

ST. PETERSBURG BAR ASSOCIATION

# PARACLETE

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

The Magazine For The Legal Professional | 100th Anniversary | May/June 2025



“THE MISSION OF THE ST. PETERSBURG  
BAR ASSOCIATION IS TO SERVE THE  
LEGAL COMMUNITY, TO STRENGTHEN  
THE NOBLE CALLING OF THE PRACTICE  
OF LAW, AND TO FOSTER EXCELLENCE  
IN THE PROFESSION.”

# SENSE

of purpose

## CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE ST. PETERSBURG  
BAR ASSOCIATION FOR  
100 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

Hill Ward Henderson is pleased to announce that Lauren Rubenstein has recently joined the firm.



### LAUREN RUBENSTEIN

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**St. Petersburg Bar Association**  
P. O. Box 172, St. Petersburg, FL 33731  
Phone: 727.823.7474

The mission of the St. Petersburg Bar Association is to serve the legal community, to strengthen the noble calling of the practice of law, and to foster excellence in the profession.

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The views expressed in the *Paraclete* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editors, executive committee, or officers of the St. Petersburg Bar Association. No endorsement of those views should be inferred unless specifically identified as the official policy of the St. Petersburg Bar Association.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# The Road to the Next 100 Years



By Jounice Nealy-Brown

The same year that the St. Petersburg Bar Association was founded in 1925, there were several notable products that were introduced: Corona beer, Honey Maid graham crackers, and Mr. Goodbar. Within the same decade, the first electric automatic traffic signal was invented, frozen foods were introduced into family homes, and adhesive bandages were being mass produced.

Just like those products and inventions have withstood the test of time – evolving and adapting to remain relevant – the St.

Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) has done the same.

The organization abandoned its white attorneys-only requirement for membership and erased its unwritten rule that the SPBA would be led only by men.

Fast forward to the early 2000s, the SPBA continued working to serve its members by being laser focused on promoting health in our profession and tools for our trade. When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in the United States in 2020, the SPBA pivoted and was prepared to help its members.

Just think about the past decade.

The Bar has served as your:

- Reminder that your health is your wealth
- Champion for living well, despite a heavy workload
- Guide for tech challenges, which ramped up during COVID
- Springboard for rebounding after COVID
- Compass for morality and professionalism
- Business coach to aid you in building your brand and business

By 2026, the SPBA will continue to help promote health in our profession, provide training and tools to help you practice effectively and efficiently, and coach you to build your brand and business.

We also will welcome the opening of the Second District Court of Appeal Bernie McCabe Courthouse in downtown St. Petersburg. The courthouse is named after the distinguished and long-serving State Attorney for the Sixth Judicial Circuit.

By 2035, the Bar will continue to be your springboard to help you rebound after disruptions and champion to help you live well.

By 2125, I hope those who are reading this will remember how selflessly dedicated each of you were to helping the SPBA leap forward and thrive for another 100 years.

It has been an honor to serve as your 100th president, and I continue to offer my heartfelt support and enthusiasm for you as we leap forward together.

## Leaping Forward

**In recent years, the St. Petersburg Bar Association's strategic planning has centered on specific themes to focus on mission led initiatives. These initiatives have included wellness guidance, promotion of professionalism, support for the community and local businesses during COVID, growth and business guidance for firms of all sizes, education in safety strategies for members, and guidance in navigating the future of technology.**





# 2024-2025 Executive Committee



**Jounice Nealy-Brown**  
**President**  
Gunster



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**Raleigh W. Greene IV**  
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**YLS President**  
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**Board Member**  
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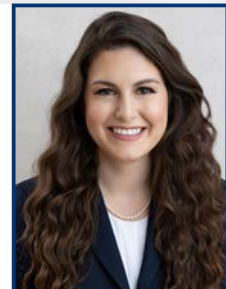
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**Board Member**  
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**Board Member**  
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# 2024-2025 Section Chairs, Vice Chairs & Staff



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**ADR Vice Chair**  
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Shannon L. Troutman



**Appellate Vice Chair**  
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**Business Vice Chair**  
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**Construction Vice Chair**  
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Christina E. Stokes



**Family Law Vice Chair**  
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**YLS President**  
Anthony W. Nunnally



**YLS Vice President**  
Gabriela Ibanez-Alers



**Nominating Committee Chair**  
Hutch Pinder



**Executive Director**  
Melissa R. Byers



**Membership Coordinator**  
Maya M. Byers

## LOOKING BACK

# The First St. Petersburg Bar Association President

{Originally printed in the St. Petersburg Times Tuesday, August 4, 1925}

## Lane is Made Circuit Judge

Freeman P. Lane, prominent St. Petersburg attorney, has received another honor, this time at the hands of Governor John W. Martin, who recently appointed him judge of the Sixth Florida Judicial District to succeed Judge Melvin A. McMullen, resigned. The announcement was made Monday and it is understood Judge Lane has accepted.

News of Judge Lane's appointment will be received with general satisfaction by his friends in the Sunshine City, as he has been prominently connected with business and social circles since locating here in 1914. Judge and Mrs. Lane are celebrating their golden wedding with a trip back to their old home in Minneapolis and for this reason congratulations will have to be sent by mail or wire.

## Veteran Lawyer

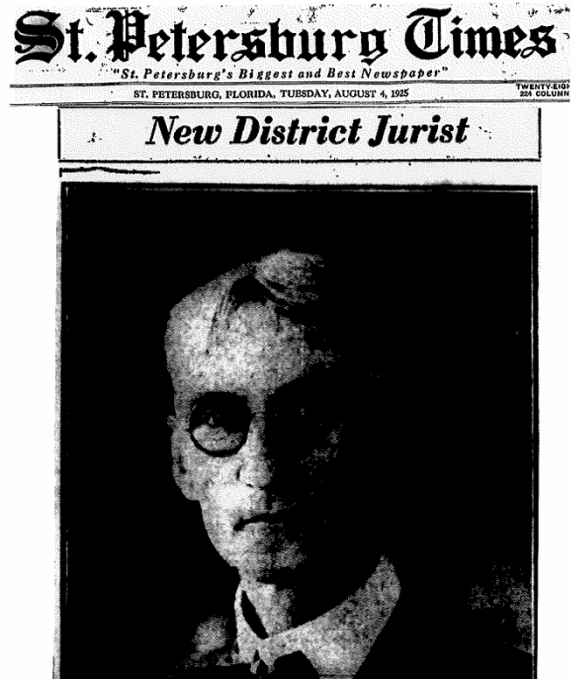
The veteran jurist will complete his fifty-first year in the practice of law May 6. He began his legal career, which has been attended by great success, in Minneapolis, back in 1874. He came to St. Petersburg in 1914 and has made his home in the Sunshine City since. Judge Lane lived with his son, Stuart Lane in Lakewood Estates, which is one of the beauty spots of Florida. The jurist was born in Eastport, Washington, April 10, 1853, the son of Charles W. and Elmira B. Lane. Charles Lane was a sailor and served as first mate on a vessel over which Freeman Parker had command as a captain. The son was named for his father's friend.

## Lived in Minnesota

The family moved to Minnesota when Freeman Lane was but nine years of age, and the country very sparsely settled. The father entered business and remained in the state the



**Fun Fact** – The first St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) meeting was held at the Suwannee Hotel. The Suwannee Hotel is located at 501 First Avenue North – one block from the SPBA office. It is also home to the Community Law Program and Gulfcoast Legal Services.



rest of his life. The son found work and went to school where there was nothing else to occupy his time. He left school after finishing the eighth grade and worked in a mill, later serving as a clerk in his father's grocery.

Mr. Lane was employed by the government in 1872, the Northern Pacific railway company and the Northwestern telegraph company, entering the office of Albee Smith, Minneapolis lawyer, in November 1872. He left for the east the following year to attend an Albany, NY law school.

Freeman Lane was admitted to the bar in 1874, when he returned to Minneapolis to practice law for 40 years, becoming a specialist in insurance law and one of the best attorneys in that section. He held many high offices in the state and was elected to the legislature in 1889, but in 1893 he left the Republican party because of its attitude toward the tariff, trusts, and other questions. He became a Populist.

Judge Lane married Miss Mollie Lauderdale, daughter of William H. Lauderdale, of Minneapolis, in 1875. The four children were Bessie, Ina, Mabel, and Stuart. The attorney came to St. Petersburg in 1914, but did not start practicing law until two years later. He served some time as a municipal judge.

He is a senior member of the firm of Lane and Bussey, with whom he has been associated for a number of years; a director of the Associated Refining Company, Oil City, P.A., and is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Yacht Club here.

# The 100<sup>th</sup> St. Petersburg Bar Association President

When the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) hosted its first meeting to officially form the organization on May 15, 1925, at 7:30pm, SPBA President Freeman P. Lane could not have envisioned where the organization would be 100 years later.

As we look to the next 100 years, we pause at this turning point to recognize the 100th SPBA President Jounice Nealy-Brown. Jounice embodies the leadership, professionalism, and strategic mindfulness that will serve as pillars in guiding the SPBA for the next 100 years.

A third-generation Floridian, Jounice joined Gunster after serving as a federal judicial law clerk for The Honorable Anthony E. Porcelli and The Honorable Mary S. Scriven, both of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division.

Jounice graduated *cum laude* from Stetson University College of Law, where she was selected for the Honors Program. While at Stetson, Jounice was an associate member of *Stetson Law Review* and received the *Outstanding New Associate Award* in addition to the *Walter Mann Award* for showing the greatest promise of leadership in the legal profession.

In addition to her Juris Doctor degree, Jounice has her Master of Business Administration from The University of Miami, where she also earned the *Academic Merit Award*. Prior to her legal career,



Jounice worked as a newspaper journalist, sales and marketing executive, and a strategic corporate communications director at the *Tampa Bay Times*.

Jounice is a member of the Labor and Employment Law practice group and advises clients in litigation matters, including employment discrimination and probate issues. She strives to develop strategies for success that are tailored to clients' needs. She focuses on being a good listener who is detailed-oriented and analyzes clients' business issues and the law in an effort to determine the best course of action for resolution.

Jounice has been married to Brent Brown, a minister and decorated U.S. Marine Corps veteran, for 23 years. They have two children, Brent II, who is a senior at the United States Military Academy at West Point, and Laci, who is a freshman at Howard University.

She is very involved in her church, currently serving as a member of the Hospitality Committee, which focuses on orientation for and outreach to new members, and formerly volunteered as a children's Sunday School teacher. Jounice has also long served on the board of Suncoast Credit Union, which is a non-profit financial institution that helps provide financial services to under-served communities.

Thank you for your service and leadership, Jounice!



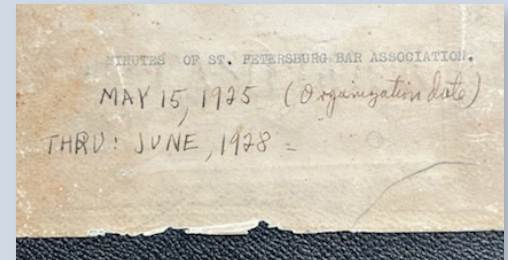
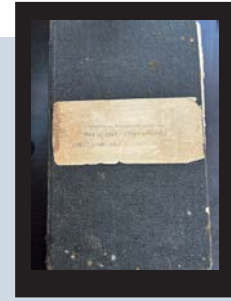
## Original Minutes of the First St. Petersburg Bar Association Meeting:

- A special meeting of all of the attorneys of St. Petersburg, Florida, was held at the Suwannee Hotel at 7:30pm on the 15th day of May, 1925.
- On motion of L.P. Hardee, Freeman P. Lane was elected as temporary chairman. Upon motion of James R. Bussey, J.S. Clark was elected temporary secretary.
- John J. Lawless moved that the attorneys present proceed to organize a permanent local Bar Association; seconded by George P. Stovall; placed and carried.
- The temporary chairman then stated that nominations were open for the election of officers for the St. Petersburg Bar Association. Freeman P. Lane was nominated for President by George K. Foye, James R. Bussey was nominated for President by George P. Stovall; motion to close the nominations by Foye, seconded by Bussey; placed and carried. - - Freeman P. Lane was elected President of the organization.
- For Secretary, J.S. Clark was nominated by James R. Bussey. There being no other nominations, J.S. Clark was duly elected Secretary.
- Judge C. E. Spear was nominated for Vice President by Bayard S. Cook, Stovall moved that the nominations be closed; motion seconded, placed and carried.
- The following were nominated for the office of Treasurer: Bayard S. Cook, George P. Stovall and Glenn Miller. Glenn Miller was duly elected to the office of Treasurer.
- John J. Lawless moved that a committee of five be appointed by the President to draw up the by-laws and constitution of the organization and also arrange for a minimum fee bill; the committee to report two weeks from the date of this meeting.
- George K. Foye suggested that a meeting be held two weeks from this date for the purpose of taking up the Thursday afternoon closing rule and also the question of dues and also suggested a regular meeting date. Lawless's motion for a committee seconded by James R. Bussey; placed and carried.
- Wilson moved that all those present donate the sum of \$5.00 apiece for the purpose of defraying the expense of the banquet and meeting; seconded, placed, and carried. J.S. Clark moved that the \$5.00 assessment be assessed against all the attorneys in St. Petersburg; seconded by L.S. Collins; placed and carried.
- James R. Booth moved that the President appoint a committee for the purpose of arranging the minimum fee bill for most of the business of the legal profession; the committee to submit a proposed fee bill at a meeting to be held two weeks from this date. As members of this committee, he named James R. Bussey, George P. Stovall, L. P. Hardee, Bayard S. Cook and J.F. Hobson; seconded, placed, and carried.
- Lawless moved that all law offices in St. Petersburg remain closed on Saturday afternoons according to the rule in effect during the winter; seconded by Foye; placed and carried. James R. Booth moved that the law offices close on Thursday afternoon in the summer season and Saturday afternoon in the winter season. Upon motion of Denning, which was seconded by F.M. Harris, Booth's motion was tabled.
- The President stated that the appointment of the committee on the constitution and by-laws would be announced at a later date through the Independent, as he desired to give the matter some further consideration before naming the committee.
- It was moved and seconded that the next meeting of the organization be held at the Princess Martha Hotel on May 29, 1925, at 8:00pm.
- James R. Bussey moved that there be a committee whose duties it would be to prepare a resolution recommending Ernest F. Davis as a successor to E.M. Burke, Justice of the Peace of the 1st District; seconded by Stovall. This motion was amended by Bussey who included also the recommendations to the Governor of George K. Foye as candidate for the office of the Justice of the Peace of the 2nd District. This amendment was seconded by Stovall. The motion and amendment were never acted upon. Bussey moved to adjourn; seconded, passed and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Clark

Secretary



MINUTES OF THE ST. PETERSBURG BAR ASS'N  
MEETING OF MAY 15, 1925.

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## LIBERTY BELL AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Board of Governors of the American Bar Association in 1964 approved the "Liberty Bell Award" as a national public service program worthy of support and endorsement by state and local bar associations in connection with the annual observance of Law Day. The purpose of the "Liberty Bell Award" Program is to recognize a non-attorney for community service which strengthens the effectiveness of the American system of freedom under law.

1965 Warren Pierce	1994 Dr. Peter R. Betzer
1966 Mary B. Saltz	1995 Robert T. Pittman
1967 Clara Reed	1996 Vyrle Davis
1968 Rev. Enoch Davis	1997 John C. Cannon
1969 Dr. Michael M. Bennett	1998 Gus A. Stavros
1970 Rabbi David J. Susskind	1999 Robert L. Anders
1971 Dr. Billy O. Wireman	Jeffrey L. Fortune
1972 Jeanne Malchon	2000 Dr. Virginia B. Irving
1973 Charles Stickle	2001 Linda A. Osmundson
1974 Israel Heard	2002 David J. Fischer
1975 Thomas McLean	2003 Adelle Vaughn Jemison
1976 Dr. Gus Sakkis	2004 Elder Clarence Welch
1977 Don Genung	2005 Andrew Barnes
1978 Emanuel Stewart	2006 Rev. Louis Murphy
1979 Lena Blomstrum	2007 Goliath Davis
1980 Martha Rudy Wallace	2008 Dr. Shirley D. Coletti
1981 Fran Sutcliffe	2009 Frank Peterman, Jr.
1982 Eugene Patterson	2010 Raymond O. Arsenault
1983 Mailande Holland Barton	2011 Frederic Guerrier, M.D.
1984 Faye Kerrigan DeLoach	2012 Mel & Betty Sembler
1985 Dr. Philip Benjamin	2013 Walter Loebenberg
1986 Sister Margaret Freeman	2014 H. William (Bill) Heller
1987 Sally Wallace	2015 Bishop Robert Lynch
1988 Andrew H. Hines	2016 Mike Alstott
1989 Dr. Charles E. Aucreman	2017 Paul C. Tash
1990 Dr. Scott N. Rose	2018 Watson Haynes
1991 Rev. J.W. Cate, Jr.	2019 Rabbi Jacob Luski
1992 Carl M. Kuttler, Jr.	2021 Kay Dillinger
1993 Peggy Peterman	2022 Helen Levine



## ST. PETERSBURG BAR ASSOCIATION PROFESSIONALISM AWARD RECIPIENTS

2001 Judge Jack Helinger  
 2002 Louie N. Adcock, Jr.  
 2003 Judge Pamela A.M.  
 Campbell  
 2004 Oscar Blasingame  
 2005 John C. Wolfe  
 2006 Joseph H. Chambers  
 2007 Bruce Bartlett  
 2008 Bruce Marger  
 2009 Joseph D. McFarland  
 2010 Robert E. Jagger  
 2011 Thomas D. Masterson  
 2012 Kenneth C. Deacon  
 2013 Leonard S. Englander

2014 In Memory of: Michael J.  
 Keane, William L. Penrose, Martin  
 E. Rice  
 2015 D'Arcy R. Clarie  
 2016 Timothy A. Miller  
 2017 Aubrey O. Dicus  
 2018 J. Emory Wood  
 2019 Raleigh W. "Lee" Greene, III  
 2020 J.S. Lucas Fleming  
 2021 Bruce H. Denson  
 2022 Jeannine S. Williams  
 2023 Guy Burns  
 2024 Kimberly Rodgers

## ST. PETERSBURG BAR ASSOCIATION RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS

2022 Danielle Weaver-Rogers  
 2023 Lama Alqasemi  
 2024 Catherine R. Henry



## Thank You Sixth Judicial Circuit Judges and Judicial Assistants

### Sixth Circuit Judges

Judge Dustin Anderson	Judge Brian Gnage	Judge Patrick Moore
Judge Michael F. Andrews	Judge Frank Grey	Judge Patricia Ann Muscarella
Judge Linda Babb	Judge Holly Grissinger	Judge Knute J. Nathe
Judge Susan G. Barthle	Judge Gregory G. Groger	Judge Cynthia J. Newton
Judge Susan Bedinghaus	Judge Rebecca Hamilton	Judge Nicole Pearlman
Judge Steve Berlin	Judge Mary M. Handsel	Judge James Pierce
Judge Joseph A. Bulone	Judge Jack Helinger	Judge Joseph Poblick
Judge William H. Burgess, III	Judge Kathleen T. Hessinger	Judge Alicia Polk
Judge Kimberly Sharpe Byrd	Judge Aaron Hubbard	Judge Frederick L. Pollack
Judge Kim Campbell	Judge Elizabeth Jack	Judge Thomas M. Ramsberger
Judge Pamela A.M. Campbell	Judge Edwin Jagger	Judge Joshua Riba
Judge John Carassas	Judge George M. Jirotko	Judge Julie L. Sercus
Judge Sherwood Coleman	Judge Joseph Justice	Judge Pat Siracusa
Judge Kent Compton	Judge Lorraine Kelly	Judge James R. Stearns
Judge Della Cope	Judge Theodora C Komninos	Judge Susan St. John
Chief Judge Shawn Crane	Judge Christopher LaBruzzo	Judge Brett Szematowicz
Judge Diane Croff	Judge Joseph Lawhorne	Judge Benjamin S. Thomas
Judge Robert Dittmer	Judge Kemba Johnson Lewis	Judge Kimberly Todd
Judge Daniel D. Diskey	Judge Doneene Loar	Judge Dorothy Vaccaro
Judge Jennifer Dubbeld	Judge Philippe Matthey	Judge Anne Wansboro
Judge David Ellis	Judge Cathy McKyton	Judge Lauralee G. Westine
Judge Philip J. Federico	Judge Keith Meyer	Judge Amy M. Williams
Judge Evan Frayman	Judge Patrice Moore	Judge Elizabeth Zuroweste

### Sixth Circuit Judicial Assistants

Laura Ferrer	Makenzie Smith	Tara Martin	Lisa Schultz
Cathy Aveney	Gia Reda	Valerie McGivern	Kimberly Shavers
Kelly Karppe	Jennifer Johnson	Connor Laporta	Tracy Curley
Tina Martin	Pauline Clark	Jess Rayburn	Heather Crum
Melinda Vincent	Mary Scholl	Carolyn Pizzuto	Michelle Hall
Annie Nguyen	Amber Leis	Jessica Smith	Ellen Dacey
Kelly Dolan	Bonnie Whitehall	Jill Kiouis	JoAn Caffentzis
Shannon McGrady	Terri Christison	Jennifer Boyer	Vicki Masterson
Cyndi Hughes	Ellice Tousey	Carrie Ann Krum	Sabine Matthews
Joann Miele	Suzy Isaksen	Dyne Bamberski	Cheryl Nierengarten
Nichelle Palmer	Peggy VanVliet	Stephanie Fadhel	Kim Rubia
Louise Smith	Angela Filippone	Shannon Karczewski	Amber Morrow
Debi McCarty	Raelynn Trosky	Amber Demiduk	Darleta Burris
Donna Belcher	Lidia Torres	Kristi Kersey	Pamela Gariepy
Stacy Wisman	Nicole Zordan	Kearsten Ferrentino	Kim Haumann
Jill Psenisky	Tamara Flournoy	Veronica Jupiter	Lisa Waters
Kristen Nagle	Amanda Esqueda	Penny Greul	Rhodene Mathis



## ST. PETERSBURG BAR ASSOCIATION JUDICIAL APPRECIATION AWARD RECIPIENTS

1989 Susan F. Schaeffer	2007 Peter R. Ramsberger
1990 Robert E. Beach	2008 Irene H. Sullivan
1991 Jack A. Page	2009 J. Thomas McGrady
1992 Horace A. Andrews	2010 Lauren C. Laughlin
1993 David A. Demers	2011 Mark I. Shames
1994 Thomas E. Penick, Jr.	2012 Jack Helinger
1995 Henry J. Andringa	2013 James V. Pierce
1996 Charles S. Carrere	2014 Pamela A.M. Campbell
1997 David Seth Walker	2015 Walt Logan
1998 John C. Lenderman	2016 Jack Day
1999 Ray E. Ulmer, Jr.	2017 Patrice Moore
2000 Anthony Rondolino	2018 Amy M. Williams
2001 Walt Fullerton	2019 Lorraine M. Kelly
2002 Frank Quesada	2020 Thomas M. Ramsberger
2003 Thomas E. Penick, Jr.	2021 Michael F. Andrews
2004 George W. Greer	2022 Marion L. Fleming
2005 George W. Greer	2023 Kimberly Todd
2006 William H. Overton	2024 Doneene Loar



## Looking Back. Leaping Forward. St. Petersburg Bar Association Executive Directors

**Patricia M. (Patches) Hicks 1977 - 1987**

**Cynthia R. White 1987 - 1997**

**Darlene Kelly 1997 - 1999**

**Nora Riva Bergman 1999 - 2007**

**Jennifer M. Lake 2007 - 2008**

**Craig (Chip) Collins 2008 - 2013**

**Melissa R. Byers 2013 - current**

## Leaping Forward – Supporting Journey to Esquire Scholars

In 2018, the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) was honored to partner with the Journey to Esquire program, formally the Diversity Access Pipeline. Created by Cooley Law School Professor Joseline Hardrick, this valuable program provides annual scholarships, leadership skills, mentorship, bar exam preparation, and networking opportunities to law students of diverse backgrounds. The SPBA has supported this program since its inception by providing a \$2,000 annual scholarship and mentorship to recipients. To date, the SPBA has provided a scholarship to seven recipients. Congratulations to our scholars!



2018-19  
Tiffany Colon



2019-20  
Forest Sutton



2021-22  
Leah Le'Veil



2020-21  
Shannon Walker



2022-23  
Logan Jackson



2023-24  
Glenna St-Fort



2024-25  
Dominique McDaniel



## One Hundred Years.

A few founding members held the first St. Petersburg Bar Association meeting at the Suwannee Hotel May 15, 1925, igniting a fire that has served as a guiding light for the Bar community for one hundred years.

## One Night.

Join us Thursday, May 15, 2025 at the Vinoy Grand Ballroom from 6-10pm to celebrate this historical milestone.

