

LAWYERS JOURNAL

YLD launches annual children’s gift drive

By Ron Cichowicz

For children living in shelters, December can be the bleakest of months. But for hundreds of such youngsters in Allegheny County, the holiday season is made a little brighter, thanks to the ACBA Young Lawyers Division (YLD) annual Children’s Gift Drive and Holiday Party.

Through this selfless effort, these children receive presents while experiencing the fun, joy and laughter of the holiday season.

The Children’s Gift Drive and Holiday Party depends on the generosity of donors and volunteers. It is chaired by Devyn Lisi, an associate attorney with Massa Butler Giglione. The program is a YLD Public Service Committee (PSC) project and a joint effort with the YLD’s Bar Leadership Initiative (BLI). BLI Subcommittee Co-Chairs are Kylee Clark, Rachel Pressdee and McCall Behringer, while PSC Co-Chairs include Jesse Exilus and Kelly McGovern. In addition, Samantha Dorn is non-YLD council liaison to the program.

“This program is one of the most special the ACBA puts on each year and the YLD does great things with it,” said Lisi. “It continues because of the strong support each year from donors and volunteers. Because of them, this program continues to be successful. It’s wonderful to see the impact we have on our community.”

The program provides personalized holiday gifts to more than 900 children in more than a dozen shelters or programs throughout Allegheny County.

“In the past, prior to Covid, we had an in-person gift wrapping session everyone enjoyed,” said Lisi. “When Covid hit, we turned to an online format through Amazon, which worked well. Last year, we were able to reach nearly 1,000 children – more



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Dozens of volunteers, including the entire 2022-2023 YLD Bar Leadership Initiative class, stuffed more than 300 stockings during last year’s Children’s Gift Drive and Holiday Party. Some volunteers also dressed up as Santa Claus and delivered the stockings to twelve shelters.

than double from 2019 – using the on-line format.”

In 2022, 17 shelters and programs participated and 987 kids benefited. Sixty-nine firms, organizations or individual attorneys donated in some fashion. At least 12 shelters and programs already are participating this year and that number should grow.

Like last year, committee members will purchase gifts and coordinate efforts with both donors and recipients. This year the committee will again collect “stocking stuffers” while

also providing sponsors with an Amazon Wish List of items that can be purchased for each child. Suggested total cost of each gift per child is \$30 or less.

Lisi said the committee is reaching out to past sponsors, which includes law firms, organizations and individual attorneys, while adding that new sponsors are always welcome, this year through mid-November. They also intend to approach vendors who have provided items in the past.

Volunteers are invited to a stocking-stuffing event December 9, from 9 a.m.

to 6 p.m. at the ACBA’s headquarters in the Koppers Building. The committee is also seeking individuals to play Santa. (A suit will be provided if needed.)

“Through these efforts and the generosity of our donors and volunteers, hundreds of children living in shelters or other programs will experience this most wonderful time of the year,” Lisi said. “It shows these children, in such tangible ways, that people do care about them and they are loved.”

Anyone interested in more information or to participate can contact Lisi at dlisi@massalawgroup.com. ■

U.S. Magistrate Judge Lisa Pupo Lenihan steps down from the bench

Retirement reception to be held Nov. 15

By Zandy Dudiak

U.S. Magistrate Judge Lisa Pupo Lenihan stepped down from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania’s bench on Oct. 31, but her retirement is by no means the end of her involvement in the law.

Though her retirement plans include traveling, Lenihan has also decided to continue working as a mediator.

“One of the most rewarding things I do is mediate cases,” she explained.



Hon. Lisa Pupo Lenihan

If you’re going:

What: Retirement Reception for the Hon. Lisa Pupo Lenihan

When: 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 15

Where: Hotel Monaco

Cost: \$25

Registration deadline: Friday, Nov. 10

“It’s a real joy in one day to bring a case to closure.”

Lenihan’s nearly 20 years on the federal bench will be honored on Nov. 15 at Hotel Monaco with a reception

sponsored by the ACBA Federal Court Section, Civil Litigation Section and Women in the Law Division, as well as

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Give grace

By Marla N. Presley

True to my message when I accepted the gavel from Erica, I have spent the better part of three months connecting with ACBA members at their offices, at events, and sometimes over a coffee or cocktail. I make an effort with every lawyer to ask about their practice, their lives, and how we/I can help. Now that we are inching toward 2024, I am hearing the same message: the end of the year is particularly challenging. We are ferociously trying to capture every available billable hour to meet our goal, agonizing over elevation decisions, and chasing clients for outstanding A/R, all while balancing life and everything that comes with it. What if the Elf forgets to relocate to the kitchen to bake cookies by morning? How will all the gifts get bought, the cards get mailed, and the house look like Martha Stewart just swung by?

I share in all those stressors. I worry about important things, like how my office will fare against the others in my firm, whether the holidays have become too materialistic in light of the atrocities happening around the world, and whether I am putting enough time in relationships with family and friends who provide me with so much. But I also fret about things that I know to be wildly unimportant in the grand scheme of things: how I will make it to all the Divisions and Sections’ Holiday Parties, how I will stay (somewhat) on track with my newfound fitness routine, and how will I squeeze in travel, hydration, and sleep for the next few months?



