
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fall, 2009

BY: George M. (Jack) Neal, Jr.

TAKE A BOW BBA, YOU'VE BEEN RECOGNIZED!

Each year the ASB recognizes local bar associations based upon criteria of charitable and public service.

I am delighted to inform you that the Birmingham Bar Association has been awarded the Alabama State Bar Local Bar Award Of Achievement for 2009. This award will be presented on July 18 at the Grande Convocation of the ASB Annual Meeting.

The letter of Ed Patterson, Assistant Executive Director of the ASB advising us of this honor is posted on our Bar's web site if you wish to read it in its entirety. For now I wish to provide you with a quote of part of its last paragraph:

“We...commend your association for this very fine, well organized program. Your application is the most outstanding one I've ever received during my tenure at the Alabama State Bar.”

What follows is an excerpt of our Bar's application for this award but first let me express my gratitude to Richard Walker, 2009 Chair of our Public Service Committee, who spearheaded the gathering of all of the information and actually organized and prepared the application.

Much credit is also due the Women Lawyers, Young Lawyers and all of the other Sections of our Bar, the BBA Public Service and other committees and the Birmingham Bar Foundation, Beth, Crystal and staff, all of whom work tirelessly on their respective aspects to cause all of these good works to come to fruition.

Finally I thank and congratulate each and every individual member of our Bar who has contributed time and energy to volunteer for these worthwhile events, **KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!**

If anyone ever wondered what the Birmingham Bar does when not hosting CLE programs, picnics or Christmas parties, simply take a moment, relax and read the details of our Bar's contribution to our community over the last year.

All indications are that we are on track to exceed last year's efforts. In addition, next year our Bar will also be able to list the contributions of legal services by members of the YLS and our general membership through their efforts in support of the Birmingham Volunteer Lawyers Program wherein hundreds of persons unable to hire an attorney have been counseled in matters including foreclosures and domestic relations.

Below is the excerpt from our application. Please read this, enjoy and pick something you would like to do to participate in the future!

.....**BBA application excerpt**.....

1. **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT(S)** Please provide a brief description (200 words or less) of your project(s). Be sure to include a description of the role(s) played by your local lawyer volunteers in the undertaking of this project; e.g., seminar coordinator, seminar speaker, volunteer trainer, publication editor or writer, legal representation.

- **The YMCA Ronnie Noojin Race to the Courthouse:** The YMCA Ronnie Noojin Race to the Courthouse benefits the YMCA Strong Kids community programs. The BBA raised money for the race and volunteered to assist with many aspects of the race.

- **Alabama State Bar Young Lawyers Section Minority Pre-Law Conferences:** The BBA sponsored the Alabama State Bar Young Lawyers Section Minority Pre-Law Conferences.

- **Magic Moments:** The BBA Contributed \$4,500 to Magic Moments, an organization that grants "wishes" for terminally ill children.

- **Children's Harbor:** Contributed \$9,000 to Children's Harbor, which provides support, assistance, counseling and other services for families with children facing serious illnesses. The money donated helped to fund the "Night Light Program" at the Family Resource Center at Children's Hospital in Birmingham.

- **The Exceptional Foundation:** The BBA contributed \$26,500 to the Exceptional Foundation for a wheelchair-accessible van. The Exceptional Foundation provides social and recreational services and activities for mentally and/or physically challenged individuals.

- **My Sister's Closet Clothing Drive:** BBA members held a professional clothing drive for My Sister's Closet, a charity that distributes professional clothing and accessories to women who are trying to enter the work force.

- **Women's Fund's "Voices Against Violence" Giving Campaign:** BBA members participated as a sponsor of the Women's Fund's "Voices Against Violence" Giving Campaign which raises funds that are used to eliminate domestic violence in our community.

- **DHR School Uniforms Drive:** Provided school uniforms to children in DHR custody.

- **Family Courts' Children's Area Project:** Donated books and storage cubes to Family Courts' Children's Area.

- **Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure:** BBA members raised over \$1,000 to sponsor a team for the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.

