

FAMILY LAW SECTION

SUBMITTED BY: David S. Pollock

Dear David,

I apologize for the delay in providing you with a report of the Family Law Section's activities and achievements for the 2007-2008 term. Below please find a summation of the various activities of the Section during my tenure as President.

Announcements and Guests.

- Bryan Neft, Esquire addressed the group on behalf of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation and its Attorneys Against Hunger (AAH) campaign.
- Barbara Griffin, Esquire was introduced to the Section as the new Allegheny County Bar Foundation Pro Bono Coordinator.
- Jay Blechman, Esquire addressed the Section as ACBA President-Elect.
- Domonic Verdini, M.S. Ed., L.P.C. spoke to the Section and described the anger management program and other counseling services offered by the Anger and Counseling Institute of Pittsburgh.
- Joel Fishman announced that the General Assembly posted a link to Purdons Consolidated Statutes on the internet as a result of a bill passed by Section Member and State Representative Elisabeth Bennington.
- Representatives from Parental Stress Center discussed the services they offer families including Safe Visits - Safe Families and Family Service Visitation.
- Representatives from Young Lawyer's Division Bar Leadership Initiative gave a presentation about a new project regarding juvenile domestic violence.

Children's Issues.

- The Children's Issues Committee met monthly to discuss issues affecting custody litigation. Additionally, the Committee sponsored numerous programs throughout the year, including:
 - o "Treating Children Traumatized by Domestic Violence," presented by Judy Cohen, M.D.;
 - o "Guardian Ad Litem Primer: When, Where, How and What," led by David J. Slesnick, Esquire;
 - o "Police Department Perspective on Custody Orders," led by C. Kurt Mulzet, Esquire;
 - o "The Contact Question: Is More Contact With The Previously Uninvolved or Absent Parent Always Better?," presented by Dr. Robert M. Wilson;
 - o "Sleeping Single in a Double Bed," addressing custody issues when the parties live under the same roof;
 - o "A Very Special Love," which addressed the challenges of special needs children;
 - o "Love is a Battlefield," which dealt with the preparation of a custody evaluator for trial; and
 - o "It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To," concerning custody litigation involving the older teen.
- The Children's Issues Committee also sponsored the Fifth Annual Brainstorming Breakfast Party where members discussed ideas for new children's programs.

Pro Bono.

- A new Pro Bono Committee was established with Elizabeth Molnar, Esquire serving as Chair. The Committee's goal is to develop more pro bono programs to assist the court in serving pro se litigants.
- Benjamin E. Orsatti, Esquire and Melaine Rothey, Esquire both received awards at the Fellows Dinner in October, 2007, in recognition of their outstanding pro bono service.
- In November, 2007, members of the Section attended an event titled "Pro Bono Rocks" at the Hard Rock Café in Station Square. The event was sponsored by the Allegheny County Bar Foundation's Pro Bono Center.

Programs.

- Section members attended various ACBA sponsored CLE's throughout the term, including:
- "Braces, Babysitters and Boarding School - Beyond Basic Support: Who Pays What and How Much;"
- "Qualified Domestic Relations Orders;"
- "Evidentiary Issues;" and
- "Obtaining and Using Criminal Records in Family Court."

Public Service.

- Led by Dana A. Levine, Esquire, the Section held a very successful food drive which benefited the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank. Collections were made at the Section holiday party.
- The Hispanic Lawyers Committee was active in recruiting attorneys experienced in family law who speak fluent Spanish.

Social.

- In August, 2007, and August, 2008, the Section held its annual summer picnic at PNC Park. Numerous Section members, along with law firm staff and family members, enjoyed a Pirates game and Skyblast.
- In December, 2007, the Section held its annual holiday party at Storms Restaurant.

Legislation, Rules and Guidelines.

- Section members met to discuss various pieces of proposed legislation, including:
 - o Recommendation 74, which sets forth a different formula by which support is to be calculated when a derivative benefit is being received;
 - o Recommendation 90, which addresses medical insurance premiums and giving recognition to step-parents providing payment toward the child's health care;
 - o Recommendation 94, setting forth that when an obligor's income is being withheld and payment is made by that person's employer within fifteen days from the date upon which the obligor's obligation would be considered overdue, the payment will still be considered timely;
 - o Senate Bill 1250, calling for a constitutional amendment to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman;
 - o Senate Bill 2252, regarding child medical support; and
 - o Senate Bill 2368, which would reduce the waiting period to obtain a divorce from two years to one year.

Membership.

- On October 25, 2007, the Sole and Small Firms Practitioners Section held a networking event. Those who attended were encouraged to join the Family Law Section.

I hope that this report will assist you in working towards the continued success of ACBA and the Family Law Section. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours very truly,
David S. Pollock