary Dohner Smith, Chancellor Anne Martin, Judge Marietta Shipley, Brenda Dowdle, Kathryn Barnett, Christen Blackburn, Jackie Dixon, Sara Anne Quinn, Chancellor Pat Moskal, Dot Dobbins, Laura Baker, Emily Warth, Shellie Handelsman, Ashonti Davis, Liz Sitgreaves, Chancellor Claudia Bonnyman, Kimberly Faye and Mary Walker. Seated, Melanie and Judge Cissy Daughtrey.



Thank you for allowing me to serve this extraordinary organization for the past 24 years!

With much love, Melanie

Spotlight on LAW's Executive Director

Janna Eaton Smith



What brought you to Nashville? Tell us about your career path before becoming LAW's Executive Director. I started my legal career in Atlanta in 1997 after graduating from the University of Tennessee College of Law and worked as a litigator specializing in antitrust law, commercial litigation and white collar criminal defense. After a couple of years practicing law in Atlanta, my husband and I decided to move to Nashville where both of our extended families lived. I clerked for Judge Barbara Haynes, who first introduced me to LAW. Following my clerkship and admittance to the Tennessee Bar in 2000, I worked as a litigator over the course of the next thirteen years specializing primarily in commercial litigation, but also representing plaintiffs in Title VII litigation. After I retired from practicing law, I focused primarily on volunteer work for several organizations and served on the board of a Nashville charter school.

Tell us about your family. I am married to Brooks Smith, a lawyer at Bradley, and we have two children, Adeline "Addie", who is a senior at the University of the South at Sewanee, and a son, Brooks Jr., who is a freshman at the University of Tennessee. My mother and three siblings all live in the Nashville area.

What are your hobbies? I love to exercise at the gym and I occasionally play pickleball. I have a group of friends who play Mahjong weekly and I have started painting and doing daily crossword puzzles.

What book is on your bedside table? [Tiny Beautiful Things](#) by Cheryl Strayed.

What woman inspires you and why? Judge Barbara Haynes was always an inspiration to me. She was one of the smartest people I had ever met and was respected by everyone in the Nashville legal community and beyond. Despite her position and demanding job, her family always came first in her life. She cherished her husband, children and grandchildren and she devoted so much of her time and attention to their care. She also had a large network of friends and loved to have fun. She cherished the times she could fish, cook and entertain her family and friends. Judge Haynes was able to balance work, family life and community service to perfection.

What is your favorite quote, piece of advice, or a motto you try to live by? "Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." Maya Angelou. This quote always reminds me to live in the moment

Phone call or text? Text (but I will pick up the phone if you call me).

Netflix or Hulu? It depends on the day (and the show).

Facebook or Instagram? Instagram (although I am also on FB)

It's a Saturday night in Nashville- what are you up to? On most Saturday nights, I try to have dinner with friends or I may be spending the weekend at my home in Sewanee.

Recap of March

The Claims, Lawyers, and Legal Issues behind “The Kids of Rutherford County”

by Leighann Ness, Newsletter Editor, Senior Operations Counsel, HCA Healthcare



On March 19, 2024, LAW held the March Membership Meeting and CLE at the Asurion Corporate Headquarters, which is a lovely place. The program was a presentation by Kyle Mothershead and Wesley Clark who were the lawyers who worked to remedy a decade-plus problem in Rutherford County where children were being arrested and detained for offenses that did not qualify for such under Tennessee law. The situation was the subject of a ProPublica article and a podcast that gained national attention, which helped bring the practices to an end and provide a remedy to some of the children impacted.

When Wesley Clark began taking appointments to represent juveniles in Rutherford County, he almost immediately noticed that children were being arrested and detained for offenses that under Tennessee law, did not qualify for arrest and detention. But Wesley was faced with a juvenile court judge and prosecutors who were not phased when Clark pushed back on his clients' behalf. He says, they “routinely ignored” statutory prerequisites for arrest and detention. With government immunities protecting the judge and law enforcement officers, and fear of retaliation toward himself or his young clients if he filed a bar complaint, Clark faced an uphill battle. He eventually united forces with Kyle Mothershead to file a class action lawsuit, *Geertz v. Rutherford County*.

