

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SARASOTA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

# THE DOCKET



MAY 2026

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## FEATURED ARTICLES

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**The Women Who Raise Us: How Maternal Influence Shapes the Practice of Law**

**SCBA President's Column:** A Centennial Milestone and a Transformational Change for the SCBA

**YLD President's Column:** A Day in the Life: Young Lawyer Mothers





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[SCBA@SARASOTABAR.COM](mailto:SCBA@SARASOTABAR.COM)

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## PUBLISHER & EDITOR

Holly Lipps  
SCBA Executive Director

## EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Emily Lethbridge  
Williams Parker

## GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Franchesca Angotti  
Angotti Design

# IN THIS ISSUE

- 06**    **Feature**  
Mother's Day
- 08**    **SCBA President's Column:** A Centennial Milestone and a Transformational Change for the SCBA
- 10**    **YLD President's Column:** A Day in the Life: Young Lawyer Mothers
- 14**    **SCD President's Column:** Evictions for the Estates Attorney
- 16**    **CDI Chair's Column:** A Motion to Dance Is Granted: Celebrating Community and Connection
- 18**    **If Lawyers Wrote the Weather Report:** A Sarasota Forecast for May 2026
- 22**    **Mock Trial:** An Unexpected Yes, and the Lessons That Followed
- 24**    **The Women Who Raise Us:** How Maternal Influence Shapes the Practice of Law
- 28**    **In Memoriam**
- 30**    **Welcome New Members**
- 31**    **Classified Ads**  
**Will Search Notice**
- 32**    **SCBA Events Schedule**
- 33**    **100% Club**

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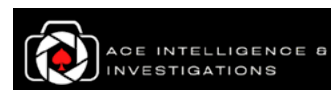
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## **A Note for Mother's Day**

May 10th, 2026

As we approach Mother's Day, we take a moment to recognize the many individuals within our legal community who balance the demands of their profession with the equally important responsibilities of caregiving and mentorship.

The practice of law requires time, focus, and commitment, often alongside family responsibilities that are just as significant. Whether as parents, caregivers, or mentors, many of our members play a vital role both in their work and in the lives of others.

We extend our appreciation to those who support, guide, and care for the next generation, and to all who contribute to strengthening both our profession and our community.



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## SCBA PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*By: Sara Castro, Esq.  
Castro Potts Law Firm PLLC*

# A Centennial Milestone and a Transformational Change for the SCBA

As the Sarasota County Bar Association enters its centennial year, we have found ourselves reflecting not only on where we have been, but more importantly, where we are going.

For decades, the SCBA, like many bar associations, has relied on a section-based model to deliver programming, foster collegiality, and provide opportunities for professional growth. Those sections have served an important role in building community among practitioners with shared interests, and we are grateful for the many members who have devoted their time and energy to making them successful.

At the same time, the practice of law, and the way we all choose to spend our time, has evolved. Across professions, membership organizations are facing a common challenge: people are more intentional than ever about how they allocate their time outside of work. For lawyers, that means balancing demanding practices with family, wellness, and the limited time available for professional engagement.

We have listened.

Over the past year, the SCBA has been working behind the scenes, devoting significant time and effort, to better understand how we can deliver greater value to our members. We have taken a hard look at attendance patterns, member feedback, and the types of programming that truly resonate. The conclusion has been clear: our members are not looking for more programming. They are looking for better programming.

Programming that is relevant and unique to our local bar. We want to ensure it is worth stepping away from your desk, logging onto Zoom, or giving up time you might otherwise spend with family or on well-earned downtime. With that in mind, we are excited to share a significant evolution in how the SCBA approaches member engagement.

Beginning in the 2026-2027 bar year, the SCBA is transitioning from a traditional section-based structure to a centralized Programs Committee model. Practice-area-specific programming will remain a core part of our offerings, now delivered through a more coordinated and strategic structure. This change is designed to modernize our organization and allow us to deliver more intentional, higher-quality programming across all practice areas. This initiative was born out of our annual, all-day strategic planning session last year under the leadership of then-President Bryan Kessler. What began as a thoughtful discussion about how to better serve our members has evolved into a year-long effort, with count-

less hours devoted to evaluating, refining, and implementing this new approach. We are proud to now formally roll out that vision during our centennial year.

