



2024 - 2025

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A Letter from the President



Nick Pesina

Dear SCBA
Members,

Spring is here—
and in East Texas,
that means azaleas
in bloom, pollen
in the air, and a
full calendar of
bar events headed

your way.

We've shaken off the winter (I think) and are jumping into a busy stretch full of opportunities to connect, contribute, and maybe even compete (Pickleball, anyone?). Whether you're looking to pick up a few CLE hours or just want to hang out with your fellow lawyers somewhere that *isn't* a courtroom, we've got you covered.

Here's what's blooming this season:

• April 5 – 3rd Annual People's Law School

Hosted by the **Smith County Bar Foundation**, this is a crowd favorite. Help spread the word or volunteer to present—we're bringing legal know-how straight to the community. Questions? See **Danny Noteware**.

• April 29 – East Texas Giving Day

Spring cleaning? Consider tidying up your charitable giving list by supporting our **Bar Foundation**, which funds great legal access

programs like People's Law School, in our own backyard. Check us out, along with hundreds of other East Texas nonprofits, at www.easttexasgivingday.org/SCBF. And, follow along on Facebook throughout the month of April! Early giving starts on April 7.

• May 9 – Law Day Celebration

Mark your calendars—we expect a great event recognizing the rule of law and those who help uphold it in our community. This is one of my favorite events of the year! We get to meet our new Board chairs of the SCBA and SCBF, while learning about some of the amazing legal professionals that bless our community.

We know your schedules are packed, but even popping into one event can make a difference — to your network, to the SCBA, and to someone who might just need a familiar face that day.

Here's to sunshine, community, and just enough chaos to keep things interesting.

Respectfully,



THE SCBA WELCOMES YOU TO OUR APRIL CLE AT WILLOW BROOK COUNTRY CLUB:

THE CHEVRON DEFERENCE: What It Is and Why You Should Care!



PRESENTED BY
BEN ANDERSON
The Anderson Firm, PLLC

APRIL 11, 2025

Willow Brook Country Club | 12 -1

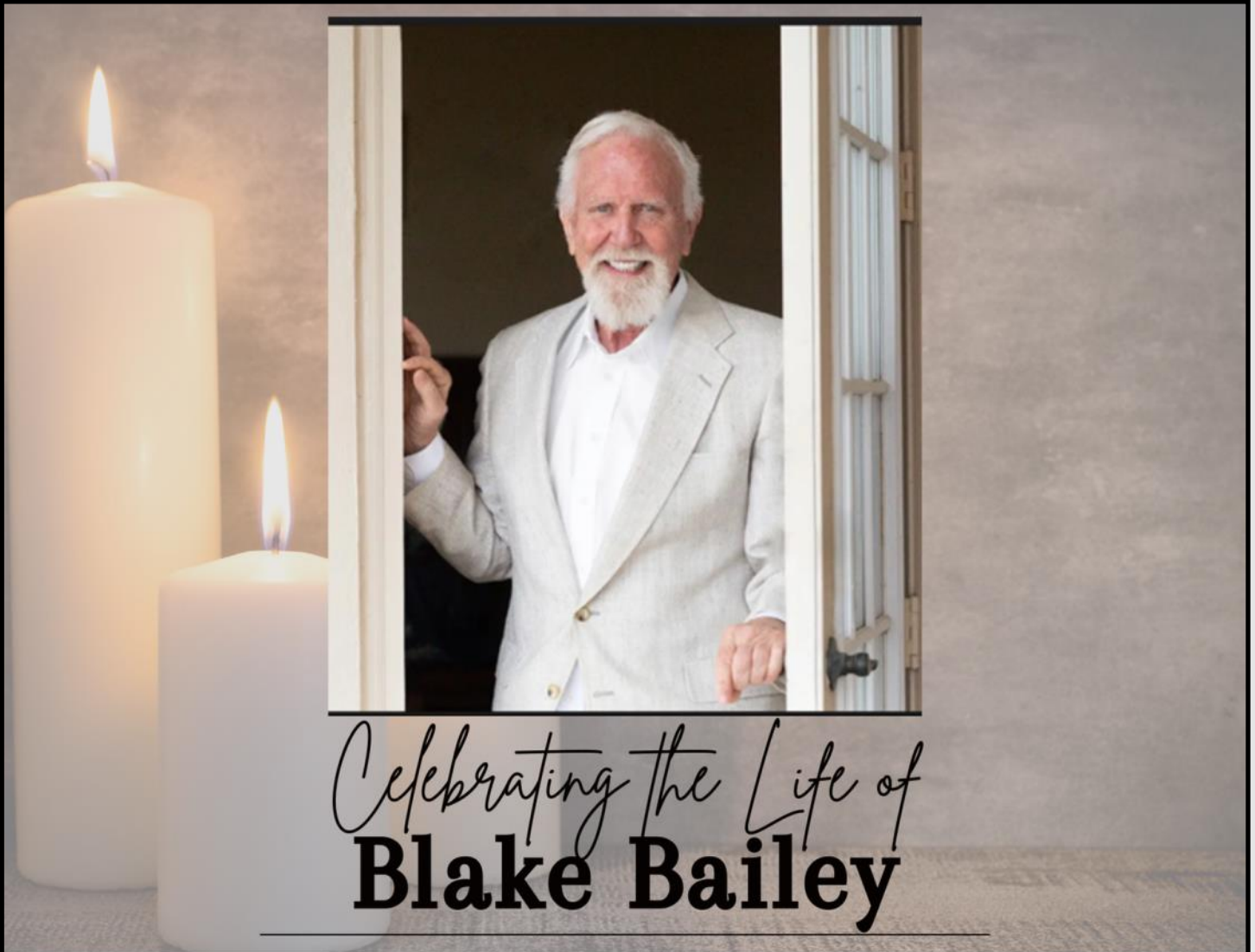
Lunch included with registration fee.
[.50 ethics hour]