Marla Presley
ACBA President

The unease, apprehension, and worry are human nature. But lawyers are a different breed. In speaking to dozens and dozens of lawyers recently, it is clear to me that we collectively focus on what we can do better, what we can do more, and what we can do differently. And this is why, particularly as we approach year end, we have to remind ourselves and remind each other that we are doing a good job, we deserve good things, and there are good times to come. As someone regularly reminds me, we have to give ourselves grace. And while we’re at it, we might as well give grace to each other.

But what exactly does this mean? It means to give yourself (and others) a chance, time, the ability to make mistakes without punishment, and forgiveness. Maybe we don’t have Pinterest-worthy homes, maybe our turkey is as dry as Catherine’s in

Christmas Vacation, and maybe we brought store-bought cookies to school. Maybe we missed our billable target by 20 hours, or came in second on a significant RFP, or lost out on a lateral. You know what? It’s okay. We are doing the best that we can in a hectic and monumentally trying profession. Giving ourselves the grace that we deserve allows us to try hard and move on. Because bigger things are to come, I am sure of it.

I received more comments to my 4,000 weeks message than other things I’ve written as President-Elect or President of the ACBA. And a number of you answered my calling: you reached out to tell me what you were going to do with your weeks. Many pledged to stop taking things for granted. Other promised to stop sweating the small stuff. And most vowed to take the trip, eat the dessert, or just say “yes” more frequently. I was humbled, moved, and inspired. Sure, sometimes lawyers get a bad rap. We’re the butt of jokes, the center of internet memes (or are they called gifs?), and often demonized by the community we seek to serve. By giving ourselves grace, we allow ourselves to stop agonizing over things and really focus on the more important aspects of our job, our community, and our life. We allow ourselves to focus on our weeks. I’ve tried to end every President’s message with a call to action. Mine for you in this edition is to give yourself grace. ■

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YLD CHAIR’S MESSAGE

The law and AI: A Sea(se)mingly good match

By Tara M. Sease

I am picturing it now – Professor Kingfield’s lecture hall. Come on, I know you can see it too. Rows of sweaty scared law students. Green chalkboards compounded with chalk remnant from the previous class that has been barely erased. A wooden podium for Professor Kingfield to tap his finger on as he looks down at his physical book and handwritten notes. The perfect set up for Professor Kingfield to administer the Socratic method of teaching on poor unprepared Timothy Bottoms. I have goosebumps just thinking about it.

Flashforward to today, how did we go from a legal world that instructed law students to handwrite briefs and utilize the library, to using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative Pre-trained Transformer, or more commonly known as “ChatGPT” in the practice of law.

Well first, understanding the new lingo is very important. You can do this! Remember, you already mastered words like “Ex parte” and “Habeas Corpus.” AI is the term to describe the different technologies performed through a machine that then has the ability to mimic cognitive functions of human intelligence. ChatGPT is a form of AI whereby a human inputs a prompt, and then ChatGPT provides a detailed response as if a human was responding to the prompt. Yes, okay – if you are like me, or even Professor Kingfield, my goosebumps just doubled.



Tara Sease
YLD Chair

Thankfully, there are some resources at your fingertips to navigate this unknown area that is taking over an archaic area such as the practice of law. To properly operate ChatGPT, so it truly benefits the lawyer and/or law firm, there needs to be some due diligence on the human end. I had the opportunity to sit down with Von Wooding, who is a recent law school graduate and the co-owner of Counsel Stack. After oversimplifying ChatGPT (a few times) for me, I, like many others, had some concerns about how and where ChatGPT was getting the information from, for its response, specifically when dealing with work product in a legal practice. Well, that is from the internet. Yes, the internet – the place where all the baseless

stories, fabricated articles, and untrue statements live. In writing.

BUT have no fear, because as my meeting with Von progressed, he described how Counsel Stack can benefit a law firm or company. In the simplest form, Counsel Stack creates a database, specifically tailored to a law firm’s needs, to moderate where GPT-4 pulls its responses from. Counsel Stack creates and secures a database with the correct and updated law pertaining to that firm, which works with GPT-4 in creating its reliable response. This way, GPT-4’s response is utilizing the database created by Counsel Stack, instead of perusing the vast internet for information, which may generate incorrect and/or false statements that effect GPT-4’s response.

Interestingly enough, when I asked Von about his goals for his company, his response had nothing to do with advancing AI or ChatGPT. Instead, it was focused on the human – the lawyer. Von said, “I want this company to help improve OTHER areas in a lawyer’s life by providing them with more time instead of wasting time. With the help of Counsel Stack, this company will allow great lawyers, who want to do great things, to actually go and do those great things – inside and outside of the courtroom.” Von and I both agreed that the lawyer life is daunting – office work, networking, court appearances, you name it – so in order for an attorney to make the most of his or her time, (s)he should

be working smarter, not necessarily harder.

Hmmmm...Professor Kingfield may have been onto something when he said, “You teach yourselves the law, but I train your mind. You come in here with a skull full of mush, and you leave thinking like a lawyer.” Little does he know, now, lawyers with help from companies like Counsel Stack, are following in the great Professor’s footsteps by teaching and training the machines to think like lawyers.

If you are interested in learning more about Counsel Stack, please visit www.counselstack.com or feel free to contact Von Wooding at ai@counselstack.com. ■

Tara M. Sease is an attorney at Adamczyk Law Offices, LLP, and can be reached at tsease@adamczykloffice.com.