Rather than operating in silos, this new structure brings together a diverse group of practitioners to collaborate on programming that serves the full membership while still ensuring subject matter depth. The Programs Committee is charged with developing a wide range of offerings, from CLEs and practice-specific education to networking, mentoring, and signature events, while coordinating efforts across the organization to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

Importantly, this shift does not mean the loss of subject matter-specific programming. To the contrary, it allows us to deliver it more effectively. Practice-area content, whether in litigation, transactional work, appellate practice, family law, real property, or beyond, will remain a core part of what we offer. The difference is that it will now be curated and delivered with a broader, more strategic perspective, ensuring quality, consistency, and relevance.

We are also placing a renewed emphasis on programming that cannot be easily replicated elsewhere, events and opportunities that are uniquely Sarasota. Whether through meaningful engagement with the bench, cross-practice collaboration, or signature events that bring our legal community together, our goal is to make every SCBA offering feel worthwhile.

I would like to recognize Michele Stephan-Arsenault and Chris Nigro, Co-Chairs of the Programs Committee, for the extraordinary amount of time and effort they have devoted to bringing this initiative to life. Michele was instrumental in drafting the Committee's Charter, thoughtfully revising it multiple times while coordinating closely with the Board and Governance Committee and incorporating their direction to ensure a strong and effective framework. Chris has likewise dedicated significant effort to shaping the Committee's vision, including extensive work on planning for the 2026-2027 bar year. Together, Michele and Chris have spent countless hours behind the scenes, alongside their service on the Board, to ensure this new structure is positioned for success from day one.

We are equally grateful to the members of the Programs Committee, who have already been actively engaged in meaningful planning for the upcoming year and who will continue to dedicate their time and efforts to developing and executing high-quality programming for our membership: Marisa Agganis, Maury Azerad, Jessica

Close, Lisa Gallagher, Richard Perlman, and Alexis Schad.

We extend our sincere thanks to our current Section Chairs, ADR (Tara Gess), Business Law (Adria Jensen), Civil Trial (Chris Nigro), Elder Law (Kate Fall), Estate Planning & Probate (Lisa Gallagher), Family Law (Richard Perlman), Real Property (Maury Azerad), and Solo/Small Firm (Cyndi Riddell), and their dedicated committees. Their continued service through August 31, 2026, and their ongoing efforts have made, and continue to make, this year's programming exceptional.

Change is never undertaken lightly, particularly in an organization with as much history and tradition as ours. But a centennial year is the perfect time to be thoughtful about the future. This is not about moving away from what has worked; it is about building on that foundation to ensure the SCBA continues to thrive for the next 100 years.

We look forward to bringing you programming that reflects your time, your priorities, and the value you expect from your bar association.

And most importantly, we look forward to seeing you there.

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## YLD PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By: Jill Bowen, Esq.  
Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick,  
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# A Day in the Life: Young Lawyer Mothers

The day begins the same way most days begin for young lawyers who are mothers: not with the gentle hum of a coffee maker or an hour at the gym, but with a small human laying on top of us, snoring or drooling, and our brains asking an urgent question such as, “Is today a pajama day?” or “Did I remember to buy more yogurt?”

It is 6:27 a.m. We already feel behind.

Before our feet hit the floor, our brains are running parallel checklists. Birthday party gift for Saturday. Daycare snack sign-up (*was today pretzels or fruit*). Daycare forms. Pediatrician appointment next month. Is my child getting enough iron? Enough outdoor time? Enough unstructured play? Have I emotionally scarred them by serving the wrong color cup?

At the same time, Outlook emails that never stop coming. That contract that needs revisions. A deadline reminder, at least I remembered to put it on my calendar. The email that came in last night at 11:48 p.m. that starts with, “Just circling back...”

Welcome to the mental load.

By 7:30 a.m., one child is crying because their sock “feels weird,” the other because their sibling is crying. As I prepare my kids for daycare, I shout across the room asking my husband if he had a chance to look at the calendar invite that I sent him for the wedding next month, and I am served a *really, we’re talking about this now?* look in return. Breakfast is negotiated like a settlement conference. Somewhere in the chaos, we make it out the door, likely forgetting my own lunch in the process.