If registering through our website, please make sure to log in to your member account first! If you have problems or would like to pay at the event, email Beth at ed@smithcountybar.com.



The SCBA is an accredited sponsor, approved by the State Bar of Texas, Committee on MCLE. This course has been approved in the amount of 1.0 credit hour of professional responsibility.



Celebrating the Life of **Blake Bailey**

Blake Bailey, a pillar of the Smith County legal community, passed away peacefully the morning of February 24, 2025. Blake leaves us with an incredible legacy. In 2023, he celebrated his 50th anniversary in the legal profession. During his career, he tried more than 120 jury cases to verdict and was lead counsel in 45 appellate decisions. He was certified mediator and arbitrator and was Board Certified in Appellate Law and Personal Injury Trial Law. He was a former board member of the TTLA and past-president of the TTLA East Texas Chapter and past-president of the East Texas Chapter (1995) of ABOTA. He was a sustaining member of the American Trial Lawyers Association; a member of the American Bar Association, Texas Bar Association and past member of the State Bar of Texas Pattern Jury Charges Civil Committee as well as Union Privilege Legal Counsel, AFL/CIO, Cooperative Attorney, and United Auto Workers. Blake had a demonstrated an unwavering passion for the law and an unrelenting pursuit of justice. What meant most to Blake was the fact that his career allowed him to become involved in the lives of hundreds of families. Blake loved pouring into others. He lectured extensively throughout the U.S. and in law schools across Europe and Asia, sharing his wealth of knowledge and experience. He was truly global advocate for legal rights and justice. He spent 18 years serving as “of counsel” with Martin Walker Law Firm and is missed by all.



THE CONSTITUTION'S PROMISE:
**OUT OF MANY,
ONE**
LAW DAY 2025

FRIDAY, MAY 9
11:15 - 1:00
CASCADES COUNTRY CLUB
TYLER, TX



CARROLL MALONEY
HENRY & NELSON
PLLC

UNDERWRITTEN BY



ADDITIONAL SPONSOR OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE - EMAIL BETH AT
ED@SMITHCOUNTYBAR.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.
INDIVIDUAL TICKETS ON SALE APRIL 11

2025 LAW DAY HONOREES

HON. DIANE DEVASTO, JUSTINIAN AWARD

HON. NICOLE MITCHELL, AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

LIVE & KICKING WINNERS CIRCLE,

CRISTY ARSCOTT LIBERTY BELL AWARD

HAGER LAW, VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY OF THE YEAR

MORGAN WOOD, OUTSTANDING YOUNG ATTORNEY

GAYE FINLEY BOYNTON, LEGAL PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

LEGAL LUMINARIES

Congratulations to Tab Beall and Kristina Ross, Tyler Municipal Court's newest Judges!



Buck Files recently received the John F. Sheehy, Jr. Distinguished Attorney Award.