- **Red Mountain Theater Holiday Excursion:** BBA members took two groups of underprivileged children to a Red Mountain Theater holiday production, provided for photographs to be made with Santa and provided snacks prior to the performance.

- **YWCA Santa's Workshop:** BBA members provided toys and donations for the YWCA Santa's Workshop and provided breakfast for parents participating in the event.

- **Bunny Bags Wine Tasting:** BBA members raised approximately \$4,519 at a wine tasting held on February 26, 2009 to purchase Bunny Bags (designed by the American Bar Association and contain items of information and comfort for children who are the victims of domestic violence) for children of domestic violence.

- **YWCA Purse and Passion Fundraiser:** BBA members contributed to the YWCA Purse and Passion fundraiser which supports essential services of the YWCA.

- **The Big Bad Wolf v. The Three Little Pigs Mock Trial:** BBA members co-sponsored a mock trial with the students of Holy Family Elementary School and Center Street Middle School including a breakfast reception.

- **Birmingham Bar Association Annual Scholarship Program:** The BBA provides \$500 scholarships annually for a law student at each of four (4) area law schools.

- **YWCA's Children in Crisis program:** The BBA raised \$1,500 to award to the YWCA's Children in Crisis program which aids children who have been exposed to domestic violence in their homes.

- **Juror Handbook Program:** BBA members provided more than 60,000 copies of the Juror Handbook since 2005 to be used by citizens reporting for jury duty. Presiding Judge Scott Vowell has cited the guide as a great tool "to assist citizens in serving their important role in preserving our Constitutional rights to a jury trial in Civil and Criminal cases".

- **Nat Bryan Memorial Fund:** In conjunction with the Marsh Rickard and Bryan law firm, THE BBA established the Nat Bryan Memorial Fund, helping to publish the January 2009 edition of the Juror Handbook and also establish Internet Access for the Jury Assembly Room in Nat's memory.

- **Charitable Equipment Program:** Designed to match law firm surplus equipment and furniture with needy charitable groups, Charitable Equipment Program is a conduit whereby BBA members match available equipment to needs in our area.

- **Memorial Scholarship Fund:** A special way to honor a loved one, the Memorial Scholarship Fund allows family and friends to pay tribute to a Birmingham attorney, his or her spouse, child or friend. Written acknowledgements are sent to all contributors and the surviving family. Gifts provide funds for two (2) \$2,000 scholarships presented by the Birmingham Bar Association annually to area law schools.

- **Luck be a Lawyer:** A black tie gala Luck be a Lawyer began in 2003. Through this event, over \$200,000 has been raised for charitable purposes and guests have enjoyed a gala event like none other in the legal community. The fun filled evening includes a live band, food, open bar and casino entertainment.

- Valentine's Day Party at the Jefferson County Rehabilitation Center: BBA members hosted the annual Valentine's Day Party at the Jefferson County Rehabilitation Center, providing refreshments and live music for about 60 residents who were able to attend the party and flowers and Valentine's Day cards for all residents, about 170 in number.

- Birmingham Bar Association Hooked on Books Book Drive: BBA members held the first annual Birmingham Bar Association Hooked on Books Book Drive in conjunction with the Junior League collecting 3753 books for the Junior League to distribute to various educational and charitable organizations.

- Service Juris 2008: BBA members planned and implemented Service Juris 2008 utilizing 175 volunteers from the Birmingham legal community and featuring projects at the following sites:

- Glenwood Autism and Behavioral Health Center where volunteers painted houses and rehabilitated natural areas;

- Jackson Elementary School (joint venture with the Magic City Bar Association) where volunteers painted classrooms, repaired playground equipment, and undertook landscaping work;

- Children's Village (which takes in children between the ages of 6 and 18 who are orphaned, abused, neglected, or have broken family relationships) where volunteers painted bedrooms and steam cleaned carpet;

- My Sister's Closet (an initiative of the Birmingham YWCA that assists women in need of career clothes for job interviews and new employment) where volunteers sorted and labeled donated clothes and installed shelving;

- The Bell Center (which is dedicated to maximizing the potential of children from birth to three years of age who are at risk for developmental delay) where volunteers moved furniture and cleaned up the playground and toys; and

- Community Kitchens of Birmingham (an organization dedicated to feeding the hungry in Birmingham) where volunteers served lunch and prepared food boxes for families.