## Walk of Fame Presenting Sponsor



Thursday, May 15, 2025 ~6-10pm~Vinoy Grand Ballroom  
Kick up your heels and celebrate 100 years in style! *(Black Tie Optional)*



**6-7:30pm Looking Back.**

Piano Duo

Delectable Food Stations

Entertainment & History Stations

**7:30pm Looking Back. Leaping Forward**

Remarks by the 100th President

(at the exact time that it all began 100 years - 7:30pm)

**7:30-10pm Leaping Forward.**

Celebrate with the Hottest Band in Town!



### Additional Evening Festivities

Commemorative gift and photo

Open bar & featured mocktails

Delectable menu & desserts

\$1,000 Money Cake Raffle (all guests entered)

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# WE ARE ST. PETE BAR

*Keeping it Local Since 1925*

## *Reflections from the St. Petersburg Bar Association 2024 - 2025 Board of Directors*

"When I was a law student, the St. Pete Bar welcomed me. When I became an attorney, the St. Pete Bar welcomed me even more. It was evident that the St. Pete Bar was evolving and continues to evolve to become even more reliably relevant to its members."

**100th President Jounice Nealy-Brown**



"Playing a part in the St. Pete Bar's long and storied history was such an honor. I will never forget my time being a member of the St. Pete Bar and encourage all lawyers to get involved. You will not regret the decision, and, more importantly, you will forge many lifelong friendships."

**Immediate Past President Ryan Griffin**

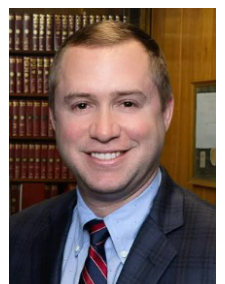


"While my time at the SPBA is filled with plenty of happy memories, fun and educational events, and new connections made on both professional and personal levels; I did not understand the importance of the SPBA and the true impact that it has made until the recent passing of my dear friend and law partner. The outpouring of love, understanding, and compassion from the SPBA members and the legal community has been overwhelming. From personal sympathy notes to the many offers of assistance, the connections made through the SPBA and their lasting and meaningful impact has never been more evident to me than now. The SPBA provides support, resources, and true camaraderie in the good times and the bad." **President-Elect Joseph Murphy**



"The Bar serves many needs in many different ways. In my opinion, perhaps the most important need is the constant mission to maintain civility, professionalism, comradery and even friendship amongst its members. The nature of our profession involves conflict; however, our role is to help resolve conflicts rather than create them. The Bar acts as a constant reminder to attorneys, judges and related legal professionals that we are in fact on the same team, serving the same goals."

**Secretary Raleigh "Billy" Greene**



"When I joined the SPBA as a first-year attorney, I was blown away by how welcoming and supportive everyone was. Over the past eight years, I have met countless friends and many mentors who have helped guide and support me as I moved from being a public defender to starting my own law firm. And now, I get to pay it forward by mentoring law students and young lawyers through SPBA, so the cycle continues! SPBA is more than just a bar association; it is a community."



**Treasurer Catherine Henry**

"The St. Pete Bar is a breath of fresh air in an industry that often demands adherence to exceedingly high standards, puts all of our professionals at odds with one another, and often impliedly encourages us to hide humanity and weakness. The St. Pete Bar is a community that encourages us to embrace our true selves, build real relationships, grow our abilities, not independently, but by relying on our fellow members. The St. Pete Bar is an organization that makes lawyers humans and humanizes the profession. The St. Pete Bar is a community that has embraced me and uplifts others. It is unfortunate that every lawyer in the country cannot join."



**Board Member Douglas Jackson**

"The St. Pete Bar is one of, if not *the* best organizations I have joined since becoming a lawyer – it embodies the professionalism of our line of work. I have had the privilege of being involved with the Young Lawyers Section for the last couple years as a member, vice president, and president. The most common feedback I routinely receive is how welcoming the Bar is to all members (students, young lawyers, veteran lawyers, retired lawyers) and also sponsors. This palpable "personality" is not something you can quickly create but develops over decades of embodying the goals of the profession and the Bar – all while developing new initiatives to help its members. I have been very humbled to have been involved with the Bar in my capacity. This is THE Bar association to be a part of and I am proud to be a small part of its long history. I am excited to see where the Bar goes in the next 100 years. Congrats on 100 years!"



**Young Lawyers Section President Anthony Nunnally**

"The St. Pete Bar represents a community of friendship, mentorship, and the highest ethical standards, creating a supportive community for professional growth. It has been a guiding force in my legal journey, fostering connections and integrity in practice."



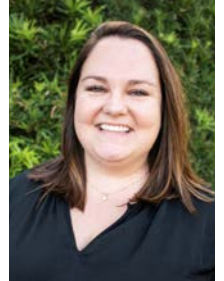
**Board Member Misa Everist**

"The SPBA has been a welcoming community that has always made me feel supported professionally and personally. I am most impressed with the way the SPBA stays so in tune with its members and tailors its strategy accordingly."



**Board Member Bea McConnell**

"The St. Pete Bar is a warm and welcoming place to build genuine relationships with fellow lawyers in our community. This Bar has proven time and time again to be a place where local lawyers can turn for connection, comfort, and clarity. Our Bar embodies the creed of professionalism that we are all bound to. The commitment to that creed has withstood the test of time, and I have no doubt it will continue to sustain us for another 100 years."



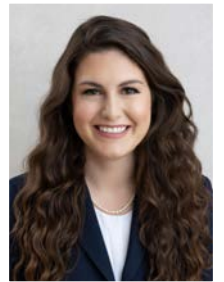
**Board Member Megan Michalski**

"As we look back and leap forward, celebrating 100 years of the SPBA means a lot to me. While I am a first-generation attorney in my immediate family, my relatives Don Mastry (third cousin) and the late-Dennis Janssen (uncle) both laid a foundation of encouragement to be a member of this bar. The first event I attended was in 1990 as a middle-schooler running in the SPBA Law Day Run with my uncle. My family has been a big part of the SPBA throughout the first 100 years, and I intend to keep the legacy going in the next 100."



**Board Member David Moran**

"The St. Pete Bar community feels very much like a community. It makes your day-to-day legal world feel a little more close-knit and personal. Getting to know peers and judges outside of a strict work setting makes everyone slow down and treat each other with more kindness and respect."



**Board Member Gracie Samarkos**

## A Note from the Oldest Practicing Bar Member

*"Congratulations to the bar on its 100th Anniversary. I have enjoyed 70 years of membership. I was admitted to the bar in 1957 and will celebrate my 94th birthday three days after the 100th Anniversary.*

*As a young solo attorney, I found it very helpful to attend bar meetings to meet colleagues and older attorneys that provided mentorship and guidance. I remember attending the meetings at the Detroit Hotel. Back in those days, you got to know all of the members and enjoyed the opportunity to socialize. I often think younger attorneys starting out in their practice don't always have the opportunity to network with more seasoned, older attorneys. As the oldest practicing member, I can definitely attest to the power of a great bar association that provides so much to the law community." - Rolfe Duggar*



*"Congratulations to the St. Petersburg Bar Association on reaching the remarkable milestone of your 100th anniversary, a century of dedication to our local legal community! We appreciate all the support the St. Pete Bar has provided to the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers over the years, and we look forward to celebrating this incredible achievement with you."*



Whitney Green  
President of PFAWL



*"On behalf of The St. Petersburg Bar Foundation, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the St. Petersburg Bar Association on reaching the incredible milestone of your 100th anniversary! For a century, the Association has played a pivotal role in advancing the legal profession, promoting justice, and fostering community engagement.*

*The dedication to upholding the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and service to the public is truly commendable. Through its advocacy, education, and support, the Association has made a lasting impact on both the legal field and the broader community in St. Petersburg. In celebrating this remarkable achievement, we recognize not only the past successes but also the bright future that lies ahead. The legacy built is a testament to the strength of commitment and the positive influence of the Association. Cheers to another century of excellence, growth, and service. Congratulations again on this momentous occasion!"*



Kristina Feher, Esq.  
The St. Petersburg Bar Foundation President



*"I joined the St. Petersburg Bar Association in 1972. It was a much smaller organization, and everyone appeared to know everyone. I was one of few female members but was welcomed and offered assistance by the other members. At the time I joined, the concept of any organized pro bono work was in its infancy. In a very few years, the St Petersburg Bar Association formed the Legal Aid Society and hired a full-time attorney to staff the office. That attorney was Robert Finck. I worked with the Bar in organizing the Legal Aid Office and remember appearing before the County Commission, with other members of the Bar, to successfully beg for money to purchase books for the Legal Aid Office. I have always admired the work that the St. Petersburg Bar Association has done, have been amazed at its growth and scope of activities, and been proud to be a member."*



Joan LoBianco Walker, Esq.  
Wife of late Judge David Seth Walker



*"Congratulations to the St. Petersburg Bar Association for the first 100 years. The bar has persevered through a century of events that have shaped our nation and our community. The importance of the St. Petersburg Bar's unwavering support of the legal system and your mission to 'serve the legal community, to strengthen the noble calling of the practice of law, and to foster excellence in the profession' cannot be overstated. Good luck and wishing you the best for the next 100."*



Chief Judge Shawn Crane  
Sixth Circuit Chief Judge



*"Congratulations to the St. Petersburg Bar Association. Bar for 100 wonderful years of leadership and service to our community. I joined the association over 50 years ago and it has been an honor to be a member. Back when I joined, there were no cell phones or email. However, the attorneys were very good about returning phone calls and communicating with each other and resolving issues. One of my early memories was attending the bar installation banquet. I got to meet a lot of new colleagues. I also enjoyed participating in the Jawbones vs Sawbones golf tournament. Over the years the association has been very good about recognizing and honoring judges, lawyers, and citizens who have contributed to the legal community and the service of justice. The legal world today can be challenging. I appreciate the St. Pete Bar for organizing meetings, seminars, and social events that provide opportunities for all to meet and professionally discuss matters. Congratulations again for 100 great years. Keep up the good work and leadership."*



Retired Judge J. Thomas McGrady



*"Congratulations on reaching the milestone of your 100th anniversary this year. The St. Pete Bar's longevity is a testament to the members, leadership - past and present, and the executive office. Your prioritization of collegiality, civility, mentorship, and engagement in the community has served you well. Take some time to celebrate this milestone but always remember the past is a classroom for the future. Stay focused on what matters and always remember it is a privilege to practice law. We judges are grateful for a Bar that fosters professionalism, civility, community service, personal wellness, and legal education. Best wishes for continued success this year. We look forward to working together to enhance the justice system."*



**Second District Court of Appeal  
Chief Judge Daniel Sleet**



*"Wow - The St. Pete Bar is 100 years old, and the good news is that it is still going strong. Let's take a look back at what was happening in St. Petersburg in 1925 at the time of its birth:*

- The Vinoy Hotel opened.
- The population of St. Petersburg exploded to 37,000 people.
  - The Coliseum opened the year before.
- The land boom was going strong but was just about to end.
- The Gandy Bridge connecting St. Petersburg to Tampa opened.
  - C. Perry Snell officially opened Snell Isle.
- Babe Ruth arrived in St. Pete for the first time in March to a huge crowd at the train station
- The Yankees spring training facility opened at Crescent Lake Park.