International Women in the Law Celebration at Pop's Wine Bar.



Texas Bar of Legal Specializations are well represented by partners Buck Files (50+ yrs) and Matt Millslagle (newly inducted)!

■ The John F. Sheehy, Jr. Distinguished Attorney Award



2025 Recipient
Buck Files

The John F. Sheehy, Jr. Distinguished Attorney Award is presented annually by the TBLS Board of Directors in recognition of an attorney who has been Board Certified for more than 25 years, shown commitment to serving the public and justice system, advanced the standards of the legal profession, and has been the epitome of outstanding professional ethics and civility. This year's recipient is Buck Files.

In 1960, Buck earned his baccalaureate degree from Austin College and, later, served on its board of trustees. In 1963, Buck graduated from SMU's School of Law; received his license to practice law; and, was recalled to active duty as an unrestricted line officer in the United States Marine Corps. During his 44 months of active duty, he received his early education as a trial lawyer, prosecuting or defending cases before general and special courts-martial for commands in Hawaii, Okinawa and the Republic of Vietnam. He attained the rank of captain. In 1967, Buck returned to Texas and, for three years, served as an assistant criminal district attorney and, later, as first assistant criminal district attorney in Smith County. Since 1970, he has devoted his practice to the

defense of criminal cases and the representation of law enforcement officers in civil rights cases. He is a founding shareholder in Files Harrison & Millsagle in Tyler, Texas.

2025 is an important anniversary for Buck. In 1975, he was a member of the charter class to attain his TBLS board certification in criminal law — and that was 50 years ago. Throughout his law practice, Buck has been committed to serving the public and the justice system, advancing the standards of the legal profession, and has been the epitome of outstanding professional ethics and civility.

Buck's service and accolades over the years are many and varied: President, State Bar of Texas (SBOT) (2012–2013); Member, SBOT Board of Directors (2004–2007); Recipient, Outstanding Third Year Director Award (2007); Recipient, SBOT Presidential Citation (2007); Chair, SBOT CLE Committee (2008–2011); Recipient, SBOT Criminal Justice Section Defense Lawyer of the Year (2004); Recipient, SBOT Criminal Justice Section Lifetime Achievement Award (2012); Member, Texas Board

2025 TBLS ANNUAL INDUCTION CEREMONY | 4

From the Texas Board of Legal Specialization's
Annual Induction Ceremony

LEGAL LUMINARIES



The next gen of attorneys and ¼ of the SCYLA board (missing other new mom board member, Promise Trujillo)!

SCYLA helping to restock the municipal court book shelves.



Congratulations

2025 Texas Bar Foundation Award Recipients!

Outstanding 50 Year Lawyer Award

Hon. Diane DeVasto, Tyler
 Andrew L. Kerr, San Antonio
 Barbara K. Runge, Houston
 Hon. Ruby Kless Sondock, Houston
 Luther H. 'Luke' Soules III, San Antonio

Gregory S. Coleman Outstanding Appellate Lawyer Award

Jeffrey S. Levinger, Dallas

Outstanding Law Review Article Award

Gus G. Tamborello, Houston

Samuel Pessarra Outstanding Jurist Award

Senior Justice Debra Lehrmann, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin

Dan Rugeley Price Memorial Award

Georganna L. Simpson, Dallas

Ronald D. Secrest Outstanding Trial Lawyer Award

William H. Ford, San Antonio

Lola Wright Foundation Award

Andrew S. Murr, Junction

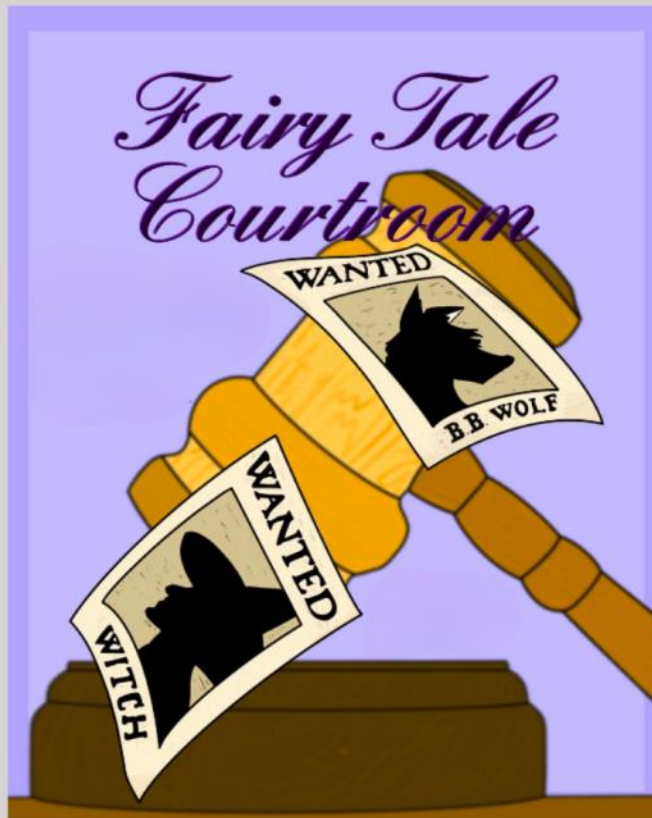
Terry Lee Grantham Memorial Award

Amy M. Stewart, Dallas

Congratulations to all Texas Bar Foundation Honorees, but especially to our own, Justice Diane DeVasto!



Ready to put your legal skills to the test?



About 220 4th grade students will be taking over the Smith County Courthouse on May 12 and 13 - while the judges are away, the kids will play! - for their own Mock Trials.

And, we need help!

All 4 courtrooms will be in use and we need at least **one attorney and four additional legal professionals** in each courtroom!

Sessions start at 9:00am and will end by noon on both days.

Email Gaye Boynton for more details!
rsfinley@msn.com



ETGD for SCBF

EAST TEXAS GIVING DAY



Early Giving Starts
APRIL 7



**Visitation room before the 2024
SCBF ETGD campaign....**



**The same room after 2024 ETGD
and lots of work from SCYLA!**

East Texas Giving Day is an 18-hour day of sharing and giving that provides critical funding for area nonprofits, including the Smith County Bar Foundation. Because of our generous donors and incredible SCYLA members, last year's campaign transformed 2 family visitation rooms into places of welcome and comfort. This year, the Smith County Bar Foundation is looking to continue this impact by expanding our People's Law School program and developing different curricula and classes for nonprofit partners.

Join us at www.easttexasgivingday.org/SCBF and follow us on Facebook!

New Lawyers Induction Ceremony Wednesday, April 30, 2025 – 10:00 a.m.

Bass Concert Hall, 2350 Robert Dedman Dr., Austin

The Supreme Court of Texas has confirmed Wednesday, April 30, 2025, for the statewide induction of new lawyers at the Bass Concert Hall in Austin. The State Bar cordially invites local bar associations, young lawyer affiliates, and other specialty groups to attend and bring information about their organizations to the new lawyers. We expect about 1,000 new lawyers and guests to attend. The ceremony will take place on the Orchestra Level.

Refreshments sponsored by the State Bar of Texas and Texas Young Lawyers Association will be located on Level 3, outside of the café area, following the ceremony. The entire event should conclude by noon. Please note that attendees may visit the exhibit area on Level 3 before the ceremony. Opening the exhibit area before the ceremony will allow more time for you to visit with the new lawyers and provide information about your services. Doors will open to inductees and their guests at 9 a.m.

If you wish to have a table for your organization or send materials for us to put out at the SBOT table, please email Caryn Truitt with the State Bar of Texas at caryn.truitt@texasbar.com by **5:00 p.m. Friday, April 11th**, so that arrangements can be made for tables and chairs in the exhibit area. If you're planning to send materials but do not want a designated table, please have them delivered to SBOT no later than Wednesday, April 23rd.

If you are exhibiting, please plan to arrive at the Bass Concert Hall by 8:00 a.m. to set up your display. Parking details will be sent closer to the event.