- Big Brothers, Big Sisters School Supplies Drive: BBA members conducted its annual school supplies drive benefitting Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Feedback received via email is inserted below.

I am so excited to receive the abundance of school supplies donated by the Birmingham Bar Association. For most of us, back to school means receiving a supply list from our children's teachers then going to Wal-mart, Office Depot, or the local drug store and filling the order, many times with the best we can find because we want our children to have the best. The parents of the children in our

program want the best for their children too but for one reason or another many of them cannot afford even the smallest items. So...our parents dig through drawers for old pencils, they borrow money to purchase paper, and they dust off the worn out backpack from last year and put the meager supplies in it. The backpacks are put on the children and they are sent to school. The children don't feel the excitement of a new notebook, of putting a new pencil holder in the notebook and filling it with their new, brightly colored pencils and pens. There is no excitement about new markers and full bottles of glue. Instead of looking forward to school there is dread.

“The Birmingham Bar Association is changing all of this. Through your donations of school supplies the children of Big Brothers Big Sisters (900-1000 of them) can get excited about a new school year because they are prepared. Our children will have new pencils, glue, notebooks, paper, scissors, markers, rulers and MORE! They don't have to hang their heads when the teacher checks their supplies for the year or when their friends show them the stack of NEW supplies their parents could afford. The Birmingham Bar Association has provided the tools our children need to learn and the knowledge that their community does care about them.

On behalf of Big Brothers and Big Sisters and especially the children who received the supplies I am so thankful to have a partner as caring and generous as the Birmingham Bar Association.”

Sue Johnson, CEO
Big Brothers Big Sisters

“The School Supply Drive shows how much Big Brothers Big Sisters is blessed by the people in our community. The children and the staff in the schools that we serve are so grateful for the supplies that we are able to give to them. Without the Birmingham Bar Association donating to BBBS, we would not be able to help some of the children in our program who might otherwise go without the necessary tools they need for school.”

Kiranda Robbins
Big Brothers Big Sisters

- Children's Village Back to School Party: The BBA hosted its Second Annual Children's Village Back to School Party wherein members of the Bar shared lunch with the kids, enjoyed activities such as a water slide and dunking booth, presented each child with a \$50 gift card to help with back to school necessities, and supplied the boys' house and girls' house with gift cards for supplies, new vacuum cleaners and a steam cleaner. More importantly, the first Children's Village Citizens of the Year Awards Sponsored by the Birmingham Bar Association were awarded. The award is given to a male and female recipient for being a good example and showing leadership among their peers. Each recipient was presented with a trophy and a progressive plaque hangs in the home commemorating the award.

- Jefferson County Rehabilitation Center Christmas Party: BBA members hosted the annual Jefferson County Rehabilitation Center Christmas Party providing a Christmas gift for each of the 170 residents, refreshments and music from the Sixth Avenue Baptist Church Youth Choir.

- **Appellate Court Oral Arguments:** The Alabama Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals or the Court of Civil Appeals have traveled together to Birmingham for oral arguments each year since 2005. The BBA and Cumberland School of Law co-sponsor this event bringing in students from area high schools and colleges, members of the legal community, and the general public. It is a fascinating day for students and the public to see Alabama's highest Courts at work. The evening before the oral arguments, attorneys welcome the Courts to town with a reception. Additionally, a BBA attorney/member is sent to each participating school to educate students in regard to the legal system.

.....end of application excerpt.....

So there you have it. There was much more that could have been listed but space limitations would not allow. The collective efforts of our Bar, the Women's, Young Lawyers and other Sections, as well as the Foundation are impressive to say the least. In addition to the actual events of charitable and public service donated by these groups there are also annual monetary donations for charitable causes in excess of \$100,000.00. Imagine the positive impact of these efforts on our community and the individuals within it.

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!