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Hoping for a soft landing

By Bevin Baker

2023 has undoubtedly been a year of surprises, meaning investors must be flexible with their expectations. We came into the year somber after weathering the sharp market decline in 2022. It was the first time in at least 45 years that stocks and bonds had negative returns at the end of the calendar year. To battle high inflation (according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average inflation rate in 2022 was 8.0, the Federal Reserve raised interest rates seven times, which was the highest number of rate hikes in a single year since 2005.

Early this year, market growth was fueled by AI and technology names, and Europe and Japan showed stronger returns than predicted. Investors have been left wondering, “What’s next?” as we remain in an environment where it’s clear that interest rates will stay higher for longer, and inflation has slowed but has certainly not gone away.

Here are some trends to watch as we finish out 2023:

1. The economy is doing better than expected, yet there is still the question of a recession.

Many economists speculated that a recession would occur after the Federal Reserve increased rates in March 2022. Here we are, eleven

hikes later, and a broad economic downturn has yet to happen. Economists wonder, will we have a recession by the end of 2024, or has a rolling recession already occurred? A rolling recession occurs when different market sectors are hit at varying times.

For example, housing experienced a downturn in early 2022 as mortgage rates climbed and affordability was threatened. The housing market has stabilized, and while inventory is still low, mortgage rates have steadied, indicating that the worst is behind us. In the third quarter of 2023, inflation has continued to ease, and economic growth has been impressive this year. However, some metrics show that economic growth is slowing, and the future remains uncertain. Regardless of whether the economy has a hard or soft landing, if we do have a broad recession, it will likely be a widely anticipated event.

2. Consumers remain resilient, which could lead to a strong market recovery.

In comparison with other global financial crises or typical recessions, the average American is spending only 9.6% of their disposable income on debt payments, which is significantly lower than we saw during previous economic upsets. The labor market has remained strong, though its strength is gradually waning. Consumer spending

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boosting industries such as travel and leisure is speculated, supported by an increase in real average hourly earnings. However, consumers have been eroding their savings balances and taking on more debt.

With higher energy prices and student loan repayments resuming, consumer spending will be tested in the coming months. Corporations are also in better shape than they were in previous recessions. The average interest rate coverage ratio, used to determine a company’s ability to pay interest on its outstanding debt, is stronger than in previous recessions. Business spending has also held up due in part to investments in artificial intelligence capabilities. The combination of these factors is favorable for investors during uncertain outcomes.

3. Cash is at near-record highs – a bullish signal?

Money market rates sit around a 5% yield, based on the benchmark of the 3-month treasury, a vast departure from the zero-interest rate policy we have experienced since the global


financial crisis. More attractive interest rates have caused investors to gravitate toward cash and cash equivalents, to the tune of 5.6 trillion dollars, as reported by the Investment Company Institute.

However, the benefits of remaining in cash will be eroded by inflation, which still hovers at a higher-than-average rate. The upside of staying in cash will likely lessen as the Fed concludes rate increases. Historically, cash levels peak around market troughs and before market recoveries. After the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, the S&P 500 index saw 40% or more returns during the following three months. Sitting on the sidelines can be costly when it comes to achieving long-term financial goals and knowing when to reenter the market can be challenging. Typically, when the Fed ends rate hikes, yields on cash-like investments have fallen quickly in the following 18 months. Investors may be well served to take advantage of current yields and lean into holdings still valued attractively.

4. Is a Fed pause favorable for the markets and provides an opportunity?

Going back to 1995, investing in both the stock and the bond market has led to solid returns after the last Fed rate increase. In the previous four


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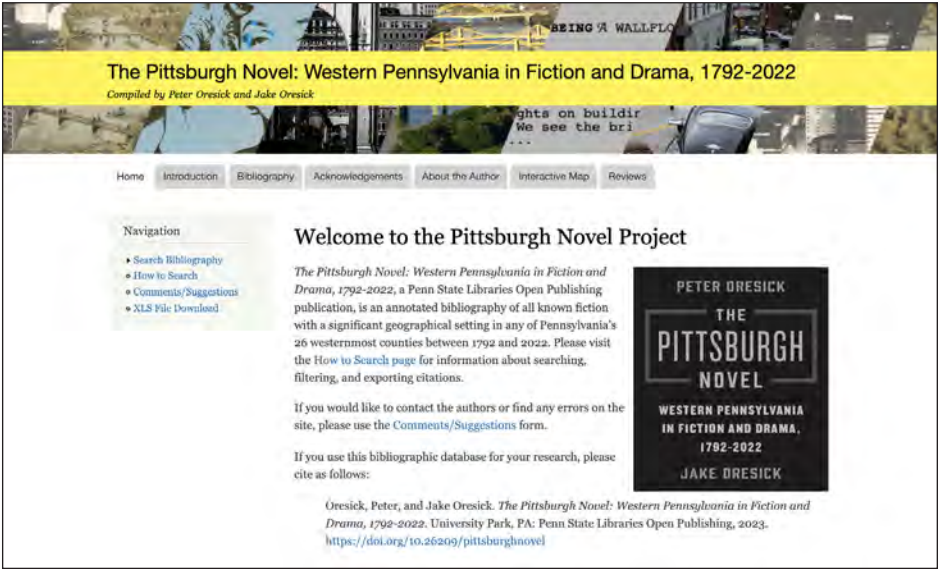
The Pittsburgh Novel has dozens of titles featuring attorneys, judges, trials or the profession at-large

By Jake Oresick

Do you love seeing our city on the big screen? *The Dark Knight*. *Wonder Boys*. *Sudden Death*. My father did, too, and he made it his mission to catalog all known works of fiction – including graphic novels, TV series and stage plays – with a significant geographical setting in our region. Peter Oresick created a first-of-its-kind, all-inclusive bibliography of Pittsburgh fiction, and had annotated over 1,000 titles when he passed away, before the project was complete. In the years that followed, I became a co-author and used every spare moment – while working as a judicial law clerk and later a civil litigation attorney – to pull my father’s magnum opus across the finish line.