Drop-off at daycare is a study in controlled emotion. We hand over our most precious people to someone else so we can argue about money or liability. The irrational part of our brain whispers: *Are they okay? Are they loved? Will they nap? Did I pack the water bottle?*

The professional part of our brain reminds us: *You are late for court.*

At our office, we transform. Hair is smoothed. Voice is steady. We are competent, assertive, and prepared. We make arguments that affect real lives while half-wondering when the daycare will post pictures so we can see an update about the little people that own our whole heart. We answer emails,

take calls, bill our time. We respond patiently to questions that feel objectively dumb while knowing that tonight we will be asked, again, why the moon follows the car.

And in the hallway, or the courtroom gallery, or the bar association luncheon, we make eye contact with another one. Another young lawyer. Another mother.

There is a “How are you?” and then there is the look. You know it if you’ve seen it. It says: *I see you. I know you woke up before dawn. I know your phone is full of pictures taken moments before drop-off. I know you packed snacks with one hand while emailing with the other.*

By mid-afternoon, the world feels heavy. We read the news between calls or listened to it on the way to work. War. Violence. Loss. The kind of stories that hit differently when you have children and suddenly imagine everything through the lens of *What if that were my child?* The weight of it all presses down, but there is no time to linger. A client needs an answer. The clock is running. The billable hour waits for no one.

At 5:01 p.m., we switch gears again. Pickup hugs are fierce and grounding. We listen to breathless stories about playground politics while responding to emails in our head. Dinner is prepared (or procured). Baths happen. Books are read, sometimes with genuine enthusiasm, sometimes while silently drafting tomorrow’s to-do list.

By the time the house is quiet, the laptop comes back out. We work because we care. Because we chose this profession. Because we are good at it. Because we want our children to see mothers who contribute, lead, advocate, and build.

On Mother’s Day, we celebrate the moms who do this every day. Moms who carry the constant low-grade anxiety of doing two full-time jobs simultaneously and feeling like you are perpetually under performing at both. These women are doing something profoundly difficult with determination and grace. Young lawyers who are mothers carry a remarkable load, often invisibly, often without complaint, and almost always with humor that borders on survival instinct.

So, this month, from the Young Lawyers Division, I would like to give a heartfelt “Happy Mother’s Day” to all the young lawyer moms. I see you and am celebrating you today and every day. And next time our eyes meet across the room, we’ll share that all-knowing look again, equal parts solidarity and exhaustion, with just a hint of pride.

Happy Mother’s Day.

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## SCD PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By: Mark Creech, Esq.  
The Law Offices of Mark A.  
Creech, PLLC

# Evictions for the Estates Attorney

Calling all probate attorneys. Tell me if this sounds familiar: A trustee or personal representative calls to say someone is living in estate property and refusing to leave. Sometimes it is a relative, significant other, or lessee. Other times, it is a complete unknown. What do you do?

If your answer is “call a landlord-tenant attorney,” feel free to stop reading here. But if you have ever wanted to go a step further for your client, a little knowledge of this area can go a long way.

Probate attorneys work hard to avoid complications. We plan meticulously, draft carefully, and try to anticipate issues before they arise. Sometimes that works. Other times, despite everyone’s best efforts, we are left dealing with a “tenant” (in the loosest of definitions).

Attorneys can’t always avoid these issues, but what they can do is answer two important questions. The first question is: How did the tenant get there in the first place? Legally or illegally? Written lease or oral lease? With or without payment?

If the individual entered illegally, recent changes in the law may allow for removal without court involvement. An affidavit submitted to the sheriff can authorize the summary removal of “squatters.” In practice, however, personal representatives and heirs often lack the information necessary to properly invoke this statute.

If there is a valid lease that extends beyond the death of the property owner, it may need to be honored. There are exceptions, and some leases provide additional options, but generally speaking, the lease term will control unless the tenant violates its terms. It is always worth reviewing the lease for provisions such as a “void upon death” clause (rare, but helpful when present) before seeking a real property attorney’s opinion on potential termination rights.

If the occupant has been paying rent without a written lease, the required notice depends on the payment structure. Most tenants are month-to-month, requiring 30 days’ notice prior to the end of a rental period. Timing matters—notice often must be given in the preceding month to be effective. Less common arrangements (weekly, quarterly, or—brace yourself—annual payments) carry different notice requirements.