The event that provided a path around the governmental immunity roadblocks was the arrest of 5 children ages 8 to 13 at Hobgood Elementary in April 2016. Investigating this incident brought to the lawyers' attention that there was an always arrest policy in Rutherford County such that any juvenile charged with anything at all should be arrested. Further, the lawyers learned that the County had a written policy outlining a “filter system” that listed certain offenses for which a juvenile should always be detained (even though Tennessee law said the opposite) and for everything else the policy was essentially, when in doubt, detain. The claims in the class action were procedural and substantive due process violations for illegal pretrial incarceration under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and false arrest in violation of Tennessee State Law. They finally got a preliminary injunction preventing Rutherford County from using the “filter system” in May 2017 and the lawyers got to go train Rutherford County officials regarding what circumstances juveniles could or could not be arrested and detained. Detention rates dropped by 90% as a result.

While the injunction was great for reducing future harm, Mothershead and Clark pressed forward with the case to get a remedy for the children who had been harmed in the decades' long practice. They explained that a lot of these children affected were 8, 9, and 10 years old. Many of them did not do anything wrong at all and most, at worst, had minor offenses like shoplifting or jaywalking. They were handcuffed, taken to jail, strip searched, and subjected to all kinds of questions about their sexual history and the like during intake processing. After years of proceedings and investigation, *Geertz* settled in 2021. The factors influencing the lawyers' decision to settle were that the preliminary injunction had a major impact on resolving the overarching problem, the risks of going to trial, the limitations on potential recovery, and comparison to other cases. They had a short window to get affected individuals to file claims for recovery. The release of the podcast helped reach some, but out of a 1,200-member class, about 280 filed claims.

When asked if the lawyers would do it all over again, they said, yes! They sacrificed enormous amounts of time during which they could have taken more financially lucrative work, but they were at a point in their lives when they were living pretty lean anyway, so, the lack of income was not as burdensome as it might be if they were having to do all the work now. The work and the outcome obviously provided much benefit to the youth in Rutherford County. Many thanks to Brooke Coplon who arranged and participated in this program as she was another attorney who worked on related litigation.



Career Evolution Insights: Private Practice to Regions Bank Trust Advisor with Alex Scarbrough Fisher

by Morgan Bernard, Newsletter Editor, Staff Attorney for Chancellor Anne Martin

Over coffee at Humphreys Street downtown, I chatted with Alex Scarbrough Fisher about her recent transition from private practice to her current role as Vice President and Trust Advisor for Regions Bank Private Wealth Management.

Around this time last year, Alex moved from Morgan & Morgan where she handled personal injury matters and first party insurance claims to becoming a Trust Advisor with Regions Private Wealth Management where she provides legacy and financial planning to private wealth clients and serves as the fiduciary for assets held in IRAs, IMAs (“investment management accounts”), and trusts. Part of her role includes preparing for and conducting client meetings to discuss and provide guidance on their wealth management and working with centers of influence to meet their needs. Currently, she is working on obtaining her financial planning certification (“CFP”) and after a CFP, is contemplating tackling an LLM in taxation to better serve clients.

A Memphis native who attended Union University in Jackson and Vanderbilt Law School, Alex became interested in trusts upon taking an estates class in law school. From there, she asked her professor for any career opportunities associated with that area of the law and ended up interning at a local firm where she researched the generation-skipping transfer tax—which arguably is one of the duller topics in that area (and don’t forget the Rule Against Perpetuities...). As a result, Alex wasn’t sure she wanted to pursue that legal area, and, after graduating, she went on to work for Thompson Burton where she handled the firm’s administrative law practice and represented healthcare professionals against regulatory boards. After a few years, she then went to work for Frost Brown Todd practicing healthcare regulatory and administrative law.

In 2019, she was asked to join Morgan & Morgan and develop the firm’s first party insurance claims for the state, where she handled complex federal plaintiff’s litigation against insurance companies. She enjoyed this work and the strategy employed by her team to make precedent in the Sixth Circuit. After a few years, she began handling personal injury claims and started to feel the pressure and burnout of litigation. Specifically, she recalls handling two federal jury trials (one of which lasted two weeks) working from 8:00 am to 1:00 am during trial prep mode and during trial. After that, she decided to start looking for something different with a better work life balance so she could spend more time with her family and two boys.