Earlier this year, *The Pittsburgh Novel: Western Pennsylvania in Fiction and Drama, 1792-2022* was published as a dynamic website, which is free to access at openpublishing.psu.edu/pittsburghnovel. The bibliography can’t help with your legal practice, but it’s a lot of fun, and useful for finding a new read or a movie to stream.

If you enjoy legal fiction, *The Pittsburgh Novel* has dozens of titles featuring attorneys, judges, trials, or the profession at-large. And I’m not just guessing, here. The website – which is easily searchable by keyword, genre and geographical setting – indicates that 79 titles are tagged with the “attorneys” keyword, to say



nothing of “legal profession” (21 titles), “judges” (16 titles), “criminal trials” (eight titles), “law students” (four titles), “law firms” (two titles), and “legal aid” (two titles). If you prefer to search by place setting, 35 titles feature the Allegheny County Courthouse, while the three iterations of the Allegheny County Jail appear in a combined 20 titles. Other regional county courthouses are included in a combined 20 titles, the City-County Building is a setting in 20 titles, and Pitt and Duquesne law schools also make appearances.

While there are way too many legal-themed Pittsburgh novels to mention,

here are ten representative titles which are sure to pique your interest:

Mrs. Soffel. Motion picture. By Ron Nyswaner. 1984. The true story of the notorious Biddle Boys, Ed (Mel Gibson) and Jack (Matthew Modine), who overpowered victims with chloroform before robbing them. In 1901, the Biddles were convicted of killing a Mt. Washington shopkeeper and sentenced to death by hanging. While imprisoned in the Allegheny County Jail, the warden’s wife, Kate Soffel (Diane Keaton), became infatuated with Ed and helped the brothers escape. *Mrs. Soffel* is one of 10 Biddle Boys works in the bibliography.

The Associate. Novel. By John Grisham. 2009. Kyle McAvoy, senior editor of the *Yale Law Journal*, was linked to a sexual assault as a Duquesne University undergraduate. To keep his secret, Kyle is blackmailed to join the fictitious Scully & Pershing, the world’s largest law firm, for the purpose of stealing client secrets. Regional settings include Homewood Cemetery and Heinz Field. In real life, Duquesne University officials were unhappy with the school’s portrayal.

The Murder of Stanford White. Novel. By S. Gerald Langford. 1962. A true crime novelization of the sensational love triangle between: Harry Kendall Thaw, heir to a coal and railroad fortune; Thaw’s wife, actress Evelyn Nesbit; and Stanford White, an architect and socialite. On June 25, 1906, Thaw shot and killed White at the rooftop theatre of Madison Square Garden in front of hundreds of witnesses. Thaw’s criminal trial was dubbed “the Trial of the Century.” This novel is one of at least three titles on the subject.

Simple. Novel. By Kathleen George. 2012. Detective Richard Christie investigates the murder of Cassie Price, a Pitt Law student and paralegal. Suspicion first falls on Cal Hathaway, a South Oakland handyman, and then Mike Connolly, a gubernatorial hopeful with whom Cassie had been having an affair. George, a Johnstown

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LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT
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cycles, cash has been outpaced by equities and fixed income, with the most robust returns occurring in the twelve months following the last rate hike. Investors who wait too long to reenter the market may miss out on potential gains and risk having to buy in when prices are higher in the future. The Federal Reserve opted to pause interest rates in its September meeting and left the door open for an additional hike this year. While predictions show rate cuts next year, there will likely be only two, which is fewer than previously expected.

5. Bull markets outlast bear markets.

A bull market signifies a roughly 20% increase from recent lows, and a bear market occurs when a stock market index falls by at least 20% from recent highs. Bull markets tend to last a median of twice as long as bear markets, partially due to stock prices trending upward over time. There is also a significant difference in returns. The average bull market has a 256% gain, while the average bear market is only a 33% decline. Recoveries are not linear, and investors must keep a long-term perspective and try not to be derailed by market volatility and unsettling headlines.

In conclusion, investors are reminded that where risks exist, opportunities exist, and vice versa, and attempting to time the market is a mistake. Instead, it would be better for investors to proceed cautiously and be adaptable as 2023 ends. ■

Bevin Baker, CEPA, is a Financial Advisor at Fort Pitt Capital Group LLC.

President Judge Kim Berkeley Clark receives Lifetime Achievement Award at PBA Minority Attorney Conference

By ACBA Staff

President Judge Kim Berkeley Clark, Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania, Allegheny County, was honored with an A. Leon Higginbotham Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award during the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) Minority Attorney Conference, Oct. 5-6 at the Hilton Harrisburg.

The A. Leon Higginbotham Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes the accomplishments of a lawyer or judge who has demonstrated dedication to the legal profession and the minority community through civil, community or legal service. Higginbotham, who died in 1998, was a civic leader, author, academic and federal appeals court judge who fought tirelessly against racial discrimination.