If no rent has ever been paid, the occupant is generally considered an unlawful detainer. In those cases, formal notice

# MEDIATION

requirements are minimal, and the process may proceed more quickly.

The second question is: How cooperative will the tenant be in leaving? This question often determines whether the situation is resolved quickly or becomes unnecessarily expensive.

Some occupants simply need 30 or 60 days to secure new housing, gather funds for a deposit, or adjust to an unexpected change. Others may not fully understand what happens when a landlord passes away. A clear, professional conversation outlining the expectations of the heirs can often prevent escalation.

From a legal standpoint, individuals without a written lease may have, at most, approximately 59 days before an eviction can be filed. Once filed, the process can move quickly, sometimes resulting in removal within a week. While this timeline may feel abrupt to the occupant, the law considers it reasonable.

Of course, clients may choose to offer more generous terms if doing so avoids additional cost, delay, or conflict. Practical considerations—such as probate timelines, service requirements, the occupant’s reliability, and any risk to the property—should all factor into the strategy.

The moral of the story is that basic understanding of these issues can help probate practitioners to save their clients the time and expense of hiring another attorney by simply contacting the “renters” and moving the occupant toward a voluntary departure. Use the above to make sure they can’t ChatGPT a defense, and if it looks like you are in for a fight, hire a landlord attorney, because you probably aren’t being paid enough to get into those fights.

*Established in 2010, the South County Division was created to better serve attorneys practicing in southern areas of Sarasota County who may have limited access to the programs and activities of the SCBA.*

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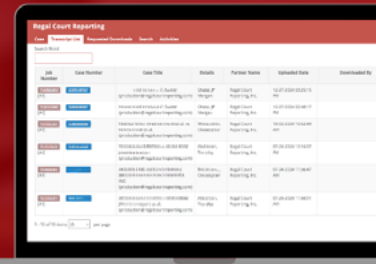
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## CDI CHAIR'S COLUMN

*By: Tonya Willis Pitts, Esq.  
Pitts Law Firm*

# A Motion to Dance Is Granted:

## Celebrating Community and Connection Through Movement

On the evening of Friday, March 27, the Council for Diversity and Inclusion of the Sarasota County Bar Association hosted a vibrant and memorable event called “A Motion to Dance Is Granted.” The Latin-themed celebration brought together members of the legal community and the broader Sarasota community for an evening filled with music, dance, food, and cultural appreciation. However, it was more than just a social gathering. The event served as a meaningful reminder of the power of shared experiences to foster connection, understanding, and inclusion.

From the moment guests arrived, the atmosphere was electric. The sounds of Latin music filled the venue, setting the tone for an evening that encouraged participation, energy, and joy. Attendees of all backgrounds, consisting of attorneys, legal staff, and community members, came together not in the courtroom, but on the dance floor, united by rhythm and a willingness to step outside of their comfort zones.

A highlight of the evening was the Latin dance instruction, which invited guests to learn the basics of popular dance styles such as salsa and bachata. Whether seasoned dancers or complete beginners, participants embraced the opportunity to engage in something new. The dance instructors created an inclusive and welcoming environment, ensuring that everyone felt comfortable and encouraged.

Kathleen Snow, one of the attendees, shared her enthusiasm for the experience: “I had a great time. It was a fun event. The dance instruction was great, and I would like to go back for dance lessons.” Her sentiment was echoed by many throughout the evening, as guests expressed appreciation not only for the entertainment, but also for the opportunity to learn and grow through cultural exposure.

In addition to dance, guests enjoyed a variety of Latin-inspired cuisine and beverages, further enriching the immersive experience. The food and drink offerings provided a sensory journey that complemented the music and movement allowing attendees to engage with Latin culture in a holistic and enjoyable way.

Beyond the festivities, “A Motion to Dance Is Granted” underscored the importance of diversity and inclusion within the legal profession. The practice of law often demands rigor, precision, and advocacy, but events like this remind us of the equally important human elements of empathy, cultural awareness, and community engagement. By creating spaces where individuals can connect outside of formal professional settings, the Council for Diversity and Inclusion continues to build bridges that strengthen both the bar and the community it serves.



