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News Story

N.C. Bar Association honors members

Several attorneys were honored for their professionalism, leadership and public service during the N.C. Bar Association's annual meeting June 26-28 at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville.

Judge John J. Parker Award

F. Leary Davis (Greensboro)

The NCBA's highest honor, the award is bestowed in recognition of "conspicuous service to the cause of jurisprudence in North Carolina." Recipients are chosen as merited, not annually.

Davis received the honor in recognition of having served as the founding dean of the Campbell and Elon law schools as well as a long record of leadership in the state and national legal community.

Prior to entering the legal education field, Davis practiced law in Zebulon and Raleigh. He served as assistant prosecutor for Wake County and town attorney for Zebulon. He also served in the U.S. Army Reserve and the N.C. National Guard.

Davis was a member of the Governor's Commission on the Future of North Carolina and on the boards of BarCARES of North Carolina and the Raleigh Business and Technology Center.

He is a member of the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism and is founding president of the National Institute to Enhance Leadership and Law Practice.

Dr. I. Beverly Lake Public Service Award

Edmund I. Adams (Sparta)

The award recognizes an outstanding lawyer in North Carolina who has performed exemplary public service in his or her community. The voluntary service rendered by the recipient may have occurred with a single nonprofit organization or with a number of groups in the community as well as through public service in elective or appointive office.

Adams is widely known and highly regarded throughout northwestern North Carolina, especially in Alleghany County where he has practiced law for nearly four decades.

In the 1970s, he spearheaded a successful challenge to the Appalachian Power Company's bid to construct a pair of hydroelectric dams on the New River. Had the project gone forward, thousands of acres in Alleghany, Ashe and Grayson (Va.) counties would have been rendered uninhabitable.

But Adams has done much more in his career, including service in the U.S. Army Reserve, leadership in the Sparta United Methodist Church and the Camp Elk Shoals United Methodist Camp and a long stint as a high school football official. He was named N.C. National Interscholastic Football Official of the Year in 1996.

H. Brent McKnight Renaissance Lawyer Award

Mark R. Bernstein (Charlotte)

The award was proposed by the NCBA Professionalism Committee in 2006 and adopted by the NCBA Board of Governors to recognize attorneys who demonstrate the "renaissance lawyer" qualities embodied by Judge McKnight, who died in 2004 while serving on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of N.C.

It honors an attorney whose trustworthiness, respectful and courteous treatment of all people, enthusiasm for intellectual achievement and commitment to excellence in work, and service to the profession and community, inspire others.

Bernstein, a partner in the firm of Parker, Poe, Adams & Bernstein, has provided service to the community and leadership to the bar throughout his career, including serving as the president of the Golden Circle Theatre, the Charlotte Symphony, the Charlotte Civitan Club, Temple Beth-El, Olde Providence Racquet Club, the American Symphony Orchestra League, the Foundation of Shalom Park, Inc., the Charlotte Jewish Community Center, Inc., Charlotte Lodge of B'nai B'rith and the Mecklenburg County Bar.

Deborah Greenblatt Outstanding Legal Services Attorney Award

Christine Trottier (Raleigh)

The award, named in memory of a lifelong legal services attorney, is presented to an attorney employed by a legal services organization who provides exemplary legal service through an agency or other nonprofit entity that serves low-income citizens. Since 1978, Trottier has worked for Disability Rights North Carolina (formerly Carolina Legal Assistance), representing indigent people with mental illness and developmental disabilities. When Greenblatt became ill, Trottier assumed leadership of CLA and steered it through tough times.

)William L. Thorp Pro Bono Award

Thomas S. Berkau (Smithfield)

The award recognizes lawyers who provide exceptional pro bono legal assistance to the state's low-income citizens and is named in memory of the founder of Legal Services of North Carolina.

Berkau, a solo practitioner in Smithfield, has dedicated countless hours to working with Legal Aid of North Carolina and served as an attorney advocate with the Guardian ad Litem Program for Abused and Neglected Children from 1984-1993.

Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award for Large Law Firms

Hunton & Williams

The award recognizes pro bono service by one of the 25 largest law firms in North Carolina. Hunton & Williams accords billable hour credit to all associates for each of the first 50 hours of pro bono service they provide each year. In 2008, the firm represented more than 200 pro bono clients, and its North Carolina lawyers devoted more than 6,000 hours to pro bono legal representation, reflecting approximately 4.62 percent of their gross billable hours.

Law Student Project Award

Charlotte School of Law SelfServe Center Group Project

The award is presented to a law student group that provides legal service beneficial to

low-income people in North Carolina.

Students at the Charlotte School of Law established a SelfServe Group Project to help the 26th Judicial District SelfServe Center, which is the first center of its kind in North Carolina. Law students Christina Sullivan and Christopher Neeson chaired the project.

YLD Younger Lawyer Pro Bono Award

Laura Slaughter (Rutherfordton)

The Young Lawyers Division created the award to promote pro bono activities among young or newly practicing attorneys.

Slaughter, a family lawyer, donated 57 hours of pro bono service during her first year of practice to the Mountain Area Volunteer Lawyers Program based out of Pisgah Legal Services in Asheville. Her caseload included 50B domestic violence matters and other family-law matters for victims of domestic violence. Prior to law school, she was a Peace Corps volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Citizen Lawyers


These awards recognize lawyers who provide exemplary public service to their communities. Honorees include elected and appointed government officials, coaches, mentors and voluntary leaders of non-profit, civic and community organizations.

This year's recipients were Paul Meggett of Hillsborough, James Narron of Smithfield, Robert Harrington of Charlotte, Paul Holt of Sylva, Carol Bruce of Greensboro, Kim Stogner of Winston-Salem, Lisa Angel of Raleigh, Wade Harrison of Burlington, Kristi Kessler Walters of Charlotte, Shirley Fulton of Charlotte, Philip Baddour Jr. of Goldsboro and Sen. Dan Clodfelter of Charlotte.

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