Judge Clark has served on the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas since 1999. Former Gov. Tom Ridge appointed her to a 10-year term and she was retained for additional 10-year terms in 2009 and 2019. In 2018, former Gov. Tom Wolf appointed her as the first African American president judge to serve in Allegheny County.

In her current capacity, Judge Clark oversees all divisions of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, including Civil, Criminal, Family and Orphans' courts. Previously,

she served as administrative judge of the Family Division and supervising judge of the Juvenile Court.

Understanding that many people who enter the family division experience trauma, Judge Clark worked to develop a "trauma-informed" courthouse, which has served as a model for other courts in Pennsylvania and nationwide.

Prior to taking the bench, Judge Clark served as an assistant and deputy district attorney in Allegheny County for nearly 16 years. During her tenure, she tried more than 150 jury cases, including some of the first gang-related and drive-by shooting homicide cases in Allegheny County. In addition, she led the Crimes Persons Unit, which handled all sexual assault, child abuse cases and serious violent crimes in the county.

Active in the legal community, Judge Clark serves as a member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Juvenile Procedural Rules Committee; Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee; Pennsylvania Interbranch Commission on Racial, Gender and Ethnic Fairness; Pennsylvania State Children's Roundtable; and the American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Standards Task Force. She also serves as president of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network Board of Directors.

Previously, Judge Clark served as president of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges, and chair of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission and the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board. She is also a Past-President of the Allegheny County Bar Association.

The recipient of numerous awards, Judge Clark received the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence from the National Center for State Courts in 2017; it is one of the nation's highest judicial awards. Additionally, she received the Philip Werner Amram Award from the Allegheny County Bar Association, the Susan B. Anthony Award from the Women's Bar Association of Western Pennsylvania and the History Makers Award from the Heinz History Center. In 2013, Judge Clark had the honor of moderating a panel discussion at the White House on the needs of caregivers for children of incarcerated parents.

Judge Clark earned her Juris Doctor from the Duquesne University School of Law and her bachelor's degree from Tennessee State University, Nashville. ■

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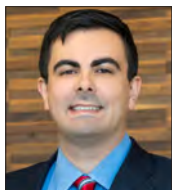
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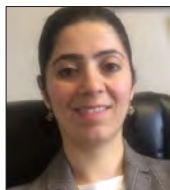
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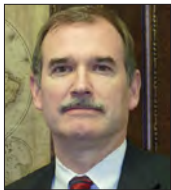
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Weaponizing addiction stigmas: The dangers of mishandling alcohol accusations in Family Court

By Chris Beck

Addiction is a complex medical condition that affects millions of individuals worldwide. Yet, despite the vast research and understanding of its nature, addiction remains one of the most stigmatized conditions in society. This stigma becomes particularly damaging when weaponized in the context of family law, where accusations of alcohol abuse can have life-altering consequences for co-parents and their children.

Addiction: A Chronic Disease, Not a Moral Failing

Before delving into the intricacies of family law dynamics, it's crucial to understand that addiction is a chronic disease and not a moral failing. This disease is characterized by a compulsive drive to use substances despite knowing the severe consequences. Like other chronic diseases, it calls for understanding, compassion, and adequate support. Unfortunately, the prevailing societal view frequently depicts addiction as a moral failing or a sign of weak character, instead of recognizing it as a long-lasting illness.

The Emotional and Psychological Toll of Alcohol Abuse Accusations

In Family Court, accusations of alcohol abuse can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, if a parent

genuinely struggles with addiction, it's essential to ensure the child's safety and well-being. On the other hand, false or exaggerated accusations can be weaponized to gain an upper hand in custody and alcohol battles, causing significant emotional and psychological distress to the accused parent.

The accused parent may face feelings of shame, guilt, and isolation, even if they are innocent. They may also experience anxiety over the potential loss of custody or limited visitation rights. Such emotional turmoil can further strain their relationship with their child and even impact their ability to parent effectively.

The Flawed Notion: Addiction Equals Poor Parenting

One of the most damaging misconceptions in Family Law is the automatic equation of addiction with poor parenting. While it's undeniable that severe addiction can impair one's ability to care for a child, it's a gross oversimplification to assume that every individual with a present or past history of substance abuse is unfit to parent.

Many individuals in recovery or those who have a history of alcohol misuse can be loving, attentive, and responsible parents. By stigmatizing addiction and making sweeping generalizations, the court risks making unjust custody decisions that may not be in the best interest of the child.

Unreliable Evidence and Misguided Perceptions

In the intricate realm of family court, the accuracy of the evidence presented plays a pivotal role in determining the outcome of custody battles. Traditional methods, such as lab testing, while widely used, do not provide real-time data on alcohol consumption, potentially putting children in danger of being with an intoxicated parent, or causing unjust rulings that harm a parent's reputation when their alcohol consumption did not affect the child.

Soberlink is a game-changer in the realm of alcohol monitoring. Unlike conventional methods, Soberlink's discreet and portable breathalyzer system integrates advanced remote breathalyzer technology with real-time reporting and facial recognition. This ensures that the readings are not only accurate but also verifiable, as the system confirms the identity of the individual taking the test. Further, it employs proprietary sensors that detect artificial air (such as that from an air pump) to combat attempts to tamper. The monitoring mechanism of Soberlink provides courts with a comprehensive view of an individual's sobriety journey, making it harder for genuine instances of intoxication to be overlooked or for false accusations to stand.

