



Denton County Lawyer

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Cruisin' Home Denton County Adoption Day 2011 Anchored to the Hearts of Denton Forever

By Jennifer J. Schultz, Attorney at Law; jschultz@grundmanlaw.com.
Photographs by Glimpses of Grace, Jennifer J. Schultz, and Tekisha Slack.



The month of February is undeniably marked by love. However, it is incomparable to the mark of love the 4th Annual Denton County Adoption Day left on the hearts of the 19 families who adopted 31 children on November 4, 2011.

One defining uniqueness of the Denton County Bar Association is the spirit of generosity and giving back to the community. Returning to Texas from California, it is rare to witness a group of lawyers who care LESS about themselves and more about OTHERS. It is very evident that Adoption Day is a project that is embraced by members of our bar.

If you are new to the scene, Denton County Adoption Day is part of the nationwide effort to celebrate families who are welcoming new members from foster care and to draw attention to the continuing need for foster and adoptive homes.

This event is the result of a partnership between the Denton County Bar Association, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and Denton County judges. Numerous donors and volunteers are also instrumental in making this event a success.

On the afternoon of November 3, 2011 the second floor of our modern

bustling County Courts Building and jury assembly room was transformed into the ultimate CruiZone: Adoption Day 2011. Each courtroom was softened with hundreds of teddy bears donated for the occasion, a themed Cruise Ship designed and built with love by Michelle Houston's father and brother was assembled, and the stage was set for the passport tour. More than 200 volunteers swarmed in to transform the second floor of the Denton County Courts Building so that these new families would have a joyous embarkation into their new lives. For many of these children, this would be their first positive experience with the legal system.

New to the Adoption Day experience, family law attorney Collette Solis echoed sentiments felt by many involved; "When I walked into the jury room and saw all the festivities, I was overwhelmed with the feeling that we were all taking

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From the President

I think most of us would agree that the practice of law can be overwhelming at times, with our deadlines, client demands, schedules, personnel issues, office management, professional development, etc. There are so many matters we have to address every day as we strive to fulfill our duty to our clients, and, although we put all our effort into the task, we can feel as if we have accomplished very little at the end of a day. There are those moments when we get a good result for our client or win on a point of law and we feel good about what we do, but I believe the most uplifting moments occur when we cross paths with people who affect us in a way that changes how we think, act, or feel. I suspect that many of you can name someone whom you've met in your practice that has changed you for the better, both professionally and personally.

For me, the most rewarding aspect of my practice are the clients with whom I work. I love their stories, their history. Everyone has a story; sometimes it is fascinating, or sad,

or courageous. Recently, through clients, I've realized that Denton County is brimming with truly gifted and talented artists. We have a vibrant visual and performing arts community that enhances the quality of life in our fair county. I'm astounded by the quality of the musicians here. I recently counseled a couple, both of whom are well into their 80s and are world class musicians. They play in a band and perform regularly. They had to cut our meeting a little short so they could get to rehearsal for their upcoming gig! (The gentleman is actually the only surviving member of the original UNT [One O'Clock Lab Band](#).)

If you've never heard the UNT One O'Clock Lab Band you should make every effort to do so. They are phenomenal. The UNT jazz degree program started in 1947 and has developed into the premier jazz program in the country. Actually, the entire music program at UNT is respected as one of the top two music schools in the country. As a result we benefit as a community from all the opportunities to hear beautiful and innovative music. You can learn



Dena A. Reecer, President

more about UNT's music school and performance dates at their website: <http://music.unt.edu>.

In addition to jazz, we have film festivals, art showings, wonderful theatre, orchestras, professional choruses, poetry readings, and so much more. To learn more about upcoming events in Denton, please visit www.gdac.org and www.cityoflewisville.com, and click on "Arts" to take you to several links to organizations for the arts in Lewisville, Flower Mound, and surrounding communities. You will be amazed at how much there is to do and see.

Next time, when I feel a bit overwhelmed, I'll just turn on a little jazz and think about how fortunate I am to live and work in Denton County.

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- Trial Lawyer's Association
- Family Law Section
- Greater Denton County Young Lawyers Association
- Real Estate, Trust, and Probate Law Section
- Criminal Law

DCBA Membership

Your DCBA Membership includes

- Free and discounted CLE programs
- Monthly luncheon & happy hour
- Networking opportunities
- Listing on the bar website, including photo, two practice areas, and a link to your website.