One of her friends who is a tax attorney put her in touch with her current boss at Regions. The Trust Advisor role is JD-preferred, and Alex felt that her litigation experience and interest in wills, estates, and trusts would allow her to succeed in that position. After six rounds of interviews, she is back where she wanted to be initially—in the area of trusts and estates. She thoroughly enjoys her work, finding that working with clients is rewarding and gratifying, especially when those clients have grown their small businesses and she can help them retain their wealth and continue growing. She also finds the work challenging as she continues to learn the intricacies of trusts and tax strategy, which is why she plans on getting her LLM in taxation to continue to grow in her new position. Alex’s story demonstrates that having a legal background can be invaluable and that there are plenty of fulfilling opportunities for attorneys in nontraditional legal roles.

Practicing Parents

“It’s not a phase, mom!”

5 Tips from the Practicing Parents Committee on Choosing to Work and Parent

Choosing to be a parent and hold a challenging, fun career can be difficult. Since there is only one of you, resources like time, energy and finances are limited. You want to be challenged and stimulated in your work, but you also want to be a present, loving and dependable parent that your kids will cherish for their whole lives. Here are our best tips for making it work when juggling a career and a role as a parent:

Be firm about your schedule

If you’re going to show up for your kids and your work in a meaningful way, you will need to hold firm to your scheduling boundaries. If you have to leave every day by 4:30 for school pickup, then that needs to be known to your whole team/department. If you have to leave the house by 7 every morning, then your partner or nanny needs to know that time is non-negotiable. Yes, discrimination against parents (particularly women) who have to leave work by a certain time is very real. But at the end of the day, you have to decide whether you are going to let a coworker’s opinion of you define the type of parent you want to be.

Everything is a season

Everything in parenting is a season. For two months, your toddler might scream about how he doesn’t want to go to bed, but then suddenly he crawls into bed like an angel, never to scream at bedtime again. Or your teenager spends an hour every morning putting on makeup from a YouTube video, making you late for three weeks straight. Then she never wears makeup again. The viral meme, “It’s not a phase, mom!” is so popular because, truly, all of parenting is a phase.

In work, I have had (and will have) seasons where I am working at night after the kids go to bed because we have a new baby. That first year of baby’s life entails lots of 10 pm emails. With my first baby, I was so bleary-eyed and sleep-deprived that I didn’t understand that a season doesn’t last forever. If you are wondering, “Will this ever get better?”, set a timer on your phone for a few weeks, months, or perhaps years from now. When the timer goes off, ask yourself, “Is it better now? Is it more doable now?”. I hope that it is. If it is not, see #5 below.

Communicate non-stop

This is especially true each time you add a new kid to the mix. You will need to communicate your needs, schedule, plans, etc. so often that you feel like a broken record. There is really no such thing as too much communication, especially in the early days of parenting. This is even doubly true if you have a spouse or partner to coparent with. Eventually, the constant communication about your needs and schedule will feel normal. If you have a frequent babysitter or nanny, communicating your needs about your children’s schedule, food, and screen time can be tricky at first. I’ve learned from experience that exact details about your expectations are critical (i.e. your nanny doesn’t know what you mean when you say, “not too much screen time!”). Communication is even better when it is written down, so this is where a shared family calendar app, calendar on the fridge, and kids’ school calendars all come in handy as well.

Reorganize your life to best suit your needs (and don't feel bad about it!)

When I was pregnant with our first child, I was sitting in Nashville traffic for two hours a day. Shortly before having our daughter, our office moved locations and that took my commute down to 1.5 hours per day. This was doable because I could listen to a podcast or talk to a friend on the phone (I was able to use this as "me time"). Recently, my car time has gone down to 40 minutes per day, which is like living life on easy street. I am minutes from my kids' school, 15 minutes from my house, and generally close to places I need to be often (post office, midwife office, good restaurants). My stress level has decreased significantly, and I have a lot more time to do other things (go for a walk, run errands, work). I did not realize the level of stress a long commute was putting on my mental health. All that to say, to the extent possible, try to organize your life around your own needs. Women are particularly conditioned to think of others' needs first (isn't that how we keep a newborn baby alive, after all?). Parenting kids is one of those seasons where you need to organize your life to suit your own needs.