For parents who are genuinely committed to their recovery or those

wrongly accused, Soberlink offers a beacon of hope. It serves as tangible proof of their sobriety, allowing them to rebuild trust with the court system and, more importantly, with their children. By providing consistent and reliable data, Soberlink aids in dispelling doubts and countering baseless allegations, ensuring that decisions are made based on facts rather than misconceptions.

However, even with accurate tools, the court's perception of a co-parent's ability to care for their child can be skewed by deep-rooted biases against addiction. This is where education and awareness play a crucial role. Judges, lawyers, and other stakeholders in the family law system need to be adequately informed about the nature of addiction and the potential for recovery.

The Impact on Children

Perhaps the most significant victims of weaponized addiction stigmas are the children caught in the crossfire. Children are incredibly perceptive, and they can pick up on the tension, animosity, and distress that such accusations bring. This can lead to feelings of confusion, guilt, and anxiety.

Moreover, unjust custody decisions based on stigmatized views can deprive children of meaningful relationships with one of their parents. It's essential to remember that the primary goal in

Continued on page 16

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Construction Law Happy Hour

PHOTO BY BRIAN KNAVISH

ACBA President-Elect Regina Wilson (far left) and ACBA Construction Law Section Chair Haig Sakoian (far right) pause for a photo with event sponsors Steve Dines and David Duffus of HKA at the Construction Law Section’s fall happy hour last month. Some 25 construction litigators – including several who just passed the bar exam – turned out for food, beverages and “bar games” at Five Iron near Market Square.



YLD Food Bank Volunteer Event

SUBMITTED PHOTO

The ACBA Young Lawyers Division went to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank on Sept. 8 to help those in need. Volunteers included Lauren Kelly Gielarowski, Gianna Kelly, Katerina Vassil, Joanne Parise, Sam Dhaliwal, Paige Tamecki, Amber Manson-Webb, Grace Mannix and Diana Bruce. Thank you to ALL the volunteers who turned out to the event and for making a difference.



YLD Welcome Back

PHOTO BY JAMES PIAGGIO

The ACBA Young Lawyers Division welcomed back its members with happy hour on Sept. 12 at Cinderlands Warehouse. Michael Wise, Daniel Maier, Adam Murdock and Kerven Moon of event sponsor Burns White pause for a photo with YLD Chair Tara Sease (center).

A close-up, black and white photograph of a 32GB USB drive. The drive is silver and black, with "32GB" printed on it. It is positioned diagonally, with the top left corner pointing towards the viewer. The background is a blurred, pixelated pattern of black and white squares.

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A photograph of two women, Colleen E. Ramage and Nikki Velisaris Lykos, sitting at a table. They are both wearing black blazers and are smiling at the camera. Colleen is on the left and Nikki is on the right. They have their hands clasped on the table in front of them.

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Dr. Chaves-Gnecco presented with El Sol Award

By Rick Shrum

A little more than two decades ago, Dr. Diego Chaves-Gnecco founded a mobile clinic that would provide health care for younger populations of Southwestern Pennsylvania. He named it, appropriately, “Salud para Ninos” – Spanish for “Health for the Children.”

That title, also appropriately, stands for Students, Residents, Faculty and Latinos United Against Health Disparities.

The clinic endures to this day and continues to be a beacon for the local Hispanic community, and for the native Colombian who launched it. Salud para Ninos serves newborns to 18-year-olds, and some a little older. The name also provides a glimpse of the career of a multi-tasking physician commonly known as “Dr. Diego.” He is a developmental-behavioral pediatrician, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Medicine and the director of Salud para Ninos.

Diagnosis and treatment of children with Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are among his specialties, along with providing care to families and children with disabilities; care to children from minority and under-served populations; and dealing with barriers to health-care access.

“Dr. Chaves-Gnecco is an integral part of the Hispanic population here. His clinic provides health care to children across Southwestern Pennsylvania,” said Rebeca Himena Miller, an attorney with Leech Tishman Fuscaldto & Lampl LLC.



PHOTO BY KELLIE WARE

All ACBA members were invited to join the ACBA Hispanic Attorneys Committee in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month on Oct. 19 at La Palapa Restaurant. This year, the El Sol Award was presented to Dr. Diego Chaves-Gnecco, the founding Pediatrician of the Salud para Niños (Health for the Children) clinic. Pictured are Hispanic Attorneys Committee Chair Juan Paz-Rosario, Dr. Diego Chaves-Gnecco and ACBA President-Elect Regina Wilson.

A native of Mexico, Himena Miller also is vice chair of the Allegheny County Bar Association’s Hispanic Attorneys Committee, which recently honored Dr. Chaves-Gnecco for his expansive work. The panel, made up of about a dozen Hispanic members of the local legal community, presented him with the ACBA’s annual El Sol Award during a dinner Oct. 19 at La Palapa, South Side.

The El Sol Award, Spanish for “The Sun,” was initiated by the committee in 2008 as part of its celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, a national celebration since 1988.

The local award, according to criteria, goes to an individual who “exemplifies distinguished service to the community at large by being an exemplary advocate and contributing his/her time and talents toward

the betterment of the local Hispanic community.”