For more information see our website: www.dentonbar.com.

Around the County



Cruisin' Home continued from page 1.

part in bringing these families together. It was so moving that I found myself teary eyed and covered with goose bumps. From the party atmosphere to the teddy bears in the courtroom, it was extraordinary. One could not imagine the magnitude of the event unless they saw it for themselves. It was wonderful to know that these children who had been through so much were now being celebrated and loved.”

Adoption Ceremony

On the morning of November 4th, each adoption family was assigned a “cruise director” to guide them to their passport destinations to ensure they didn’t miss a single opportunity in this fun-filled day. The first and most important passport destination was the adoption proceeding. Adhering to the formal proceedings, the presiding Judges also added their own personal touch. The heartfelt judicial proceedings were conducted by Judges Carmen Rivera-Worley, Bruce McFarling, Steve Burgess, L. Dee Shipman, Doug Robison, Margaret Barnes, and Jonathan Bailey. With a wave of their gavels and signing of the Orders, the Judges gregariously shared in the joy of the union of the families and each child left the courtroom with a teddy bear of their choosing. At the conclusion of their respective dockets, the Judges joined the families to enjoy the Cruizone festivities.

Pictures in Paradise

The next official passport stop was Walter Eagleton Photography for their first formal family portrait. Lynn Eason of Divine Inspirations Make-up provided professional make-up for the portraits so that everyone looked their best on such a special day. The families were glowing and the kids appeared elated at all of their options.

The Cruizone

A terrific time was had by all and the big party that morning was a sweet reminder of how special it is to celebrate and welcome these new families. I heard several comments from family members and friends about how nice the event was for everyone.

Denton County Adoption Day 2011 was a bittersweet experience for many CASA and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services staff who were saying goodbye to the children they have protected. The expressions of love and hugs were priceless. Sherri Gideon, Executive Director of CASA stated:

“CASA is always pleased to be a part of the Denton County Adoption Day—in fact, it is truly a highlight for CASA each year. The 2011 event was incredibly successful and we know a large part of that success is because of the hard work and generous donations of members of the Denton Bar Association, the event planning committee and the staff at Child Protective Services. A well known author, Garrison Keillor once wrote that ‘nothing you do for children is ever wasted.’ He is so right. Those who serve on the Adoption Day planning committee and all who participated the day of the event can be assured that their efforts were not wasted. They have blessed these children in ways that are unmatched and the families are now whole with their new family members.”

Adoption Day 2011 could not have been possible without the generous support of Content Solutions, Cross Timbers Community Church, Denton County Sheriff’s Department featuring McGruff, Walter Eagleton–Eagleton Photography, Excite! Gym, Cheer & Dance, Macklin Floral Design, N.V. Cupcakes, State

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Around the County

Education Opportunities for Paralegals

By Sunnie Palmer, paralegal to Joseph F. Zellmer.

The Denton County Paralegal Association's (DCPA) annual membership drive is underway. Dues are just \$25.00 a year and offer many benefits for paralegals and legal assistants in Denton County. All members receive free accredited CLE at monthly meetings held at Oakmont Country Club. Speakers include local attorneys on a variety of areas of law. Other benefits of membership include a monthly newsletter, membership mixers, and the opportunity to get acquainted with other paralegals. DCPA provides pro bono service opportunities, including DCBA's Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans legal clinics and Wills for Heroes project. Community Service is also important to DCPA, with members raising money for the Children's Advocacy Center of Denton County

and Denton County Friends of the Family.

There are a variety of membership levels available, including sustaining membership for businesses and law firms interested in supporting DCPA's goal of paralegal education. Information about DCPA, including membership applications and a directory of active members, is at www.dentonparalegals.org.

Local paralegals also benefit from membership in the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas (PD). The PD functions as a section of the State Bar, offering discounts on State Bar CLE, as well as seminars exclusively for paralegals. PD members also have access to an email listserv of paralegals throughout Texas—always helpful for referrals or information about other areas of the state.

Members may register for a mentor/protégé program that offers another resource of information for paralegals with less than two years experience. Subscriptions to the Texas Paralegal Journal and the Texas Bar Journal are included. For more information about the PD, including membership levels, visit www.txpd.org.