Contact information:

Caryn Truitt, CMP

Events Manager, Marketing & Outreach | State Bar of Texas

Office: (512) 427-1513 | Mobile: (512) 767-9653

Email: Caryn.truitt@texasbar.com



***The State Bar of Texas cordially invites you and
your family to the New Lawyers Induction Ceremony***

Wednesday, April 30 , 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

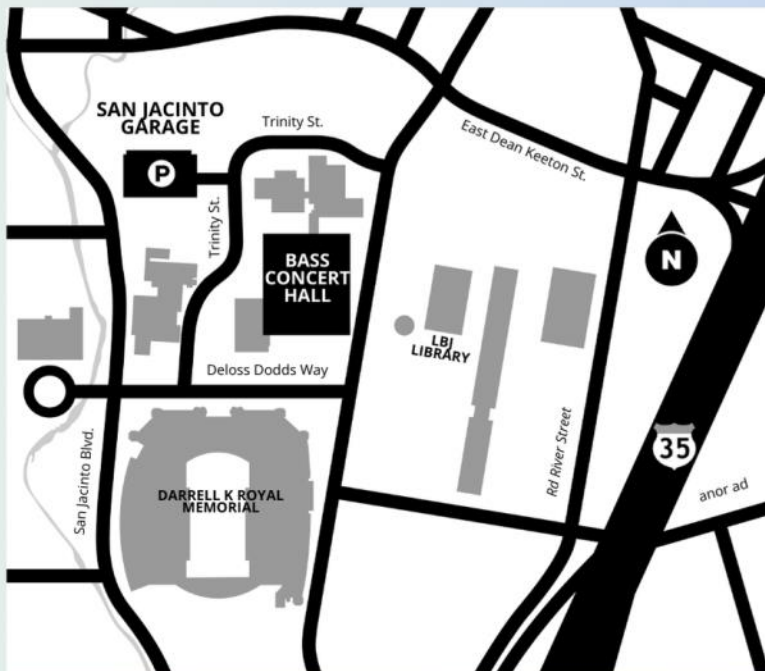
***Bass Concert Hall
2350 Robert Dedman Dr.***

Austin, Texas

Refreshments will be provided

***Hisham Masri, President
Texas Young Lawyers Association***

***Steve Benesh, President
State Bar of Texas***



PARKING AVAILABLE

**SAN JACINTO GARAGE
2401 San Jacinto Blvd. (entrance
on Trinity St.)**



SMITH COUNTY BAR FOUNDATION

MISSION STATEMENT

Furthering justice and promoting the rule of law by providing resources and education to our community

The Smith County Bar Foundation is the charitable arm of the Smith County Bar Association. The Foundation was formed by a group of visionary leaders, focused on preserving and furthering justice in Smith County and the continued promotion of the rule of law.

Join us in keeping this dream alive and growing! Send in your check (PO Box 7248 Tyler, TX 75711); scan the QR code; or email Beth for more options!



Make a difference for the people of Smith County and the SCBF!



**Join the President's Circle
and help create a
legacy of justice for
Smith County!**

PLATINUM

Craig Adams
Mike McNally
Gary Traylor

SILVER

Tab Beall
Raymond Cozby, III
Rachael Griffith
W. Todd Parker
Mandy Nelson
Woody Roark
Matt Rowan
Steve Spitzer
Dallas Tharpe

GOLD

Dobbs & Porter
Mary Endres
R.W. Fair Foundation
Hon. Judith Guthrie
David Hudson
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Mike Patterson
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Blake Thompson

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BRONZE

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FRIENDS OF THE FOUNDATION

Denise & Ken Hawk

2024-'25 SCBA MEMBERS

WHO'S MISSING? INVITE YOUR FRIENDS & COLLEAGUES TO JOIN THE FUN!

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Thank you for your continued participation with and support of the SCBA.

Visit
www.smithcountybar.com
 to renew your membership
 or join a section!

We have auto renew!

Important SCB Dates

People's Law School

April 5, Tyler Junior College, 9:00a to noon

SCBF Board Meeting

April 9, Genecov conference room, 12-1p

SCYLA Board Meeting

April 17, Genecov conference room, 12-1p

SCBA Board Meeting

April 24, Genecov conference room, 12-1p

EAST TEXAS GIVING DAY!

April 29, www.easttexasgivingday.org/SCBF

Law Day Luncheon

May 9, Cascades Country Club, 11:15-1:00p

Smith County Courthouse Closed

April 18, Good Friday

Easter Sunday

April 20



The SCBF is a 501/c/3, EIN 81-0585550

Mission Statement

Furthering justice and promoting the rule of law by providing resources and education to the community.

Interested in including the SCBF in your estate planning? Have non-cash assets and would like a charitable deduction? Give me a call - we can help!

beth@smithcountybar.com

[Click here if you would like to honor someone with a gift to the Foundation.](#)

Thanks to all for honoring your loved ones

Advertising

Interested in advertising in The Advocate?
 Call or email Beth to check out member rates and options!



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