Several attendees reflected on the broader impact of the event. Attorney Keith DuBose stated, "This was more than just a social event, it was an opportunity to connect with colleagues and community members in a way that we don't often get to experience. It breaks down barriers and reminds us that we all share common ground and can have fun embracing our cultural differences." Rian Davis commented, "A Latin dance studio isn't where you'd expect to find a bar association fundraiser and that's exactly what made it a success. The lively music, colorful movement, and great food, coupled with the wide range of attorneys and community members on the dance floor felt like the CDI putting its mission into practice."

The significance of such events cannot be overstated. In a profession that plays a critical role in shaping justice and equality, fostering an inclusive environment is not just beneficial, it is necessary. Cultural events like this one provide a platform for dialogue, appreciation, and unity. They encourage participants to engage with perspectives and traditions that may differ from their own, ultimately contributing to a more empathetic and effective legal community.

Moreover, these gatherings help to humanize the legal profession in the eyes of the public. By

inviting members of the broader community to participate, the Sarasota County Bar Association demonstrated its commitment to accessibility and outreach. It reinforces the idea that the legal profession is not isolated but deeply connected to the people and communities it serves.

The success of the event is a testament to the vision and dedication of the Council for Diversity and Inclusion. Through thoughtful programming and intentional engagement, the Council continues to create opportunities that celebrate diversity while fostering unity. Events like this not only enrich the lives of those who attend but also contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic legal community.

As the evening came to a close, guests left with more than just memories of music and dance. They carried with them a renewed sense of connection, a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity, and a reminder of the importance of coming together both within and beyond the legal profession.

In the end, the motion to dance was not only granted, it was embraced. And in that embrace, the Sarasota legal community took another meaningful step toward building a more inclusive and connected future.



## YLD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

By: *Michael A. Kostruba, Esq.*  
*Ferguson Skipper, P.A.*

# If Lawyers Wrote the Weather Report:

## A Sarasota Forecast for May 2026

Residents of Sarasota rely on weather reports to plan beach days, golf outings, and whether they should risk driving through a particular intersection prone to flooding during a storm. But what if meteorologists took a sabbatical and left the job to a team of attorneys? Below is a preview of what this month's forecast might look like through the eyes of legal professionals who take issue with any uncertainty under 95% confidence.

### **Monday, May 4 – Partly Sunny, Subject to Clarification**

Today begins with a tentative mix of sun and clouds. Attorneys advise that the term “partly” should be construed in its plain and ordinary meaning unless extrinsic evidence (e.g., radar) suggests otherwise. Sunglasses recommended, but not guaranteed to be necessary.

### **Tuesday, May 5 – Chance of Showers: Motion to Strike Pending**

Meteorologists have moved to include a 40% chance of afternoon showers; the Sarasota Association of Rain-Affected Litigators (SARAL) has already filed an objection, alleging insufficient factual basis. Until the motion is ruled upon, residents are encouraged to carry umbrellas in an abundance of caution.

### **Thursday, May 7 – Heat Index Exceeds Reasonable Standard**

Temperatures in the mid-90s prompt local lawyers to debate whether the heat index violates Florida's implied covenant of livable conditions. Experts disagree. Golfers remain undeterred.

### **Sunday, May 10 – Mother's Day - Afternoon Thunderstorm Settlement Conference**

Dark clouds gather—or perhaps it's the mother who was just gifted an estate plan for Mother's Day. As sunshine and thunder engage in a tense settlement conference, expect showers by 3 p.m.

### **Wednesday, May 13 – Humidity at 100%: Strict Liability Applies**

In Sarasota, humidity respects neither precedent nor equity. As usual, it arrives fully formed, offering no defenses. All attempts to negotiate with it have failed. Hair frizz reaches record levels, windshields remain fogged over.

**Friday, May 15 – Storm Advisory with Request for Continuance**

A strong multi-day coastal system is expected to arrive just in time for everyone's weekend plans. Local practitioners collectively file a Request for Meteorological Continuance. Denied, naturally. High winds expected; flying pool floats may become exhibits.