Dr. Chaves-Gnecco did not expect to be that individual. “I was really surprised that I was named, and I was humbled by it,” he said. “I am very grateful to the Allegheny County Bar Association.”

Dr. Chaves-Gnecco was accompanied by his wife, Marysue Grassinger, and son, Gabriel, at the awards dinner. The event, according to Himena Miller, took place at a restaurant that is a favorite of the Hispanic Attorneys Committee. “La Palapa is a smaller venue,” she said, “but we love it. The committee likes to support a Hispanic restaurant.”

The doctor was drawn to pediatrics and serving those with Autism and ADHD. “As pediatricians, there is a lot we can do,” he said. “The ultimate goal is to make sure children not only grow up free of illnesses but have the ability to achieve their highest potential. Development became a big cause of mine.”

He added that a lot of progress has been made in the treatments of Autism and ADHD. “There are more tools to benefit the kids.”

Dr. Chaves-Gnecco has nurtured the mobile clinic into one with culturally aware staff members, who provide comfort and medical care to youths and families. For youths with insurance coverage, Salud para Ninos operates the clinic three days a week in Oakland at the Primary Care Center of Children’s Hospital in Oakland. The

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MEDIATION TRAINING

SESSION 1: April 3, 4 & 5, 2024 8AM-4PM
SESSION 2: April 18 & 19, 2024 8AM-4PM

This Basic Mediation Training fulfills basic requirements required by most court sponsored mediation programs, including the Western District of Pennsylvania, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court and the Generations Program. As a base to their mediation training, participants will first gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychology of conflict and negotiation. Participants will then be trained in basic mediation skills and be encouraged to begin developing their own mediation style.

WHAT PAST PARTICIPANTS SAY

This was the best training I've received as a lawyer. The course drastically improved how I approach the settlement of any case. This is a master class in resolving disputes – and I'm a better lawyer because of it.
JULIAN NEISER, ESQ.

I attended several mediation classes after taking Selina and Bernie's course, and their class was by far the most useful and enjoyable. They are one of the best educational teams I have ever encountered.
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THE PITTSBURGH NOVEL
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native, has authored 10 Pittsburgh novels.

The Ambulance Chaser. Novel. By Brian Cuban. 2021. Jason Feldman is a personal injury attorney who uses drugs between court appearances. Feldman is shocked when David Chaney, a long-disappeared childhood friend, emerges after 30 years to advise that authorities have discovered the remains of Heather Brody, their high school classmate. Cuban – a Mt. Lebanon native, Pitt Law grad and brother of business mogul Mark Cuban – included several local settings, like the Original Hot Dog Shop, the Cathedral of Learning and the William Penn Hotel.

Harm Not the Earth. Novel. By Liz Milliron. 2021. Assistant public defender Sally Castle steps outside of her office, and around the rules, to help a battered woman accused of murdering her abuser. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania State Police trooper Jim Duncan investigates when two bodies pulled from the flooded Casselman River are revealed to be partners in a controversial environmental group. The two cases become intertwined. This novel is part of Milliron’s Laurel Highlands Mystery series set in Fayette and Somerset Counties.

But Remember Their Names. Novel. By Hillary Lock Bell. 2011. Cynthia Jakubec, a blue-collar kid and recent Harvard Law graduate, feels stuck in Pittsburgh when her Manhattan law firm postpones new hires during the Great Recession of 2008. Following a high-profile murder, Cynthia represents the 17-year-old defendant. The author is an attorney.

Zelienople Road. Novel. By Brian Lee Weakland. 2010. In this dramatic conclusion to Weakland’s Rivers of Pittsburgh trilogy, Matty Moore, the late governor’s lovechild-turned-crack newspaper intern, stands trial for murder in Butler County. Settings include SCI-Pittsburgh and St. Benedict the Moor Church in the Hill District.

Railroaded! Novel. By Whitfield Grant. 2004. When Pittsburgh Steelers star free safety Tony Williams rejects the advances of the team owner’s daughter, she accuses Tony of rape. Two lifelong friends must help defend Tony in a racially-charged, highly-publicized trial. Settings include Three Rivers Stadium and St. Vincent College. The author is an attorney.

Those Who Kill. TV series. By Glen Morgan. 2014. This series follows Catherine Jensen (Chloë Sevigny), a detective, and Thomas Schaeffer (James D’Arcy), her partnering forensic psychiatrist, as they investigate murders. In a subplot, Catherine pursues her suspicious stepfather, a prominent judge, who she suspects is a murderer. The series was canceled after ten episodes. ■

Jake Oresick is an attorney at Houston Harbaugh, P.C. and can be reached at oresickjs@hh-law.com. His practice is focused in the areas of business litigation, insurance coverage and bad faith, environmental law, intellectual property and construction.

WEAPONIZING ADDICTION STIGMAS
continued from page 13

family law should always be the best interest of the child. This means making decisions based on accurate information, compassion, and understanding, rather than misguided perceptions and biases.

Conclusion

Weaponizing addiction stigmas in family court is a dangerous and damaging practice. It’s essential to approach addiction as the medical condition it is, offering support and understanding rather than judgment. By challenging flawed notions, relying on accurate evidence, and prioritizing the well-being of children, family law can ensure that justice is truly served. ■

Chris Beck is the VP of Family Law Business Development for Soberlink Healthcare. He works with family law judges, attorneys and health care professionals across the country to educate them on Soberlink’s modern approach to alcohol monitoring for child custody cases. He holds a BA in Psychology from the University of California Irvine with an emphasis in child psychology.