If you're constantly dissatisfied, make a change

Making a change in your career or home life can be really tough, especially when you feel like you have worked so hard to land where you are. If you need to take a step back from a job with 10-hour days, do it. Again, you can decide if it's just for a season – you may want to return to something more demanding when your child enters pre-k or kindergarten (or earlier/ later). You may decide that, at that time, you have changed as a person and may want to try something completely new. If you decide to make a change at home, that may look like hiring a full-time nanny rather than schlepping your kids to preschool. If you have a teenage child with special needs who isn't able to be home alone after school, that might look like hiring a caregiver or asking your partner to reduce their hours. These are not easy decisions, and they involve mental energy, time and financial resources. Speaking to a counselor at any time during your parenting journey is a good idea, but it is especially helpful when navigating these types of big life changes.

From other parents I've spoken to, here are some of the "signs" that they needed to make a change:

Parent feels an intense sense of dread on Sunday afternoons/nights

Parent feels deep sense of guilt when spending time with kiddos because he is not working (that doesn't go away) OR feels a deep sense of guilt when working because he is not with his kiddos (that doesn't go away)

Parent keeps getting sick, has difficulty sleeping, has difficulty "bouncing back" from a cold or challenging season

Parent feels trapped or deeply dissatisfied on a daily basis

In conclusion, all parents feel torn between their duties outside the home and their children/home life. It is a struggle as old as time. That being said, it can be manageable (and even enjoyable!) in different seasons and with the right support. At the end of the day, you can choose to be happy with how things are going at home and at work and, if not, you can do something about it.



Victoria Gentry is a co-chair of the Practicing Parents Committee and the Managing Attorney at The Immigration Group. She and her husband, Jesse, have two daughters and are expecting a son any day now.



Jan Margaret Craig is a co-chair of the Practicing Parents Committee and a Staff Attorney at Adams and Reese. She and her husband, Brandon, have two daughters and welcomed their son, Charles, into the world on March 9th.

KUDOS

- ... **TO Jan Margaret Craig** and family on the birth of Charles Hawkins Craig on March 5, 2024, at 6:48 PM, weighing 9 lbs. 10 oz and measuring 21 inches.
- ... **TO Judge Elect Stephanie J. Williams** who will fill the Davidson County 4th Circuit Court seat.
- ... **TO Vivian Wilhoite** on her re-election to the office of Metro Nashville Assessor of Property.
- ... **TO Leslie South** on her recent promotion to General Counsel of the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

Condolences

*to Judge Lynda Jones on the recent death of her mother,
Linda Lou Brown Jones on March 25, 2024.*

Book Report: February Book Club Discussing *Miss Blaylock's School for Girls*

by Morgan Bernard, Newsletter Editor, Staff Attorney for Chancellor Anne Martin

Miss Blaylock's School for Girls, the sequel to *Painted Trillium: A Novel of the Civil War*, continues to follow the life of Carrie Blaylock after the Civil War and her struggles maintaining independence as headmistress of her own school with a surprise pregnancy at the age of 42. Marnie Huff graciously hosted a book club at her home where the author and former Chancellor, Robert Brandt, discussed the novel, the characters, and his love of Tennessee history. The book club attendees included not only several LAW founders, but also young lawyers and even a college student applying to law school, creating a diverse and interesting discussion with various points of view.

The novel takes place in Nashville beginning in the 1880s, and Carrie's later involvement with the suffragette movement. Chancellor Brandt explained how he researched Civil War and post-Civil War history in Tennessee to create an accurate depiction of life in that era. In particular, he traveled to several cities throughout the state to look through Civil War archives, including diary entries and newspapers. He also researched women's fashion and pregnancy, although he noted nobody during that time period used the word "pregnant," but rather the more formal "with child." While the school itself is not based on reality, the cover picture is from Nashville's women's college, Ward-Belmont, which was located on the grounds of the Belmont Mansion. Any local or long-time resident with an interest in history would appreciate this novel simply for the attention to detail he provides in describing Nashville, including the original street names and historical buildings that have been lost to time.



* Many thanks to Marnie Huff for hosting and preparing delicious appetizers for the group!

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