**Thursday, May 21 – Hurricane season Pre-Filing Notice Period**

With June approaching, forecasters issue the annual reminder to begin preparing as though every rain cloud has already retained counsel. Residents encouraged to review their roofs, insurance policies, and hurricane game plans. Monopoly in confined spaces is not recommended.

**Monday, May 25 – Memorial Day – Clear Skies by Stipulation**

For one day, Sarasota's meteorological attorneys come together to stipulate to sunshine in honor of those who served. Conditions are ideal. No objections, no amendments, and no afternoon showers are on the docket.

**Friday, May 29 – Sunshine with a Probability Disclaimer**

Clear skies predicted conditional upon atmospheric cooperation, satellite accuracy, and the Court not taking judicial notice of unexpected cloud buildup. Beach-goers advised to proceed but remain mindful that the forecast is not a binding agreement.

If lawyers ever took over local forecasting, Sarasota would receive weather reports that are thorough, heavily caveatted, and accompanied by at least three footnotes. Until then, we leave meteorology to the experts and stick to interpreting statutes rather than atmospheric pressure.

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# Mock Trial:

## An Unexpected Yes, and the Lessons That Followed

Back in the fall, a local high school student learned that I was an attorney and approached me with an inquiry:

“We started a mock trial club at Venice High School. We just need an attorney to be our coach so we can compete. We don’t actually need someone to coach us; we just need to be able to put someone’s name and bar number down as a coach. Would you be willing to do that?”

And that, my friends, is when I should have politely declined.

Instead, fond memories of competing as part of the Trial Team at Stetson University College of Law flooded my mind. Hours spent crafting the perfect cross examination or closing argument. Celebrating our team’s win at FJA against the other Stetson squad. Some of my best memories of law school came from that Trial Team experience with our coach, Professor Lee Coppock. And on top of that, I coached the Trial Team at Stetson Law for a few years after graduating. So why shouldn’t I coach high school mock trials?

In hindsight, there were a few good reasons. First, I graduated law school almost twenty years ago. Those Trial Team days are ancient history at this point. Second, I am now a transactional attorney, and my litigation days are far behind me. Things like hearsay exceptions are buried in my mind beneath two decades of non-litigation work and raising three children. And third, I am a partner in a busy law practice without much open space on my calendar.

And yet I found myself saying yes. After all, they didn’t really need someone to actually do much coaching, right?

I showed up at Venice High School (my alma mater) for the first mock trial club meeting where I met close to a dozen eager high school students. Not one of them had ever competed in a mock trial before. And when I found myself explaining the role of an attorney and a judge, as well as the difference between a plaintiff and a defendant, I realized that perhaps this would be a bigger commitment than I had envisioned. But they already had their hearts set on competing in the 12th Circuit High School Mock Trial Competition just a few months away.

I found myself tempted to retract my agreement to be their coach. But their eagerness persuaded me to stay. Every Wednesday afternoon, they gathered in that classroom to learn and prepare for competition. And as I looked at them, I thought of myself as a high school student. To be honest, I never envisioned becoming an attorney at that age. No one in my family had ever been an attorney—my dad was the first in his family to get a college degree. That would have

seemed out of reach to me as a high school student. A dream for a different student, but not me.

And as I looked at these students, I realized the same was true for several of them. And yet, here they were.

So I stayed. Did they win the competition? Not even close. But did the dream of someday becoming a lawyer get a little closer to reality for some of them? Absolutely yes.

They had the opportunity to go to Hale Law's office and run through their trial in the practice courtroom with Patrick Iyampillai presiding as judge. His kind words and direction gave them confidence leading into the competition. They logged into the Zoom Training by Judge Bruning where he gave practical tips and encouragement to all of the students preparing for the competition.

They walked into the Courthouse in Sarasota on competition day filled with nerves, but greeted by the kind smile of Cori Coser whose team worked tirelessly to make it an incredible experience for all of the students.

They competed in courtrooms presided over by the Honorable Kennedy Legler, the Honorable

Frederick Mercurio, and the Honorable D. Ryan Felix—each one not only ensuring a fair trial, but also offering words of affirmation and constructive feedback after the rounds.

There are times where we can forget that this legal community we call home is a foreign land for many "outside the bubble." Any time we can bridge the gap between our legal community and the community at large is good not only for our profession but for our society as a whole. The Mock Trial competition isn't just about teaching high school students how to compete. It is about introducing them to our chosen profession in a way that makes them feel welcome. Valued. Seen.