*But most significant of all:  
The St. Petersburg Bar Association was founded!*

*As St. Petersburg continued to change and face good times and bad, the principles the St. Petersburg Bar Association was founded upon remain as viable today as 100 years ago:*

- Encourage fellowship and support among its membership
- Bring honor and dignity to the justice system and to the rule of law
- Offer Professional development and education

*Congratulations on 100 years of success!"*



**Ken Burke  
Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, Pinellas County**



*"On behalf of The Florida Bar, it is my distinct privilege to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the St. Petersburg Bar Association on its extraordinary achievement of reaching the 100th anniversary. Voluntary bar associations play a vital role in advancing The Florida Bar's mission within local legal communities, fostering professionalism, service, and connection.*

*This significant milestone is a testament to the SPBA's unwavering dedication to serving the legal profession and inspiring generations of attorneys. The longevity and vitality of the St. Petersburg Bar Association underscore the passion and commitment of its members, who have steadfastly strengthened both the organization and the broader legal community.*

*Thank you for a century of leadership, advocacy, and support for the legal profession. The Florida Bar deeply values the contributions of vibrant voluntary bars like the SPBA, and we are honored to celebrate this incredible moment with them."*



**Roland Sanchez-Medina, Jr.  
The Florida Bar President**



*"Congratulations on the 100th anniversary of the beloved St. Pete Bar Association! Without its valued members, this milestone could not have been achieved. We at the Clearwater Bar Association admire the St. Pete Bar's congeniality, professionalism, and community involvement. We always enjoy collaborating on joint events.*

*We look forward to continuing our special relationship in the future and to celebrating more milestones together! Cheers to another hundred years of success!"*



Connolly C. McArthur  
Clearwater Bar Association President



*"Congratulations on reaching the 100th Anniversary this year! Voluntary bar associations such as the St. Petersburg Bar play a vital role in the legal community. They promote collegiality and civility among members of the bar, foster excellence in the practice of law, and aid the growth of new attorneys. The longevity of this organization is a testament to its success in these endeavors. May this year of celebration provide a renewed enthusiasm for the important work that we do as lawyers, judges, and engaged members of our communities."*



Chief Judge Marcia Morales Howard  
United States District Court, Middle District of Florida



*"On behalf of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, I write to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the St. Petersburg Bar Association on its centennial anniversary in 2025. From my time as a professor at Stetson University College of Law, I know firsthand about the important work the Association does for the community. The centennial theme of "Looking Back. Leaping Forward." is perfect for an organization that has made its mark in the past and will, no doubt, continue to do so in the future!*

*Once again, congratulations and best wishes as you move into the next 100 years!"*



Chief Judge Michael P. Allen  
United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims





# Thank You Paraclete Editorial Committee



**Melissa Byers**



**Bruce Denson**



**Mercy Roberg**



**Daniel Smith**



**Christina Stokes**



**George Thurlow**



**John Tucker**



**Emily VanOosting**



**Shannon Zetrouer**

**Not Pictured: Charles Samaha**



## WE HONOR & THANK THE ST. PETERSBURG BAR ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS

\* indicates deceased ~ \*\* indicates Florida Bar President

1925 Freeman P. Lane*	1960 Charles E. Fischer*	1995 H. James Fischer*
1926 A.L. Richardson*	1961 Wilbur C. Stone*	1996 Kent G. Whittemore
1927 C.I. Carey*	1962 Richard F. Logan*	1997 Robert C. Decker
1928 Bayard S. Cook*	1963 Thomas V. Kiernan*	1998 Pamela A.M. Campbell
1929 George W. Wylie*	1964 Paul H. Roney*	1999 Thomas D. Masterson*
1930 John I. Viney*	1965 James P. Bennett*	2000 Eric E. Ludin
1931 Harry R. Hewitt*	1966 William J. McLeod*	2001 Doreen S. Young
1932 William B. Tippetts*	1967 William W. Gay*	2002 John V. Tucker
1933 Erle B. Askew*	1968 Edward A. Turville*	2003 David J. Abbey
1934 E.C. Watson*	1969 Samuel W. Harris*	2004 William H. Walker
1935 Henry L. Baynard*	1970 William H. Carey*	2005 Seymour A. Gordon
1936 Vernon G. Agee*	1971 Hugh E. Reams*	2006 Lee H. Rightmyer
1937 Harvey L. McGlothlin*	1972 Robert H. Willis*	2007 Camille J. Iurillo
1938 Edwin B. Ellis*	1973 Charles W. Burke*	2008 Jeannine S. Williams
1939 Victor O. Wehle*	1974 John D. Harris, Jr.*	2009 James D. Thaler, Jr.
1940 C. Frank Harrison*	1975 George F. Wilsey, Jr.	2010 John W. Biesinger, III
1941 James Booth*	1976 W. Joseph Reynolds*	2011 Gentry B. Byrnes
1942 Lincoln Bogue*	1977 Louie N. Adcock, Jr.*	2012 Timothy A. Miller
1943 Herbert L. Peterson*	1978 Horace A. Andrews*	2013 Raleigh W. Greene III
1944 J.E. Kennedy*	1979 Kenneth C. Deacon, Jr.*	2014 J.S. Lucas Fleming
1945 Stuart B. Warren*	1980 James R. Lyle*	2015 Cary A. Cash
1946 A.S. Bradley*	1981 William F. Blews **	2016 Erica Smith Roodhouse
1947 S. Henry Harris*	1982 E. Thomas Fisher, Jr.*	2017 William B. McQueen
1948 Thomas J. Collins*	1983 William C. Ballard	2018 Gregory J. Hoag
1949 Carroll R. Runyon*	1984 Jack S. Carey*	2019 Tara Scott Lynn
1950 James T. Smith*	1985 Martin E. Rice*	2020 Sean K. McQuaid
1951 Leonard W. Cooperman*	1986 Glenn M. Woodworth*	2021 Lauren Christ Rubenstein
1952 Robert Barton*	1987 Aubrey O. Dicus	2022 Hutch Pinder
1953 John Blocker*	1988 John C. Dew	2023 Ryan Griffin
1954 J.A. McClure*	1989 David A. Bacon	2024 Jounice Nealy-Brown
1955 Richard T. Earle, Jr.*	1990 Anthony S. Battaglia*	2025 Joseph Murphy
1956 William S. Fielding*	1991 Jack Helinger	
1957 Robert W. Fisher*	1992 Douglas M. Williamson	
1958 Charles Robinson, Sr.*	1993 Karen B. Lopez	
1959 Arthur J. Nelson*	1994 Mark I. Shames*	

## LOOKING BACK

# St. Petersburg Bar Association Past Presidents

## A Legacy of Leadership

The St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) could not celebrate this 100-year milestone without the vision and leadership of 100 presidents, beginning with President Freeman P. Lane in 1925. SPBA is proud to honor those who have selflessly served the SPBA for 100 years. Each president

shares valuable skills, strengths, and unique characteristics that laid the steppingstone for the next president walking the path. It is a legacy of leadership that should not go unnoticed. Thank you to each and every president for your leadership. You have left your inedible mark, and we are forever grateful.

"When I was admitted to The Florida Bar in 1958 the total number of admitted attorneys was barely 7000. In my graduating class of over 100 there were only two female students. For years after, the number of Florida attorneys that were female was astonishingly low for various reasons. That glass wall was broken somewhere in the 1980s. Today the total admitted attorneys is over 96,000 of which 40,000 are female. That increase was the most significant event in my years of practice and most pleasing to me because included in that group of 40,000 is a granddaughter of mine."

**George F. Wilsey, Jr., 1975 (Oldest living president)**

"I can't image our legal community without the SPBA. It has been the entity that brings us all together. There are so many lawyers, who have become my friends, that I probably would have never known if not for SPBA functions. Congratulations SPBA!"

**The Honorable Jack Helinger, 1991**

Congratulations on the 100th anniversary! As a former SPBA president, I have such vivid memories of the challenges we were going through at the time. Nothing like today, but, it was, and continues to be, the strong bonds of friendships that remain the wind beneath my wings. The president who



served directly before me was Bob Decker and after me was Tom Masterson. While gender bias was in the news, I couldn't have been more warmly welcomed into the male dominated club of the legal profession. It's great lawyers and simply really good men and women that make the St. Petersburg Bar my home. I am grateful for all the blessings of the past and looking forward to our future together.

**The Honorable Pamela A.M. Campbell, 1998**

"My service as president of the St. Petersburg Bar was a major highlight of my professional career. During my term, among other accomplishments, we created the Judge Frank H. White Diversity Scholarship awarded annually to a Stetson Student and initiated the development of a successful museum exhibit highlighting the history of minority lawyers in Pinellas County. I will always remember the spirit of collegiality of our members and those who worked with me. I was blessed to have the opportunity to serve this outstanding organization."

**Eric Ludin, 2000**

"Congratulations to the St. Petersburg Bar Association on its 100th Anniversary. I have had the privilege of being a member since 1960. During this lifetime it has been my good fortune to have met, socialized, litigated, and meditated with the finest and most ethical attorneys in Florida. Thank you for the opportunity of being part of the group."

**Seymour A. Gordon, 2005**



"As the SPBA celebrates 100 years, I celebrate 25 years of practicing law in St. Pete. Each year of practicing is positively influenced by my membership and participation in our bar. The original Diversity Committee was created the year I moved here, and three years later, SPBA developed *A Legacy of Courage, Vision & Hope: African Americans in the Legal Profession*. This museum exhibit represented a recognition of history and symbolized a willingness of our bar to be open and welcoming to all in terms of not only membership, but also leadership. I could not imagine my life without the SPBA, including the service provided to the Bar and the benefits gained from the Bar. The mentorship of members, educational opportunities, network of friends and colleagues, and persistent professional development are all reasons our bar has continued to thrive for 100 years."

**Jeaninne Williams, 2008**

"During the June 2009 leadership installation ceremony, I had the privilege of addressing the attendees and mentioned that I would be available to any member at any time. In doing so, I provided my cell phone number. While still at the podium, my phone rang. I believe it was on vibrate, but I looked at it and quickly recognized the name. So as to not embarrass Frank McDermott, I won't provide his name right now...and he was not the only one to call me that night (you know who you are). A few other memories of my term include a membership luncheon slideshow of "Legal Insanity" cartoons, narrated by the artist Judge Stephen



Rushing, and a foul ball hitting the St. Pete Bar president-elect at a Rays game, along with a cardboard cutout of said president-elect (John Biesinger) being pelted by nerf baseballs at his installation. Who says lawyers don't take things seriously?

**Jim Thaler, 2009**

"My first memory of the SPBA is a membership lunch when I was a young lawyer - I may not have even received my bar results yet. Louie Adcock took me to the bar lunch and when we walked in he simply said "go sit with someone else." That got me out of my comfort zone! The next year I signed up for the membership committee and upon arriving to the first meeting learned there was currently not a chair of the committee. I reluctantly volunteered and thus began my leadership journey with the SPBA. It has been rewarding both professionally and personally. I developed lasting friendships and will forever be thankful that Louie pushed me at that first luncheon."

**Gentry Byrnes, 2011**

"When I was elected as President of the SPBA in 2012 a sage old friend and mentor Tom Masterson quietly said to me, "That's a demanding responsibility for a solo practitioner to shoulder..." Then he and many others proved our members' character by supporting me continuously through that year, as usual, in teaming to make our association prosper as a place where lawyers quietly help other lawyers grow and learn together, to succeed and enjoy the practice of law here in sunny St. Pete!"

**Timothy Miller, 2012**

"I remember the resilience of the St. Pete Bar staff during my time as president. After a change in leadership of the executive director, we discovered mold in the recently purchased building. For many months the staff worked with dry wall removed from the

wall, plastic coverings placed to shield the staff from mold exposure and humidifiers to dry out the building. All the while continuing with the work of the Bar. It was a testament to the dedication of the Bar staff."

**J.S. Lucas Fleming, 2014**

"I remember while conducting a monthly membership meeting I decided to advise everyone via playing popular songs on my guitar and changing the lyrics to describe our upcoming events. Seemed to go over well. Our speaker that meeting was Judge Rondolino and he started his presentation by telling everyone he had to double check to make sure he was not accidentally at the Las Vegas Bar meeting. I considered that a high compliment - thank you, thank you very much! Great times and memories!"

**Cary Cash, 2015**

"I am so glad to have had the opportunity to serve in Bar leadership. My best memories from my time so far in the Bar are rather mundane - laughing and brainstorming at meetings, setting up for events, collaborating with Executive Director Melissa Byers on various projects, organizing Young Lawyers events, attending Membership Lunches (especially when Past President Cary Cash played his guitar) - but they are all good memories. They represent important time shared with people who started as my colleagues and became my friends. The benefit you get from the Bar really does depend on the work and time you are willing to put into your membership. It has been one of the most rewarding parts of my experience as a lawyer."

**Erica K. Smith Roodhouse, 2016**

"Understanding the challenges that solo practitioners face on multiple levels, my motivation to serve as president of the SPBA was to be a voice for the solo practitioner and very small firms. Among the chal-

lenges is personal wellness. As noted in recent statistics posted by The Florida Bar showing that: 21-36% of lawyers qualify as problem drinkers, which is higher for solo practitioners. I am hopeful that we will collectively work together to support the health and success of bar members for the next 100 years."

**Tara Scott Lynn, 2019**

"The St Pete Bar and its members are such a special group of professionals. My time as president will always be a special part of my life, and the relationships I forged while apart of this organization's great leadership are some of the most fulfilling, both personally and professionally."

**Lauren Christ Rubenstein, 2021**

"I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride as the Bar celebrates this momentous 100th Anniversary. Reflecting on my journey as a past president of the St. Petersburg Bar Association, I am deeply appreciative and honored of the incredible colleagues, mentors, and friends who have walked this path with me.