DR. CHAVES-GNECCO
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clinic operates elsewhere once or twice a week for the uninsured.

It also offers virtual visits for parents with transportation challenges; interpretation services; car seat checks in Spanish (sometimes replacing seats); a bilingual literacy project; community CPR training; and a 24-hour phone line.

Dr. Chaves-Gnecco also is credited with creating the first pediatric bilingual, bicultural clinic in this quadrant of the state.

He began his health-care training and education at institutions in Bogota, Colombia, before becoming a visiting instructor at Pitt’s School of Medicine Center for Clinical Pharmacology in 1998. He obtained a master’s degree in Public Health at the university in

2000, and began a pediatrics residency at UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh in 2002.

Dr. Chaves-Gnecco joined the hospital’s Community Oriented Residency Education (CORE) program, which strives to train leaders in community health and child advocacy. As part of that training, he created the bilingual-bicultural clinic that, in 2002, would ultimately evolve into Salud para Ninos.

Himena Miller, who is involved in ACBA’s Young Lawyers Division as well, will assume a larger role in the next El Sol presentation. She said Juan Paz-Rosario, an associate with The Lynch Law Group, will depart as chair of the Hispanic Attorneys Committee. “He brought me on as vice chair so I can be chair next year,” she said. “The committee is important to me because I’m Hispanic. It’s really a cool cross-pollination.”

She moved from Mexico to Western Pennsylvania when she was 8, a relocation Himena Miller admits is not common. “It’s interesting that my family ended up here. My stepdad was from Pittsburgh and pulled us here. My family keeps its ties with Mexico, but I’ve spent most of my life in this area. It’s a very beautiful and interesting story.” ■

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PHOTOS BY JAMES PIAGGIO
ACBA President Marla Presley, YLD Chair Tara Sease, Susan Abramowich, Carolyn Abramowich, ACBA President-Elect Regina Wilson and YLD Chair-Elect Danielle Parks pause for a photo during the ACBA Young Lawyers Division’s Esquire Open “Pickleball Tournament” on Oct. 10 at the Rivers Club.



John Prorok and Renee Howard-Prorok take first place.



ACBA President Marla Presley and ACBF YLD Trustee Connor Sease pause for a photo during the tournament.



Meg Burkardt and Caroline Bailey take second place.



Jeff Heiskell and Adam Cooper take fourth place.



Anthony Hassey and Jacob Naylor take third place.



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Bar Briefs

News and Notes

ACBA Basketball League begins in January. Looking to hit the hardwood? All members are invited to participate in the ACBA Basketball League, which begins play in early January with the schedule continuing into March. Games will be played on Sunday and Monday evenings at the Jewish Community Center in Squirrel Hill. Teams are divided into two divisions: Division A is a more competitive level, and Division B is an “intramural” level. For those interested in forming a team, note that the team should be composed primarily of legal professionals (attorneys and staff), though a limited number of law students or non-lawyers is acceptable. Those looking to play but not interested in forming an entire team can reach out to express interest and be placed on a team as space allows. The cost will be approximately \$1,200 per team; for more information, contact Scott Scheinberg at sscheinberg@jonesday.com.

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Christina Lane

Likeness (NIL) and the newest developments at the high school level. She addressed over 100 high school athletic directors, principals and school counselors in attendance to update them on the PIAA’s recently adopted ‘Three Strikes’ policy regarding a student’s violation of NIL rules.

Maiello Brungo & Maiello, LLP announces that attorney **Christina Lane** spoke at the Tri-State Area School Study Council & University of Pittsburgh’s Annual NCAA Update forum. Lane, a partner at MBM, spoke about Name Image

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Rebeca Himena Miller

Sciences Industry Group.

Leech Tishman is pleased to announce the addition of a new attorney to the firm, **Rebeca Himena Miller**. Based in the Pittsburgh office, Miller will join the firm as an associate in the Intellectual Property Practice Group and Life

Change in Status

Sheri Lynn Geis has been reinstated to active status.

Wonder if your decisions, legal advice or other professional actions are ethical?

Members can get consultation on their legal actions and potential actions through the ACBA Professional Ethics Hotline.

All calls are confidential.

See ACBA.org/OfficerAssignments for details.

People on the Move



Gabrielle K. Shaulis

The attorneys of Rothman Gordon are pleased to announce that **Gabrielle K. Shaulis** has passed the Bar and is the newest associate at the firm. Shaulis will practice with the Employment Litigation and Labor & Employment groups, as well as



Jake Noble

Anderson & Labovitz is pleased to announce attorney **Jonathan “Jake” Noble** has joined its firm as an associate. He focuses his practice in the areas of Estate Planning and Administration, Elder Law and Real Estate. Anderson &

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The Honorable
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The Honorable
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The Honorable
Jennifer A. Satler



The Honorable
Christine A. Ward

These judges are recommended for retention by the Allegheny County Bar Association. For more information, visit our Judicial Vote 2023 website at www.JudicialVote2023.org.

Additionally, the ACBA Judiciary Committee has issued the following ratings for those judicial candidates seeking to be elected judge:

SUPERIOR COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA
Jill Lipman Beck – Highly Recommended

ALLEGHENY COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
R. Anthony DeLuca – Highly Recommended
Patrick A. Sweeney – Recommended

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