Will all of those students someday become members of our bar association? Likely not. But my hope is that their fond memories of this experience will give them an appreciation for the practice of law. And that maybe, just maybe, it will empower a student for whom becoming a lawyer feels out of reach to step into that calling.

Thank you to the 12th Circuit for a great High School Mock Trial event. And, yes, as you may have guessed, I'll see you next year.

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By: *Tamara J. Spires, Esq.*  
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## The Women Who Raise Us:

### How Maternal Influence Shapes the Practice of Law

Some of the most important lessons I carry into the practice of law were not learned in a courtroom, a classroom, or even through experience. They were learned from the women who helped shape who I am, long before I set foot in a law office.

I remember a time when my mother carried more than she ever let us see. After my parents divorced, she raised my siblings and me as a single mother for years before getting remarried, doing everything she could to hold our lives together. There was a period when she lost her job, and I recall moments when she would retreat quietly, trying to hold back tears as she faced the uncertainty of how she would make it to the next day. Despite those challenges, she made sure we got to school every morning, that there was food on the table, and that we always had a place to call home. Looking back, I now understand that what I witnessed during that time was strength in its purest form. Even in the face of hardship, she remained committed to raising us with character, integrity, and purpose.

As we approach Mother's Day, we often pause to celebrate mothers in the traditional sense. But for many of us, the influence of "motherhood" extends far beyond biology. It lives in the women who guided us, encouraged us, and poured into us. Sometimes through words and other times simply through example. Their impact is often quiet, but lasting.

In the legal profession, we are trained to think critically and navigate complex issues with precision. Yet the qualities that often define great lawyers are frequently cultivated outside of the profession. For many, those qualities were first modeled at home. They were instilled in us long before we understood how they would shape our careers.

Strength, for example, is often associated with unwavering confidence. In the legal field, we are expected to speak with authority, stand firm in our positions, and represent our clients with conviction. But the strength I have come to value most is quieter. It is the kind that shows up consistently, even when circumstances are difficult. The ability to remain composed under pressure, to persevere when the outcome is uncertain, and to continue showing up with purpose even on the most challenging days.

This kind of strength is not always visible, but it is impactful. It is the strength to prepare when no one is watching, to respond thoughtfully rather than react emotionally, and to maintain professionalism in adversarial environments. These are lessons many of us learned not from legal textbooks, but from watching the women in our lives navigate challenges with resilience and determination.

Gratitude is another quality that is often overlooked in the legal profession. In a field driven by deadlines, expectations, and outcomes, it is easy to focus on what remains to be done rather than what has already been accomplished. We move from one task to the next, often without pausing to reflect. Yet gratitude has a way of grounding us. It invites us to slow down and recognize the people and opportunities that make our work possible.

Gratitude reminds us to appreciate the trust our clients place in us during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. It reminds us to value the colleagues who support us, whether through collaboration or simple encouragement. It also allows us to recognize the privilege of practicing law and the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in the lives of others.

Perhaps one of the most enduring lessons is the importance of purpose. The women who shape us often instill in us that our work should mean something. That it should extend beyond personal achievement and contribute to the well-being of others. This sense of purpose becomes especially important where the demands of the day-to-day can easily become overwhelming.

Deadlines, billables, and competing responsibilities can quickly take center stage. But when we ground our work on purpose, we are reminded of the larger impact of what we do. Whether it is advocating for a client, serving our community, or contributing to the profession, purpose provides direction. It keeps us connected to the reasons we chose this path and sustains us during the more difficult moments.

Throughout our careers, many of us encounter mentors who continue to guide and support us. These individuals play a critical role in our professional development. They challenge us to grow, encourage us to lead, and remind us of our potential, even when we may not fully see it ourselves.

In many ways, these mentors carry the same spirit of care and encouragement that defines motherhood. They create space for growth, offer guidance when it is needed, and model what

it means to lead with intention. Their influence reinforces the idea that success is not achieved alone, but through the support and investment of others.

As we recognize Mother's Day, it is worth reflecting on the broader impact of maternal influence in our personal and professional lives. The legal profession benefits from these qualities more than we sometimes acknowledge. Strength, gratitude, and purpose are not just personal values, they are professional assets. They shape how we advocate and how we lead.