Together, we have not only navigated the complexities of the law but also fostered a vibrant community dedicated to justice and service. The legacy we celebrate is a testament to the resilience and dedication of those who came before us and those who will continue to shape the future of our profession.

Looking forward, I am filled with optimism. The legal landscape is always evolving, and I am confident that the next generation will rise to the challenges ahead with creativity and integrity. Let us continue to inspire one another and uphold our commitment to justice, ensuring that the St. Petersburg Bar Association remains a beacon of excellence for years to come. Here's to our shared past, and to an inspiring future!"

**William Blews, 1981 (Only St. Pete Bar President that also served as The Florida Bar President)**



# Celebrating and Honoring 50-Year Members

By Melissa Byers and Charlie Samaha



For 27 years, the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) has had the privilege of honoring and sharing the journey of those SPBA members who have achieved the milestone of practicing at least 50 years. Who is the person that beautifully captures and etches in history the essence of all of the members celebrating 50 years? It is *Paraclete* Committee member Charles Samaha. Charlie is extremely modest and humble. I am honored to have this opportunity to shine the light on him and personally thank him for sharing his gift with the SPBA. He has preserved the history of many. Below he reflects on his journey. Thank you, Charlie!

I had been practicing law for about a decade in 1998 when I joined the SPBA and subsequently joined the *Paraclete* Editorial Committee. The editor, Kate Kyres, needed someone to interview three members who had been practicing for at least 50 years. I jumped at the opportunity because it satisfied my hobbies of writing and history – a perfect combination. Those first three interviewees were Joe Bradham, Bill Cramer, and Pepper Bennett. I interviewed them at varied locations – Joe took me to lunch, Bill was over the phone, and Pepper at his office. I geeked out to the fact that all three were World War II veterans. My most recent interview was with Judge Beach, whom I have personally known the longest, as I used to carpool with his son to elementary school in the early 1970s.

Many of the lawyers and judges that I have interviewed were known to me either by reputation, acquaintance, or as an adversary or judge in the courtroom. There were also those folks I had never met, but nonetheless equally enjoyed. Each interview was special to me in their own way – whether it was

Guy Perenich who became emotional recounting one of his early cases, Dick Earle ruminating about his role in the removal of justices at the Florida Supreme Court, or Evelyn Kuttler who was the first woman I had the opportunity to interview. The common thread that ran through every interview was their love for the law.

My only disappointment is that I have not yet had the opportunity to interview someone of color. I tried to interview Frank White when he had his 50th anniversary. I had practiced before him on many occasions as he was the first African American circuit judge in Pinellas County. When he was a young attorney, he was ignominiously rejected for membership in the SPBA due to the color of his skin. I called him and tried to entice him for an interview, but he said there had already been much written about him. I felt he was being too modest.

The *Paraclete* archives are available on the SPBA's website dating back to 2013. I hope you have enjoyed reading them as much as I have enjoyed writing them. – **Charles M. Samaha**

*William C. Cramer – A Lawyer Who Continues To Make A Difference*, September 1998

*Jospeh W. Bradham, Jr. – One Of St. Pete's Finest*, November 1998

*James Pepper Bennett – A Well-Rounded Professional*, January 1999

*Richard T. Earle, Jr. – Still Having Fun*, February 1999

*Edward A. Turville – A Champ In & On The Court*, March 1999

*Harold J. Soehl – The Poet Lawyer*, April 1999

*Howard E. Warns – Still Flying High*, May 1999

*Gerard J. O'Brien – The Consummate Judge*, June 1999

*Leonard Lubin – Loving The Law*, September 1999

*Robert Fisher – A Multi-Faceted Attorney*, October 1999

*Adrian Bacon – From Humble Beginnings Doth Rise A Lawyer*, December 1999

*Judge Paul H. Roney – Member Profile*, February 2000

*James R. Lyle, Sr. – A Solid Professional*, March 2000

*William F. Davenport, Jr. – Hometown Son Excels*, May 2000

*Sydney M. Goetz, Jr. – The Active Retiree*, June 2000

*Judge Robert J. Shingler – There Is Life After The Law*, July/August 2000

*Judge William H. Seaver – No Rest For This Senior Judge*, October 2000

*Sam H. Mann, Jr. – A Committed Member Of The Community*, January 2001

- Jack Carey – Following The Family Calling*, February 2001
- Judge Owen S. Allbritton – A Successful Local Son*, October 2001
- Billy L. Rowe – 50 Year Profile*, September 2003
- Anthony S. Battaglia – 50 Year Profile*, December 2003/January 2004
- Profile of William H. Walker*, June 2004
- Honoring Our 50 Year Members*, October 2004
- Richard Eagle – 60 Years of Service*, June 2007
- Robert “Bob” H. Willis celebrates his 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of practicing law this September*, July/August 2007
- Louie N. Adcock – 50 Year Member Profile*, December 2007/January 2008
- Guy Perenich– For the Little People*, April 2008
- Rolfe Duggar – A Rich Heritage*, June 2008
- George F. Wilsey – Going Powerfully After 50 Years*, November 2008
- Robert E. Jagger – Hail to the Chief!*, May 2009
- William Reischmann – Still in the Trenches*, June 2009
- Philip S. Ware – 50 Year Member Profile*, October 2009
- Bruce Marger – A Lawyer Who Made A Difference*, December 2009/January 2010
- John Dew – A Hometown Original*, April 2010
- Alfred E. Underberg: A Predilection for Wanderlust*, September 2010
- William C. Kaleel, Jr.: Litigator Extraordinaire*, October 2010
- The Honorable Irene Sullivan: A Career on a Whim*, October 2010
- John L. Green, Jr.: No Slowing Down for this Legal Veteran*, July/August 2011
- Seymour Gordon: The Well Balanced Attorney*, November 2011
- Allen P. Allweiss: The Razor Never Dulls*, February 2012
- John E. M. Ellis – We Salute This Veteran*, November 2012
- Seymour Gordon – What Makes A Hero Among Us*, December 2013/January 2014
- Robert “Bob” F. Michael, Jr. – No Time For Retirement*, January/February 2016
- Joseph “Joe” H. Lang - Law as a Family Affair*, May/June 2016
- Howard P. Ross – The Consummate Professional*, September/October 2016
- David Seth Walker – Longtime Jurist Returns to Private Life*, November/December 2016
- William F. Blews – A Leader Rediscovered Himself*, January/February 2017
- David L. Foster – Mirabile Dictu, A Précis of a Storied Career*, July/August 2017
- Evelyn Flathmann Kuttler – A Trailblazer*, November/December 2017
- Barry M. Salzman – Continuing the Advocacy*, July/August 2018
- The Honorable Crockett Farnell – Semper Fidelis!*, May/June 2019
- D’arcy R. Clarie – On the Case*, November/December 2021
- Ernest P. Jenkins – No Rest for this Local Son*, May/June 2022
- Walter E. Smith – Continuing his Passions*, May/June 2023
- George Wilsey – Our Oldest Past President Has Something to Say*, July/August 2023
- Joan LoBianco Walker - Perseverance Through Adversity Has Paid Dividends*, July/August 2024
- Robert “Bob” E. Beach – From the Bottom of His Class to the Top of the World*, January/February 2025

## Executive Director Nora Bergman, 1999-2006

I remember July 1, 1999, very clearly. It was the day I walked into the St. Petersburg Bar Association office, not as simply a member, but as the executive director. It was a day that changed my life for the better in so many ways. After practicing law for seven years and losing my mom suddenly in a car accident, it was time to make a change. I've always loved the song, "I Take My Chances," by Mary Chapin Carpenter. So, I decided to take a chance on something new.

But despite my desire for change, I wanted to stay connected to my friends and my legal community. When the opportunity arose for the executive director position, I knew it was meant to be. My dear friend and law partner at the time, Dana Greenbaum, was so supportive. I will be forever grateful.

It's hard to believe that I took that chance over 25 years ago. It was definitely a career shift to go from employment law litigator to taking on the stewardship of "my" bar association. I had the opportunity to work with wonderful bar presidents and committee members over the years, but the learning curve was steep. I was blessed to have JoAnn Knight working with me throughout my years at the bar. JoAnn helped me get through that first year and was always there to lend a hand with any job, no matter how big or how small. Not long after I came to the bar, Kathy Parker joined the team. JoAnn, Kathy, and I worked closely together, and we had a great time along the way.

Then in 2005, it was time to take another chance. I met Mark Powers, the founder of Atticus, and he asked me if I would join Atticus as a practice advisor and coach. In 2006, after nearly a year of training, I left my role as executive director and started my work as a business coach, working exclusively with lawyers and law firms. Through Atticus, I've had the privilege of coaching lawyers and law firms across the country – from sole practitioners to much larger firms. My work as a coach gave me the opportunity to launch the *50 Lessons for Lawyers* book series. We're currently working on the fourth book in the series, *50 Lessons for Young*

*Lawyers*. I'm excited to be collaborating with contributors from the United States and Canada to bring our vision of a handbook for young lawyers to life.

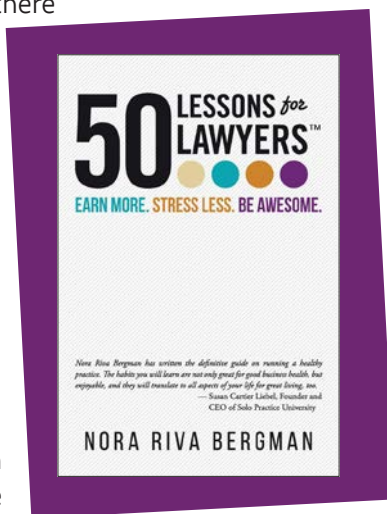


Over the years, people have asked me, "What was your favorite part about being a bar executive?" My response is always the same, "I loved everything about it." But if there were one thing that stood out, it was being able to help lawyers improve their lives – not just their practices, but their whole lives. The St. Pete Bar was one of the first voluntary bar associations in Florida to focus on wellness. We hosted programs that included yoga and the latest

tips on health and well-being. In my work as a coach, I always tell my clients, "You don't have a professional life *and* a personal life. You have one life. Take care of yourself first. If you don't take care of yourself, how can you take care of your clients? Take care of yourself so you can be at your best for your clients, your loved ones, and your friends."

It makes me so happy to see that the St. Pete Bar is continuing to focus on the well-being of its members by providing ongoing programs and resources. Melissa Byers leads the bar with authenticity, integrity, and a sincere devotion to the legal community. Her commitment is evident in the work the bar has done and continues to do.

Happy 100th Anniversary, St. Pete Bar! I can't wait to see what's next!



*Nora Riva Bergman is a law firm coach, author, and certified Atticus Practice Advisor. She is the creator of the 50 Lessons for Lawyers book series, including 50 Lessons for Lawyers: Earn More – Stress Less – Be Awesome, 50 Lessons for Women Lawyers – From Women Lawyers, and 50 Lessons for Happy Lawyers: Boost Wellness – Build Resilience – Yes, You Can! A licensed attorney since 1992, Nora has coached hundreds of lawyers across the country. She practiced as an employment law attorney and certified mediator and has served as an adjunct professor at both Stetson University College of Law and the University of South Florida, teaching courses in alternative dispute resolution and negotiation.*

## LEAPING FORWARD

# Executive Director Melissa Byers, 2013 to Present

"If we don't turn things around, the St. Pete Bar may not be here to celebrate 100 years." That was the sentiment I received from Past President Lucas Fleming when I accepted the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) Executive Director position in December 2013. Why? At that time, the SPBA faced uncertainty due to budgeting challenges resulting in a pattern of negative net revenue, a building with water intrusion, a lack of standard operating procedures, and an outdated strategic plan created seven years earlier.

My goal was to get back to basics: focus on the mission, achieve solid financial ground, meet the needs of the membership, create a culture that embraces everyone, and brand the Bar as the best bar in the state, reflective of the best city in the state. Oh, and yes, to make sure the Bar would celebrate its 100th Anniversary.

Above my desk is a quote by Thomas Edison, "Vision without implementation is hallucination." Our leadership set out to create a vision combined with a clear roadmap that became the cornerstone of the Bar's success. The mile markers included securing solid partnerships with trusted, corporate sponsors resulting in better events at beautiful venues and financial reserves to ensure future success; a solid leadership succession of section chairs and board members resulting in the only bar in the state to host 30-50 free CLEs and 10-20 free events per year; annual strategic planning with engaged, committed board members resulting in themes that invigorate and energize; and a commitment to tackle relevant issues including attorney safety, attorney wellness, and law firm business strategies while maintaining the ability to pivot, as needed, to ensure members are supported no matter what is thrown our way.