Other opportunities for Texas paralegals include associate membership in the State Bar College, the Pro Bono College, and various State Bar sections, including the Family Law Section. The Texas Board of Legal Specialization offers certification for paralegals in family, criminal, real estate, civil trial, estate planning/probate, and personal injury trial law. Information on paralegals' roles in these organizations is available on the PD website, www.txpd.org.

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Bar of Texas, As You Wish, Denton Quilt Guild, Lynn Eason–Divine Inspirations Makeup, Cindy Given, Gail and Lynn Ward, Hayes, Berry, White & VanZandt, Hill & Hill Attorneys at Law, Edward Jones–Abe Nayfa and Kyle Nayfa, Newland Real Estate, St. Phillips Church of Flower Mound Women's Club, TWU Practice III Group, Breenda Sweeten and the UNT Non-Profit Leadership Student Association, Oralia's Crazy Quilts, Elsie Barrow, Café Du Luxe, Christine Harvey–Suncatcher Photography, Ginny Couch–Glimpses of Grace Photography, CokerLegal, Delta Gamma Sorority–UNT, Eric Clement Photography, Jacque Evans, Judge Kimberly McCrary, Julia

Kerestine, KoonsFuller, Law Offices of Kelly Skenesky, Bruce and Muriel McFarling, Montessori Episcopal School–Lewisville, Ramey King, TK Photography, Darcy Loveless, Jonathan and Beverly Bailey, and Incucomm.

Everyone involved had big or should I say HUGE hearts, which shined through. Looking back, the level of sponsorship (big heart, red heart or silver heart sponsor) was immaterial to the priceless smiles and families made whole. The culmination of generosity and

community spirit reflects the heart of our community.

Thank you for hitting the target at Adoption Day 2011. If you missed the boat in 2011, no worries; follow your heart to Denton County Adoption Day 2012 on Facebook at "[DentonCountyAdoptionDay](https://www.facebook.com/DentonCountyAdoptionDay)."



Fear Factor or DCBA Christmas Party? You be the Judge!

By Fon Laughlin, Laughlin Law; flaugh123@aol.com.

If you were fortunate enough to arrive at the DCBA Christmas party timely on December 15, you had a rare opportunity to experience some real excitement. As you entered Giuseppe's beautiful Italian Ristorante, you were greeted by thick white smoke billowing from the front door. DCBA staff and Giuseppe's personable waitstaff welcomed all with the offer of an adult beverage. The lure was set and many took the bait, crossing over the threshold, uncertain of whether the smoke-like substance was entertainment or accident.

Once you were through the door, the inviting aroma of Giuseppe's county-famous grilled mushroom caps bathing in lemon butter sauce and the scrumptious tomato-topped bruschetta locked your olfactory sense in a garlic prison that simply would not release you. Whether it was the ravioli or the cannoli that caused each of us to overcome our fear of the fog, those of us who endured the trial were rewarded with radical tunes from Tony the Tunemaster Sidharta and Travis Biggs' epic light and laser show. Kimberly Killebrew survived the fog

frivolity and made a grand entrance in her glitzy feathery finest (of which I understand she made an unexpected court appearance in earlier that day)! KK definitely brought the sparkle.

If the fog wasn't enough to scare the Santa out of you, watching a bunch of lawyers dance and sing karaoke might have done it. Once Biggs got the juke box jingles jamming, Amie Peace and Michelle Houston broke out some wild moves on the dance floor. Debbie Henry was killing it slowly with her groove. We even had some judicial pillars of the community on the dance floor. It was insane.

Meanwhile back at the ranch (far away from the dance zone), the conversation was lively. Hons. Margaret Barnes and David Jahn along with a few other members of the judiciary, surrounded by regular old lawyers, visited and swapped all kinds of stories. That's something Denton lawyers love to do. Tamera Bennett, Don White, Cynthia Burkett, Ted Ogilvie, and Lee Ann Breeding were avoiding the dance floor by holding court out front. Snippets of random party talk overheard included:

- "Who are those young whipper snappers?"
- "How's your mom and them?"
- "Are those gals new lawyers?"
- "How'd that case work out for you?"
- "They work where—Chaucer's? Is that firm south of the bridge?"