When we lead with these qualities, we contribute to a legal community that is not only skilled, but grounded. We create environments where others can grow, collaboration is valued, and where professionalism is defined not only by competence, but by character.

In a demanding profession, these foundational lessons serve as a steady guide. They remind us that while legal skills are essential, character sustains us, and that the influence of those who shaped us continues to define not only who we are, but how we lead.

## MEDIATION

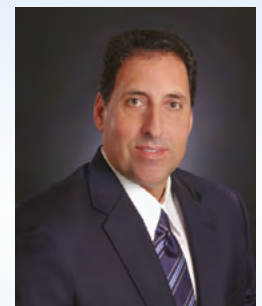
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# IN MEMORIAM



## Stefan Paul Campagna

July 30, 1986 - March 26, 2026



The memory of Stefan Paul Campagna (Sarasota, Florida), who passed away on March 26, 2026 at the age of 39, will forever remain in the hearts of those touched by this precious presence in their lives. Leave a sympathy message to the family on the memorial page of Stefan Paul Campagna to pay them a last tribute.

In the soft embrace of remembrance, we recall the profound impact Stefan had on those he encountered along his journey. Though Stefan may have slipped beyond the veil of mortality, his essence lingers like a faint fragrance in the air, a lingering reminder of the beauty and complexity of the human experience.

He is survived by: his wife Camile; his children, Jaxon "Jax" and Arielle; his parents, Maria Campagna and Dominick Campagna; and his brother Courtney Campagna. He is also survived by aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family by marriage, and countless friends.

## Christian Thomas Van Hise

October 6, 1967 – April 25, 2026



It is with fond memories and hurting souls that we mourn the passing of Christian Thomas Van Hise. Chris passed away peacefully on April 25, 2026, at the age of 58, surrounded by family and friends. Chris was born in Danbury, Connecticut, on October 6, 1967, one of six children of Maureen Van Hise and Jon Van Hise (deceased). He is survived by his wife, Denise Fair Van Hise, his daughter, Hannah Christine Van Hise, and his son, Matthew David Van Hise, and siblings, David (wife Cindy) Van Hise, Laura Van Hise, Daniel (wife Barbara) Van Hise, Holly Van Hise (deceased) and Jennifer Maltby. Brothers-in-law Richard (wife Gloria) Fair, Jerry (wife Pat) Fair, Jeff Fair, and Tim (wife BJ) Fair and many nieces and nephews on both sides.

Chris received his J.D. from the University of Dayton and held a B.S. in Civil Engineering from the University of Rhode Island. He practiced law as a tireless advocate, with humility, devotion and respect for the legal profession and the clients he served. Chris was a renaissance man with a myriad of interests ranging from law, civil engineering, music and theater, and embraced life and celebrated everyone and anyone that he was with. He was devoted to his family, friends, community, profession, colleagues and faith. His sense of humor, genuine spirit and authenticity will be missed by all.

May 2026

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## Last Will and Testament of:

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**Charles Timothy McConaghy**

**DOB:** June 23, 1938

**DOD:** April 3, 2026

### Last known address:

1246 Cielo Court, North Venice, Sarasota County, FL 34275.

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### Please Contact

Kelly McConaghy

[mconaghykelly@gmail.com](mailto:mconaghykelly@gmail.com) | 770-280-5033



# EVENT SCHEDULE

## MAY 2026

FRI 08	<b>2026 12th Judicial Circuit Bench Bar Conference</b>	9:00 AM
SUN 17	<b>Tri Section Brunch</b>	11:30 AM
TUES 19	<b>Follow the Money: Prosecuting Elder Exploitation</b>	12:00 PM
THURS 28	<b>Summer Associate Kickoff</b>	5:30 PM

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## JUNE 2026

WED 03	<b>SCBA Annual Meeting</b>	11:30 AM
THURS 04	<b>Bagels with the Bench</b>	8:00 AM
MON 08	<b>Interview Tips with Attorney Kim Walker</b>	12:00 PM
TUES 23	<b>Building Community Trust in the Justice System</b>	12:00 PM

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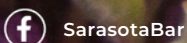
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