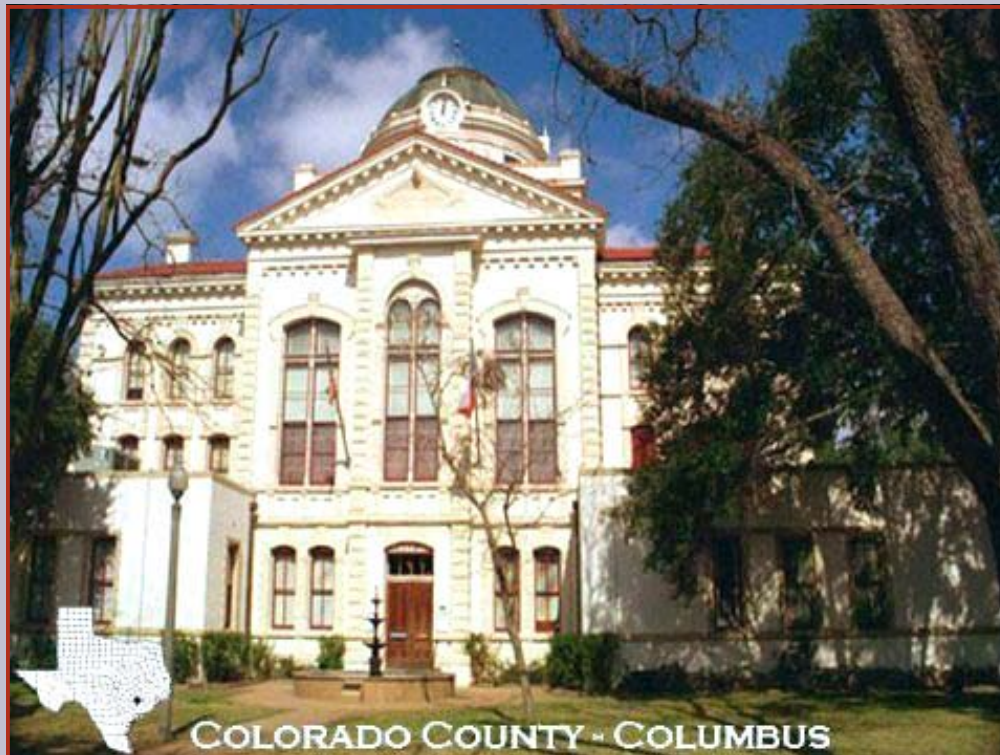


JOURNAL

TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR COURT ADMINISTRATION

PROFESSIONALS MANAGING TEXAS COURTS

Volume 35 Number 1, January 2010



Colorado County Courthouse

Columbus, Texas



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FROM THE CHAIR



I hope you have had a Happy, Safe and Joyous Holiday Season. As we start 2010, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for allowing me the honor of serving you another year. It is a joy and privilege to work with the great people we have

serving on the Board, the

Chairs and Committees that work so very hard for you, the membership. If you ever have suggestions or comments please remember, my email address is rewalker@tarrantcounty.com and my phone number is (817)884-3403.

With another successful conference behind us, December 2 – 4, 2009, the Board and many of the Chairs met in Huntsville to work on the Action Plan & Curriculum for 2010. We had a great deal to accomplish and everyone worked very hard to get everything wrapped up before the bad weather came rolling in. After reviewing the evaluations from the conference and balancing the books, we established some changes for the Policy & Procedures as well as proposed changes to the By-Laws. With those items completed, we

set about the job of setting the curriculum for next year's conference and the timeline for getting everything ready. Now the calendar is set, the tasks are assigned and we start building the momentum that will take us through to San Antonio in October. Here are some dates to put on the calendar:

April 1	Registration Opens for the Annual Education Conference
June 13-18	PDP, Austin
July 1	Deadline for Declaration of Candidacy
August 15	Deadline for Scholarship Applications
October 12-15	34 th Annual Educational Conference, San Antonio

Until next time, remember: *Being involved is not the same as being committed. It's like bacon and eggs; the chicken is involved, but the pig is committed.*

Sincerely

Randy Walker
Chair

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Left to Right: Christie Loveless, Denise Spalding, Ed Wells, Monica Gracia, Randy Walker, Sylvia Buitron

2009 TACA ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN REVIEW

BY JENNIFER BOLTON, EDUCATION COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR



and with a number of excellent speakers. The aim of the conference was to gather the TACA members to discuss and exchange knowledge of the opportunities and challenges of being involved in the court system.

On Tuesday afternoon, Nancy Baird kicked off the week with, "New Work Habits, New Attitudes". As always, Ms. Baird was informative, inspirational and very enjoyable. She



reinforced the idea that sometimes a change in perception is all you need to change the reaction of those around you. The day was concluded with a reception welcoming new members which had an unbelievable turnout of attendees who enjoyed

mingling and greeting members both old and new.

The panel of Court Coordinators provided Wednesday morning with fresh ideas and answers to some of the more common questions and concerns that court staff encounter on a daily basis. Judge Weiser was an excellent moderator and made the session fun as well as educational. Breakout sessions and workshops filled the rest of the day, with a break for the luncheon where PDP attendees received their certificates and Board



Candidates were introduced to the membership. After a long day of education, veteran and first-time attendees took advantage of a great evening out at the Icebreaker at the Ice House where everyone enjoyed a night of barbeque and karaoke.