My fact-finding husband took the time to interrogate the new girls on the block, but I won't bore you with the details of his inquisition. The dance floor was far more fascinating. Turns out we have a very lively group of lawyers that have some funk-a-delic moves. I don't want to tell all... we have to leave some element of surprise for the Bench/Bar Pirate Cove Party Room.

For those of you that turned away from the party in fear that Giuseppe's was on fire, it turns out it was just Travis' fog machine working overtime! Next time, brave the elements and forge through—you may just experience the time of your life. If you missed the frivolity, [sign up for the Bench/Bar III today](#), and get your camera ready—it may provide some leverage in your next case!!! LOL.



Around the State

The Texas Legal Services Center Seeks Attorney Assistance For Reduced Fee Lawyer Referral Service

Texas Legal Service Center (TLSC) is a nonprofit organization that offers free legal advice and limited services via a phone hotline to low income clients throughout the state of Texas. "While 70% of client calls can be resolved via our free hotline service, TLSC also offers clients a Lawyer Referral Service to fill the gap in services. When a referral is needed, hotline attorneys refer the client based on legal issue and geographic

location," explained Moriah Steinthal, TLSC Title.

TLSC is currently recruiting attorneys who would be interested in taking referred cases from our legal hotline, and is accepting attorneys from all practice areas. There is no membership fee associated with the program, but a minimum malpractice coverage is required. Panel attorneys are not obligated to take any case that is referred. By working with TLSC's

Lawyer Referral Service, attorneys are paid a reduced fee by the client, and they can also get credit toward their State Bar pro bono requirements. Additionally, a great service is provided to those of modest means.

If you are interested in becoming a panel attorney or would like more information, please contact Moriah Steinthal at msteinthal@tlsc.org or 512-637-6752.

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DETAILS:

Come join us for Pirates of the Caribbean on Sundance Isle, The Search for the Lost Fountain of Law. Register online at www.dentonbar.com.

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Gunner Donor plus the company name/logo will appear on one of the ships, option to select any available event during Bench Bar to name after the firm/attorney. Donors at this level will receive a 10.5x13 commemorative plaque and complimentary conference registration and meals for 1 person (upgrades on rooms will be an extra fee).

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BOATSWAIN DONOR - \$1,000-1,499

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MATES PACKAGE - \$200

For a contribution of \$200 cash or a prize equal in value, vendors may set up a booth in front of the conference meeting room.

SAILMAKER DONOR - \$100-199

Company name will appear on signs at the event.

TO BECOME A SPONSOR PLEASE CONTACT MICHELLE
HOUSTON AT MHOUSTON@DENTONBAR.COM

Announcements and Events

DCBA in 2011-12

February Bar Luncheon

Date:

Friday, February 3, Noon
Meal included

Location:

Oakmont Country Club
1901 Oakmont Drive
Corinth, Texas 76210

Program:

The Art of Elder Planning: How to Qualify for Benefits While Avoiding Family and Legal Conflict

Speaker:

Rick Weaver

March Bar Luncheon

Date:

Friday, March 2, Noon
Meal included

Location:

Oakmont Country Club
1901 Oakmont Drive
Corinth, Texas 76210

Program:

TBA

Speaker:

TBA

Condolences

DCBA would like to express our condolences to Annette Ezzell and family, on the passing of her father-in-law, Ben Ezzell, on December 15, 2011.

Monthly Meetings

Collaborative Professionals

DCCP will meet at **12:00 PM** on Tuesday, **February 7**, at Oakmont Country Club, 1901 Oakmont Dr. in Corinth.

Family Law

Family Law will meet at **12:00 PM** on Thursday, **February 16**, in the Central Jury Room, 1450 E. McKinney St. in Denton.

Paralegals

DCPA will meet at **12:00 PM** on Thursday, **February 23**, at Oakmont Country Club, 1901 Oakmont Dr. in Corinth.

GDCYLA

GDCYLA will gather for their monthly:

- Meeting at **11:45 AM** on Thursday, **February 2**, at Greenhouse, 600 N. Locust St., in Denton.
- Happy Hour at **5:00 PM** on Thursday, **February 9**, at the offices of Hayes, Berry, White & Vanzant, 512 W. Hickory St., Ste. 100 in Denton.

REPTL

REPTL will meet at **11:45 PM** on Wednesday, **February 15**, at Oakmont Country Club, 1901 Oakmont Dr. in Corinth.