In looking back to December 2013, I remember attending my first bar event, the holiday party at the Mirror Lake Lyceum. I was nervous. I had achieved success in business and the wellness industry, but I wasn't an attorney. I wasn't

certain if a bi-racial female director with unruly, curly hair would be embraced by a bar association. I don't remember anything about that night except one thing – the warmth, kindness, and professionalism of so many members that graciously welcomed me with open arms. That night, I knew the Bar would succeed, but not based upon my experience. The Bar would succeed based upon the long history of committed leadership and members that were deeply invested in its success. I was blessed to become a small part of this tapestry and do my part.



Fast forward 10 years later. In January 2023, the SPBA Board of Directors encouraged me to consider

hiring my daughter Maya to fill the vacant membership coordinator position. I knew Maya had the skill set we were seeking but, again, I was concerned how members would view this decision. Once again, everyone welcomed Maya exactly as they had welcomed me 10 years earlier. While in high school, Maya was the "1920s cigarette girl" at the SPBA 90th Anniversary. Now, as the membership coordinator at the 100th Anniversary, I am proud that she is committed to ensuring the success of the Bar now and in the future.

As we celebrate the 100th Anniversary, I am thankful to the judiciary, past presidents, board members, section chairs, members, judicial assistants, annual sponsors, partners, bar associations, legal aid providers, and staff (past and present) that selflessly have dedicated their time and resources to ensure the law community is a beacon of light.

In the past 11 years, our Bar has faced amazing success coupled with unexpected, heartbreaking loss. As an only child, I never fully understood the concept of strength in numbers. Now, I do. As we face a future of increased technology, growth, and a bit of uncertainty, I don't know what the next 100 years will entail but I know this Bar will stand strong because this Bar will stand together.

# Membership Coordinator JoAnn Knight, 1987-2020

By Melissa Byers



It's impossible to look back in the bar history without seeing the imprint of JoAnn Knight. Many of you know that much of the success of the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) is a direct result of the dedication and hard work of past Membership Program Coordinator JoAnn Knight. JoAnn served as the backbone of the SPBA for 33 years. Members remember JoAnn's humble demeanor, warm smile, positive outlook, and kind heart. Directors, members, and technology advancements may come and go, but JoAnn served as the foundation that held the bar together through every challenge and every success. I was blessed to work with JoAnn for seven years. I can honestly say that I literally never witnessed JoAnn lose her temper, be disparaging, or unprofessional in any manner. She was the "Wizard" behind the curtain juggling many balls without expectation of accolades or acknowledgement. She truly has a servant's heart and the SPBA was incredibly blessed that she chose to dedicate her time and talent in serving the Bar as her profession. She is what I aspire to be. I asked JoAnn to share in her own words a little about her life since retiring in October of 2020.

Since leaving in October 2020, I have been fairly busy! My older sister says that I am a godly person because I'm always

helping someone. I don't think of it that way. I think if there is a need, fill it... whether helping my family, my friends, my church, or anywhere else. I think that might be what God intended for my life. My husband Richard, of almost 49 years, always says that when you're retired, you never have a day off. I feel I have every day off and choose what I do. Some days I relax, but I enjoy having lunch with my family or with a friend after visiting one of our favorite thrift stores.

I'm always there to listen and spend much of my time on the phone connecting with my family, especially our two daughters. We also have three grandchildren, including Isabel (26) who lives in St. Pete. Years ago, she accompanied me to some of the "Evening with the Rays" events hosted by the SPBA. Those are fond memories! Our two other grandchildren, Waylon (7) and Juniper (5), live in South Carolina with our eldest daughter Kimberlee and her husband. I just got back from visiting to help out when Juniper had her tonsils out. She's doing great now and back to her spicy self! Our youngest daughter, Valerie, got married this February 1st on the Disney Wish cruise ship and we made sure all of our kids and grandkids were able



to come along, making it an extra special memory for us.

Life has been good! But it's also not without loss. I lost my brother last year from cancer, a sad time. I also lost many of my beloved pets over the past four years. It's the first time in years that we have been without a dog. However, life continues. I am blessed with good family, good friends, and good health. I try and get to the gym for some exercise too. I'm not sure what life holds in store for the future, but I'm trying my best to be around for a good, long time!

I still dabble in bookkeeping for our marine repair business. I am also the trustees' chair at my church. I help with occasional grounds clean up, serve as the treasurer for the women's group, and utilize the PowerPoint skills I learned at the bar office to create the worship video ministry each Sunday.

I have fond memories of the St. Pete Bar, including the six Executive Directors who led the bar office to where it is today. I am proud to have been a part of the organization and support its mission. However, I do miss the camaraderie between bar office employees. We had a good crew!

I also miss the members because that was truly what it was all about. The outstanding judges and attorneys have given the practice of law a good name in the past and now as the bar heads toward the next 100 years! Keep up the good work!

---

*Melissa Byers has served as the Executive Director of the St. Petersburg Bar Association for the past eleven years. Previously, she served as the Executive Director for the Police Athletic League. Her background also focused on a career in wellness, including working at The Golden Door Resort & Spa in San Diego and Warner Brothers Studios in Los Angeles. She is a sought-after speaker presenting "Shift Happens - Surviving the Law Profession" at conferences and bar associations around the state.*

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## LEAPING FORWARD



## Membership Coordinator Maya Byers, 2023 to present

When the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) Board of Directors and Executive Director Melissa Byers proposed the idea of becoming the membership program coordinator, I was honored. However, I was also a little hesitant. As many members are aware, Melissa is my mother. We have a very close relationship, and I was concerned that working together would potentially impact that relationship. We had many conversations before making a decision. Reflecting on the past two years, I can honestly say it was the right decision.

In January 2023, I was honored to become the membership coordinator. Previously, I assisted with events if the bar needed an extra hand. So, I was familiar with a few of the bar members and leadership before I was offered the position. Prior to accepting the position, I was a regional assistant at the St. Petersburg-Clearwater Airport managing the finances for the airport restaurants. I also assisted the Tampa and Orlando airports and was on track to begin assisting the Miami airport.



As the membership coordinator, a large part of my job is meeting the needs of the members, maintaining the website, creating graphics, and assisting with events and CLEs. I look forward to seeing bar members at events, interacting with the Young Lawyers, and assisting members daily with any questions or concerns. Every interaction brightens my day and inspires me to be the best I can be in my work.

The SPBA has a sense of camaraderie and unity that I haven't experienced in any other workplace. After working at a few events, I expressed to Melissa how touched I was that bar members are so gracious and appreciative of the Bar. That remains true now.

I'm incredibly honored and excited to be part of such a monumental milestone: celebrating 100 years of the St. Pete Bar! I am honored every day to serve an organization that proudly fosters community, wellness, and camaraderie. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for the bar and being an integral part of that future.

## LOOKING BACK

## Sixth Circuit Court Administrator Gay L. Inskeep

As the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) celebrates its 100th anniversary, I reflect on my almost four decades of membership in the organization. While I have accumulated many memories over the years, in addition to serving the judiciary in my role as Sixth Circuit Court Administrator, my time spent serving as editor, and then board member, of the *Paraclete* magazine Editorial Committee bubbles to the surface as one of my favorite memories.

Kate Kyles, the editor of the *Paraclete* in the late 1990's, approached me at a SPBA function and asked whether I would consider writing a regular feature in the magazine about my experiences having a full-time legal career while raising my young children. With her encouragement, I submitted a column containing my random musings and some feeble attempts at humor, and "The Paraclete Parent" was born. The column soon became a monthly feature and provided me with a creative outlet that I hadn't even known I needed. I kept it up for over 15 years, thanks to the indulgence of many *Paraclete* editors and readers. Looking back, those articles memorialized my family's story and created a diary of sorts of my children's antics, accomplishments and milestones. What started as a project to bring a personal touch to the publication and to help support other lawyer-parents ended

up enriching my own life in ways I cannot begin to measure.

Now that I am retired from my legal career, I am once again tapping into that creative vein. I established a sole proprietorship called Petterson Writing and Publishing, and I have independently published two middle-grade children's books. It has been a liberating and rewarding departure from my previous working life and in large part, I have my experience with the *Paraclete* to thank. The many supportive and encouraging calls, e-mails and texts that I received after my "Paraclete Parent" articles were published gave me the confidence to pursue my passion in retirement. I owe a debt of gratitude to the past and present SPBA Presidents, Executive Directors, *Paraclete* Editors and board members for giving me a forum to express myself and a chance to hone my craft.

I appreciate the sense of community that the SPBA provides to local lawyers, and for the innumerable other ways in which the association enriches the professional and personal lives of its members. Here's to another 100 years!





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# 100 Years... and Counting!

The St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) was formed 100 years ago in 1925. Even for those of us who no longer qualify by youth for the young lawyers section, it's difficult to imagine life as an attorney in St. Petersburg in 1925. To set the stage of a Florida attorney in the midst of the Roaring Twenties, here are some fun facts about life and St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1925:

Here are some highlights of the cost of living in 1925 versus 2025.<sup>1</sup>

## 1925:

- A pound of butter cost \$0.55.
- A pound of bacon cost \$0.47.
- A pair of men's Oxford shoes cost \$2.95 and a new wool suit cost \$12.50.<sup>2</sup>
- A pair of women's patent leather pumps cost \$2.50 and a silk dress cost \$15-25.
- A Ford Model T Tourer cost around \$260; other cars were \$1,000-\$3,000.
- The average American income was \$5,425.
- A new house was \$11,600.

## Compared to 2025:

- A pound of butter costs \$4.72.
- A pound of bacon costs \$6.91.
- A pair of mens' Oxford shoes cost \$159 and a new wool suit costs \$300.<sup>3</sup>
- A new car costs \$48,274.
- The average American income as of 2023 is \$80,610.
- A new house costs \$420,400.

## Interesting facts about life and St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1925:

- It had been nearly four years since the Tampa Bay Hurricane of 1921 made its destructive path across the Tampa Bay Area.<sup>4</sup>
- In 1925, Florida was experiencing a real estate boom with prices of land and properties skyrocketing – not too far off from the past decade.<sup>5</sup>
- The Vinoy Hotel opened. It cost \$3.5 million to build, which was an astounding cost for the time.<sup>6</sup>
- The Gandy Bridge connecting St. Petersburg to Tampa had just opened in 1924.<sup>7</sup>
- Snell Isle was opened by C. Perry Snell.<sup>8</sup>



By Shannon L. Zetrouer

- The Yankees spring training facility opened at Crescent Lake Park.<sup>9</sup>
- St. Petersburg was known for its sunshine, warm winter weather, and lively entertainment scene.

## St. Petersburg, Florida, in 2025:

- It has been just a few months since Hurricanes Helene and Milton caused damage to nearly 40,000 homes in St. Petersburg.
- St. Petersburg has been experiencing a real estate boom for nearly a decade that is just starting to lose a little steam.
- The Vinoy Hotel recently completed a 50 million dollar renovation that started in 2017.<sup>10</sup>
- The Howard Frankland Bridge was just expanded to provide an additional four lanes heading south to St. Petersburg and Largo.
- Snell Isle is recovering from the worst flooding it has seen during Hurricane Helene in September.
- The Yankees, after a few moves, have been hosting their spring training in Tampa at George M. Steinbrenner Field since 1996.<sup>11</sup>
- St. Petersburg is known for its sunshine, warm winter weather, and lively entertainment scene.

While looking back is fun, leaping forward is even better! So, where will we be in 2125? Well, according to Bill Gates we may move to a two-day workweek in the next ten years, thanks to the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI).<sup>12</sup> Ray-Ban is already selling AI sunglasses, which according to Ray-Ban "blend cutting edge technology with iconic style" – so, excuse me while I pause to shop for a new pair of shades! I'm back now and my sunglasses will be writing the remainder of this article. I'm only kidding, but the future is here and as lawyers we need to embrace it. At my firm, ZP Legal, we are utilizing AI-generated software and non-AI software to perform tasks I previously paid a law clerk to do. It's not perfect, but neither are the best law clerks. If you don't start getting used to utilizing AI, you will be struggling to keep up in the very near future.

What will happen to the price of commodities in 2125? Will they decrease in cost with the development of

technology? Will robots replace laborers and decrease the cost of construction? Will vacations be to space? Will bridges be necessary or will all vehicles have the ability to fly? Will homes still be built on the ground? Will technology replace coaches in professional sports? Will judges allow AI to decide issues of law? As of now I have more questions than answers, but if I had to make a prediction it would be this: the difference between life in 2025 and 2125 will be far more drastic than the difference in life in 1925 and 2025. Yet, despite that I also predict that St. Petersburg will still be known for its sunshine, warmer winter weather and vibrant entertainment scene. So, let's all take some time now to appreciate our amazing city, its past, and future.

*Shannon L. Zetrouer is the managing partner of ZP Legal, which focuses on real estate matters, including timeshare, condominium and homeowners' association related issues. Her passion for law is only superseded by her love for her children, Ariana Sol and Austen Lee, her husband, Trevor and her Maltipoo, Pebbles.*

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*~ Bill Schifino, Past President of The Florida Bar*

# Looking Back. Leaping Forward. Meet Catherine Duggar.

By Melissa Byers



I had the pleasure of meeting Catherine Duggar approximately two years ago. In one of our initial conversations, she asked, "Could you assist me in finding a women only firm that would be a good fit for me to join as I scale back my practice?" This may not appear on the surface to be a unique question. What made it unique was the person making the request.

In her nineties, I knew Catherine Duggar as the oldest living member of the St. Petersburg Bar Association. I also knew Catherine Duggar previously as Rolfe Duggar.

In subsequent conversations, Catherine shared the details of her journey with me. At one point, I cautiously asked Catherine if she would be comfortable sharing this journey with others in a *Paraclete* article. She wasn't confident that the timing was right. Quite honestly, I wasn't confident either. I fully understood her trepidation. I wanted others to celebrate her strength in making life choices that reflected the essence of who she was as an attorney, but more importantly, who she was as a person. I wanted to believe that the St. Petersburg Bar Association, an association that strives to build a culture of inclusion, would, at best, support her, and, at worst, be open to gaining a better understanding of a different perspective. However, I was concerned about unforeseen challenges that sharing her story may illicit. So, we waited.

This year, as I contemplated the 100th Anniversary of the St. Petersburg Bar Association and the theme *Looking Back, Leaping Forward*, Rolfe Duggar came to mind. Looking back, Rolfe represented the Bar's history. Leaping forward, Catherine represented its diversity and inclusion. Maybe the time was right for Catherine to share, in her own words, her journey.

**So, we think this is a good time to share your journey. As we begin this interview, what are you feeling?**

Some hesitation.

**Me too. Let's start at the beginning. Where were you born and raised?**

I was born May 18, 1931, in Chicago. My dad had a job there during the early years of the depression. We moved back to Madison, Wisconsin in 1933 where both sets of grandparents lived. We moved to Pass-a-Grille in early 1941. I graduated from St. Petersburg High. While at Maryville College, I took the Vanderbilt Law School exam, made a very good score and entered University of Florida law school as a veteran after three years of undergrad school. After two years, I had

to move back to St. Pete where I graduated from Stetson Law School in May, 1957. I was admitted to The Florida Bar in October, 1957.



**When did you marry? Tell me about your wife.**

I married Jean on December 13, 1974. We just celebrated 50 years of marriage. She has retired from managing our now closed travel agency.

**As the oldest living member, do you mind sharing your age and also your age when you made the decision to begin living as Catherine?**

I will be 94 on May 18. At age 88, with Jean's encouragement, I started going out in public as a woman. I had a desire to do this since I was a teenager but did not dare to do so. I

admit, I was scared, but I was so happy to be able to be the person I wanted to be.

Further, I am an 11-year cancer patient, now in remission. I had no idea of the power of new treatments available today.

**Why did you decide that was the right time to embrace living as a woman?**

Times have changed and most people are more understanding and accepting.



**Please share details of the transition from living as Rolfe to living as Catherine. Do you consider yourself to be transgender, a cross dresser? I want others to understand your perspective.**

I am transgender. My doctors refer to me as a transgender woman. I have not legally changed my name but my family, friends, and clients know me as Catherine. I dress 100% as Catherine. I don't own any men's clothing. When meeting new people, I introduce myself as Catherine Duggar.

**I know you prefer others to address you as Catherine and the pronouns, she and her. How have people responded, including your wife and family?**

I have been amazed by the acceptance by my daughters,

by both Jean's and my family, most of our friends, and my clients. Over the years, as Catherine, we have gone to a number of social events, galas, and parties. We have also taken at least six cruises, five out of the U.S.

**Have you ever felt trepidation about sharing with others?**

Yes, very definitely. Still do, particularly when we meet new people socially.



**What do you enjoy most about now living as Catherine?**

Simply, the freedom to be Catherine. To dress in clothes I love. To be accepted by so many women into the "sisterhood" and to be treated as a woman by both men and women.

**Is there anything else you want to share or would like others to understand?**

I enjoy mentoring women, both Stetson students and those already in the practice. In what time I have left, I hope to be able to help many more women.



*Thank You for Supporting the  
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# 100 YEARS

## with the

# St. Petersburg Bar Association

### The 1920s

**1915** – The **St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA)** began under the name of Pinellas County Bar Association

**May 15, 1925** - The St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) held its first meeting at the Suwannee Hotel. The purpose of the association was to maintain the honor and dignity of the legal profession, the promotion of improvement in the law and the methods of administration, and the cultivation of professional ethics.

### The 1930s and 1940s

Members of the association met informally at various locations throughout St. Petersburg. The association had a steady and healthy growth until shortly after World War II when a tremendous influx of attorneys in the St. Petersburg area stimulated growth.

### The 1950s

Regular meetings were held at the Detroit Hotel – cigars were provided

Judges in St. Petersburg did not wear robes

The Public Relations Committee was created to distribute The Florida Bar informational pamphlets throughout the St. Petersburg area. These pamphlets, covering subjects such as purchase of a home, wills, what to do in case of an accident and other related subjects, were in constant demand. Today, they can be found on the SPBA website.

**1952** - The Legal Institute and Legal Forum Committee was organized. It is through this committee that the St. Petersburg Bar Association, in cooperation with the St. Petersburg Times, presented legal annual forums on a variety of legal subjects.

**1954** – The Stetson University College of Law relocated from DeLand, FL to Gulfport campus

**1958** - SPBA net worth was \$800

**1959** - Dues increased from \$15 to \$25

### The 1960s

**1960s** – The SPBA reached 100 members

**1960s** - In the early 1960s, the Legal Aid Society was formed, comprised of all of the members of the St. Petersburg Bar Association. Each week, a different member of the Bar would volunteer time to interview and counsel indigent applicants for legal aid. All applications were then reviewed

by the Legal Aid Society Committee. If an application was approved for legal aid benefits, one of the members of the SPBA was assigned to the matter at no expense to the applicant.

**1961** – Recognizing that certain problems existed between the St. Petersburg Police Department and the attorneys, a committee was created to serve as a liaison. The committee, consisting of nine members, met with police department officials, municipal judges, and city officials. The meetings met with immediate success and resulted in revised policies and a better understanding of present problems. One of the more significant changes was to establish a uniform policy governing the arrest of people suspected of committing crimes. Also, a uniform policy was instituted regarding the posting of bonds.

**1961 and 1962** – The SPBA was awarded The Florida Bar Award of Merit for local bar associations over 100 members. The Bar was competing against the Dade County Bar Association, the Jacksonville Bar Association, the Orlando Bar Association, and the Hillsborough County Bar Association

The bar secures an office and part-time secretary

The Liberty Bell Award was established

The Lawyer Referral Service was created

**1965** – The SPBA presented the first Liberty Bell Award to Warren Pierce

**1968** – 341 members - The bar stopped giving out cigars at meetings

**1969** – First joint meeting of the St. Pete Bar and the Clearwater Bar was held

### The 1970s

**1972** – 305 members

**1973** – Dues increase to \$40

**1977** – Total bar budget - \$18,250

Executive Committee (SPBA Board of Directors) meets monthly for breakfast meetings at the Owl Diner

Pat Hicks hired as first Executive Director

Paraclete expanded to include advertising

SPBA office moved to West Coast Title Building

### The 1980s

**1983** – 502 Members

**1984** – Dues increase to \$75

Tom Masterson explores creation of the St. Petersburg Bar Foundation

**1987** – SPBA Executive Director Pat Hicks resigns and is replaced by Cindy White

St. Pete Bar & Clearwater Bar sponsor the “Law Office” at Enterprise Village

**1989** – The SPBA was instrumental in creating the Community Law Program. The Community Law Program was designed by the leadership of the SPBA and Gulfcoast Legal Services to help qualified low-income people with their civil legal needs through the use of volunteer attorneys.

**1989** – The SPBA awarded the first Judicial Appreciation Award to The Honorable Susan F. Schaeffer

## The 1990s

**1994** – 850 members

**1995** – SPBA Executive Director Cindy White resigns and is replaced by Darlene Kelly

**1999** – SPBA Executive Director Darlene Kelly resigns and is replaced by Nora Riva Bergman. The St. Pete Bar launched a website and began hosting the Annual Bench & Bar-B-Que at Stetson.

## The 2000s

During Past-President Eric Ludin’s tenure, the SPBA Diversity Committee was created.

SPBA created a scholarship honoring Judge Frank H. White Diversity Scholarship. Kimberly Jackson was the first recipient.

SPBA created the Thomas E. Penick, Jr. Award for Community Service. Deanne Yvonne Marie West was the first recipient.

**2001** – The SPBA awarded the first Professionalism Award to Judge Jack Helinger and hosted the first Judicial Reception at P. Buckley Moss Gallery

**2002** – The St. Petersburg Bar Association created the St. Petersburg Bar Foundation

**2003** – The SPBA Diversity Committee created *A Legacy of Courage, Vision, & Hope* exhibit to chronicle the history of African-American attorneys. The exhibit has been on display at universities, museums, and other venues.

**2005** – The SPBA surpassed 1,000 members

**2005** – The St. Petersburg Bar Foundation awarded the Heroes Among Us award to Louie Adcock, Danell DeBerg, and H. James Fischer, In Memoriam

**2006** – The St. Petersburg Bar Foundation endowed the Judge Penick Award and created the Judge Paul Roney Scholarship

**2013** – Melissa Byers was hired as the SPBA Executive Director

**2014** – The SPBA Executive Committee (Board of Direc-

tors) began annual strategic planning and implemented a new theme each year

**2014** – The SPBA building was sold. The SPBA relocated next to Florida CraftArt.

**2014** – Annual corporate and law firm sponsors added to reverse annual negative net revenue

**2015** – The SPBA launched the *Faces of the Law* Diversity Project

**2017** – SPBA was first bar to implement wellness initiatives through the theme *Happy, Healthy, Holistic Attorneys*

**2018** – SPBA was awarded the first Health & Wellness Award by The Florida Bar

**2018** – The SPBA partnered with Journey to Esquire in providing annual diversity scholarships

**2019** – The Annual Judicial Reception was moved from the Palladium to the James Museum. The Annual Holiday Party was moved from the Mirror Lake Lyceum to the Vinoy Sunset Ballroom. The Annual Leadership Installation was moved to the Museum of History.

**2020** – SPBA Executive Director Melissa Byers was awarded the Marshall R. Cassedy, Sr. Leadership Award by The Florida Bar

**2020** – SPBA Membership Coordinator JoAnn Knight retires after 33 years of service

**2021** – Membership Luncheons moved from the Mirror Lake Lyceum to the Yacht Club

**2022** – The SPBA awarded the first Rising Star Award to Danielle Weaver-Rogers

**2022** – SPBA is first bar in the state to offer all CLEs and events free of charge (approximately 40-70 per year)

**2023** – Maya Byers hired as the SPBA Membership Coordinator

**2023** – 1200 members; budget \$340,000; 13 Sections of the law; 12 board members; two staff

**2023** – SPBA introduces *BYB (Build Your Business, Build Your Brand, Build Your Bar)* theme

**2024** – The SPBA established the Cozzi Creed award to honor Diversity Committee Chair Steven Cozzi. The first Cozzi Creed Award was presented to Samantha Van Scoik.

**2024** – Community Law Program celebrates its 35th anniversary

**2024** – St. Pete Bar and Clearwater focus on *Safety for All* theme at annual Bench & Bar-B-Que

**2025** – SPBA celebrates its 100th Anniversary May 15, 2025 at the Vinoy Grand Ballroom. The Vinoy also celebrates its 100th Anniversary. SPBA focuses on *Looking Back, Leaping Forward* theme.

# Community Law Program

## A Legacy Born of the Bar, Built for the People

The September 1989 issue of this very publication printed an article titled "New Pro Bono Corporation in Gestation." What followed was a story of vision, urgency, and action – a story that began not in government offices or law school classrooms, but within the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA) itself.

Two years prior to the article, a handful of passionate members of SPBA formed the Pro Bono Task Force "to address the need for a more effective means of providing legal assistance to the over 40,000 poor people in south Pinellas County." These weren't abstract statistics – they were neighbors facing eviction, domestic violence, child custody battles, and exploitation with no legal voice. From this recognition came action, and from that action came the Community Law Program, Inc. (CLP) – a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that would officially operate under the fictitious name "Community Law Program of the St. Petersburg Bar Association." That Task Force – powered by SPBA volunteers – became the catalyst for what would become a now 35-year journey toward equal access to justice for all.

In *Looking Back*, the foundation of CLP was laid by leaders who deserve more than passing mention – they deserve reverence. The original trustees on the Articles of Incorporation were SPBA Executive Director Cynthia R. White, Pro Bono Task Force Chair, Karen B. Lopez, and Patricia A. Blizzard. Joining the first official Board of Trustees were attorneys Brian Battaglia, John P. Cunningham, V. James Dickson, and Watson Sinden, and community members Dr. Calvin Harris of St. Petersburg Junior College, Clifford Smith of Pinellas County Social Services, and Virginia Rowell of the City of St. Petersburg. These dedicated visionaries – along with the members of the 1987-1990 SPBA Pro Bono Task Force – gave life to a belief radical in its simplicity: justice should not be reserved for those who can afford it. It all started with SPBA.

With few resources but boundless will, CLP held its first legal clinics in shelters and community centers. Expansion focused on family law, public education about legal responsibilities and rights, and facilitating pro bono work for each private bar member – initiatives at the heart of CLP today. The legal problems were serious, the resources were few, and yet, the impact was profound. Each client was heard. Each case mattered.

*Looking Back* also includes recognizing CLP Executive Director Kimberly Rodgers who dedicated nearly two decades to upholding the vision and legacy of the CLP founders. Kimberly recently was awarded the Sole of Justice Award at the 35th Anniversary CLP Gala for her unwavering dedication to equal access to justice. CLP now prepares to *Leap Forward* under the steadfast guidance of Executive Director Rachael Stanger.

### The Need Then – And Now

The 1989 article later continues, "Gulfcoast has to turn away people with serious domestic problems unless abuse is involved; they turn away people who earn more than \$9,400 per year for a family of two, no matter what their problem. (That's \$180 per week to support two people)." Adjusted for inflation, that's roughly \$25,800 per year or \$495 per week in February 2025.<sup>12</sup> Today, those thresholds remain much the same, even as the cost of living and complexity of legal problems have skyrocketed.

Current (2023) data paints a sobering picture in Pinellas:

- 11.3% of Pinellas County's estimated 961,596 persons live in poverty<sup>3</sup>; roughly 108,660 individuals survives on at most \$379 per week for two people.<sup>4</sup>
- 15.5% (149,000) fall below 125% of the federal poverty level<sup>5</sup> – \$474 per week or less for two people.
- Over 261,500 (27.2%) live below 200% of poverty level – at most \$758 per week to support two people.
- 53% of workers in Pinellas<sup>6</sup> do not earn enough to meet the Household Survival Budget<sup>7</sup> – over 510,000 individuals are living with the bare minimum, paycheck to paycheck.



That means over half of our neighbors face impossible choices: Stay with an abusive partner or risk homelessness. Pay for a guardianship proceeding or keep the lights on. Fight an unlawful eviction or buy food and medicine.

In 2023, 173,273 new cases were filed with the Pinellas County Clerk of Court<sup>8</sup>, the highest since 2019, plus those yet to be closed. These aren't just statistics – they're people whose lives are unraveling in courtrooms without representation. The need seen in the late 1980s in our community has grown significantly, as have their legal needs and problems.

### A Call to the Bar That Birthed Us

To the St. Petersburg Bar Association and the St. Petersburg Bar Foundation – thank you. Your foresight, courage, and leadership gave life to CLP. You are not just our sponsors. You are our founders. Our family.

Because of you, CLP continues to serve on the frontlines of civil legal aid, living up to our steadfast mission to empower the most vulnerable in our community through the provision of pro bono services.

But our shared work isn't finished.

We need you:

- To **volunteer** at clinics or with a case.
- To **donate** to expand services and reduce the justice gap.
- To **advocate** within your firms and circles.
- To **remember** that CLP is yours – your legacy and your responsibility.

Looking back, we see the courage that built us. *Leaping Forward*, we honor that courage by continuing the work.

Because Community Law Program was born of the Bar – and together, we'll build its future.

1. [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)
2. This number likely comes from the 1988 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines (FPLG), which Legal Services Corporation (LSC) uses at 125% to determine low-income for eligibility.
3. Quickfacts, United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table%20pinellascountyflorida/%20PST045223>.
4. HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2025, Office of the Assistant Secretary For Planning and Evaluation, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>.
5. Population Median Age (Census ACS), Florida Department of Health, <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndRateOnly.Dataviewer>.
6. United For Alice, <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/florida>.
7. Measuring Economic Well-Being for Alice, United For Alice, <https://www.unitedforalice.org/Alice-EVD>. In Pinellas County in 2022, Household Survival Budget was \$53,508 for one adult one child – unless the child is in childcare, then it was \$60,300 per year or \$1,160 per week.
8. Pinellas County Clerk Statistical Reports, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller Pinellas County, Florida, <https://www.mypinellasclerk.gov/Statistics>.

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The mission of the St. Petersburg Bar Foundation is to fund, develop and promote efforts which enhance the legal profession and encourage better public understanding of and access to the judicial system.



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## HOLIDAYS IN JULY

SPONSORS AND VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Holidays in July will be held on Saturday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, bringing a day of bowling, presents, pizza and fun to children in the dependency system! Volunteers and sponsors help make this event possible, visit

[stpetebarfoundation.org/holidays25](http://stpetebarfoundation.org/holidays25)

to learn about sponsorship and volunteer opportunities.

## THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING OUR 2025 PROFESSIONALISM SEMINAR

The St. Petersburg Bar Foundation was proud to hold the 11th Annual Professionalism Seminar at Stetson University College of Law at the end of February. Many thanks go to all of our sponsors, speakers, panelists, an attendees.



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# Join PFAWL This Summer!

The Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers (PFAWL) hosted a wide array of professional and family-friendly events this spring, including a Valentine's Day jewelry making class with Past President Meredith Gaunce; a Table for 8 dinner with Judge Rebecca Hamilton; Women Lawyers in Politics online CLE panel discussion; When There are Nine annual Judicial Panel at Stetson; Lobby Days in Tallahassee; Table for 8 Moroccan cookie-making night; and an axe-throwing social to round out the month of March.

April brought even more excitement as PFAWL hosted its first Judicial Reception on April 10, 2025 at Savant on Second in St. Petersburg. More than 20 judges attended, including judges from the Second DCA, Sixth Circuit, and Thirteenth Circuit.



In June, PFAWL members will march in the St. Petersburg Pride Parade. We are seeking volunteers for the PRIDE Parade 2025 Work Group. Please contact Starlett Massey at [smassey@masseylawgroup.com](mailto:smassey@masseylawgroup.com) if you are interested.

Additionally, PFAWL's new slate of officers and directors will be installed on July 1, 2025.

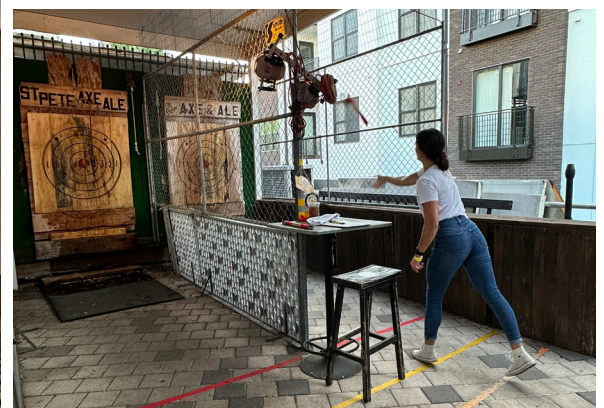
## Stay Tuned for More Events

We also encourage you to sign up for our monthly e-newsletter and e-blasts, as events are being added and



By Jovita Ahava

updated regularly. Additionally, please follow us on social media or contact us at [pfawlsocialdirector@gmail.com](mailto:pfawlsocialdirector@gmail.com). Looking ahead, PFAWL will continue offering a variety of enriching experiences, with upcoming events that promise to deliver insightful CLE sessions, health and wellness training, and other opportunities for members to engage with local judges and fellow attorneys. Whether you are seeking



professional development or simply looking to expand your network, PFAWL's events are a fantastic way to stay connected and informed. It's never too late to join, renew your membership, or even consider becoming an annual or event sponsor. We look forward to seeing you soon!

*Jovita Wysocka Ahava is a partner at Ahava Legacy Law, P.A., handling estate planning, probate administration, serious injury cases, and business disputes throughout Florida. Jovita serves on the boards of PFAWL, Community Law Program, and the Polish American Society of St. Petersburg. She may be reached at [Jovita@AhavaLegacyLaw.com](mailto:Jovita@AhavaLegacyLaw.com).*



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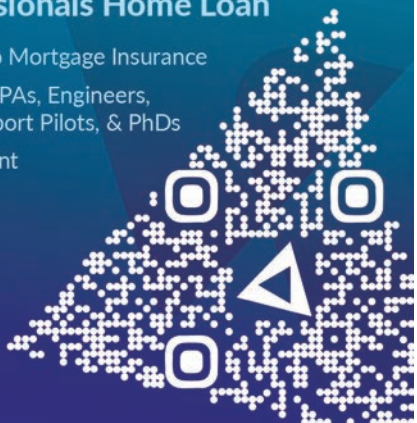



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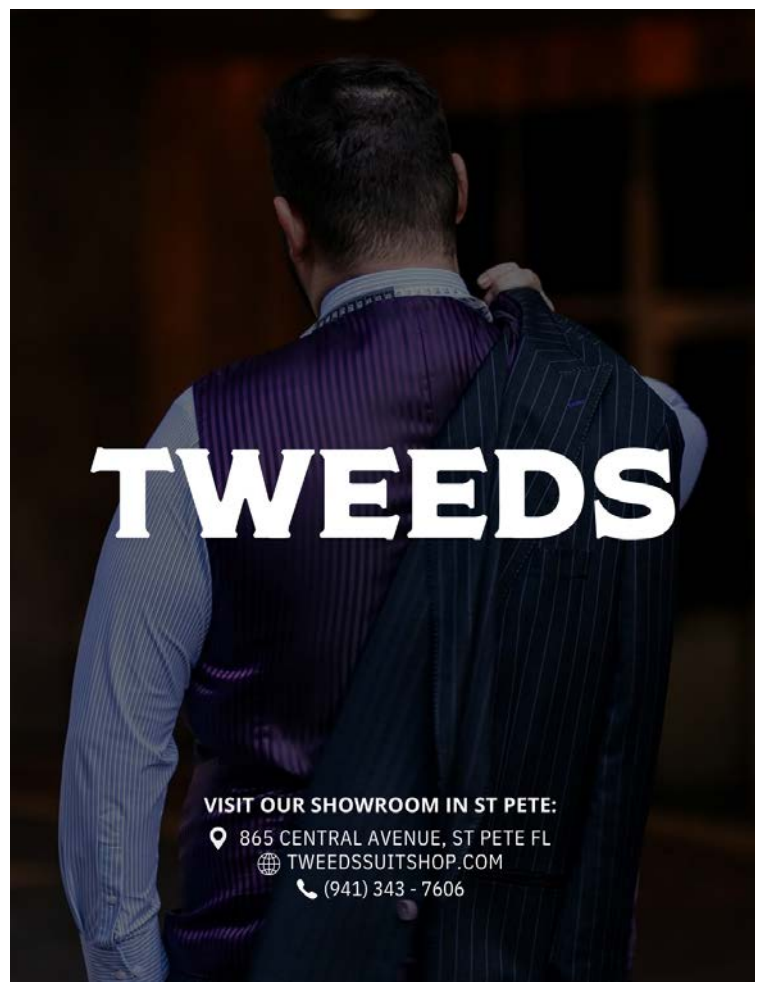
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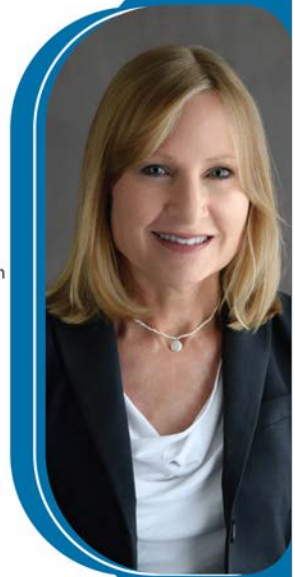
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