The Thursday morning session was warmed by Jack Harris' thought provoking motivational speech on, "Who's Pushing Your

Buttons". Mr. Harris taught that "if you can't change a 'Button Pusher,' change the way that person affects you.... The choice is yours and yours alone!" This is an excellent way to think while working in a court environment where stressors can trigger negative emotions and may affect others in a less than desirable manner.



Judge Lewis followed lunch with useful information on dealing with Pro Se litigants. The day was wrapped up

with a very informative legislative updates session by Marshall Shelsy, Thomas Sullivan and Jim Bethke.



The Friday morning breakfast buffet was a great way to send the members away from the conference feeling content and full

of friendship and knowledge. The week concluded with sessions on court security and ethics where Tim Quintana and Dave Murray both served up a different approach to both topics and were well received by the attendees.

A big thank you goes out to all of our sponsors and vendors for their support. The prizes for the raffle were truly amazing thanks to the diligent efforts of Christie Loveless and the Scholarship Committee. All committees show a growth in numbers this year, indicating the membership's desire to get involved and support our organization.



A great big thank you to all attendees, Board Members, conference speakers, committee members, exhibitors and sponsors for a truly great event! Start making your plans to attend next year's conference in San Antonio, Texas. The 2010 conference will take place October 12-15, where you can once again expect to be educated and energized!



NEW MEMBER PERSPECTIVE: 33RD ANNUAL TACA EDUCATION CONFERENCE

BY RUBY LARA,
EL PASO 65TH DISTRICT
JUVENILE COURT #2

This was my first year as a Court Coordinator, and it has been a great year for me. I have learned a lot and have had great teachers to help me get through the year.

This was my first TACA Conference, and I just wanted to express what a great job you all did. My first impression was how friendly everyone was even though no one knew me. People would introduce themselves to me and quickly we all became friends.

The topics discussed at the conference were very informative. I am able to incorporate some of the points of interest during my daily duties and enjoyed all of the speakers. They all kept everyone's interest on the topic they were discussing and were very informative. As for the extra curricular activities, what can I say? They were awesome – so energetic and full of spunk.

Congratulations to all of the winners of the door prizes and the raffle you all deserve them for being such great Administrators.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you again next year in San Antonio and hope next year's conference outdoes this one.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

BY JEROME COLEMAN, DENTON COUNTY
PROBATE COURT

Wow, what a conference. Hopefully, everyone got something that they can use in the courts. By the way, if you did not go to the Ice House, you missed a really good time. TACA has some very talented singers and dancers.

Now to the business at hand – after the elections, your TACA Board Members are Randy Walker (Chair), Sylvia Buitron, Monica Gracia, Christie Loveless, Denise Spalding, Ed Wells (Treasurer) and Bob Wessels (PDP).

Membership would like to say congratulations to Jerome Coleman (Member of the Year), Liz Rodriguez (MOY Finalist) and Marinda Stryker (MOY Finalist). Also, congratulations to Jerome for signing up the most new members. He was the winner of the \$100.00 prize. Who knows, next year in San Antonio, you could be the lucky winner.

A big thank you goes to the TACA Board for sponsoring the Welcome Reception. A great time was had by all. During the reception, Vickie Byers, Anna Cruz, Jolene DuBoise, Eloy Garcia, Misti Glasscock, Elvira Gonzalez, Cydney Grubb, Becky Holland, Nathan Jensen, Gina McCarver, Ira Mejia, Terrie Mire, Betty Naal, Linda Newlin, Carol Pelzel, Mary Salley, Cathy Sanchez, Mike Sanchez, DeDe Taylor and Judy Wade were all door prize winners.

On a more serious note, for our Organization to succeed, we need the help of all of our members, so please sign-up for a committee. Remember TACA is your Association. "Together we can make it work."

Dear Board and TACA Members:

I feel honored and privileged that you have given me the opportunity to serve on the board of TACA once again. Being a TACA member for many years now and participating in the education committee, and being somewhat shy, it was not until very recently that I was asked to be a part of the board and I accepted. Members, let me say this, I absolutely love it. Working with the Board, Vanessa and other members of TACA has been a rewarding experience to say the least. Members, I urge each and every one of you to get involved with the different committees one way or another and see where it takes you. The experience opens your eyes to an array of information, ideas, comradeship and memories that will stay with you for the rest of your life.

To each and every one of you, my sincerest gratitude for this extraordinary opportunity to serve you as a TACA board member. Have a great year!

Sylvia Buitron
Publications Committee Board Liaison



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SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

BY MARINDA STRYKER, SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR

There are many ways to describe the members of TACA, but the one word that comes to my mind is AWESOME! Once again I am overwhelmed by the response this year's scholarship raffle received at our education conference in Corpus. This year, because of everyone's generosity, the scholarship committee managed to raise about \$4,000 which will continue to provide us with the ability to award several goodwill scholarships.

Goodwill scholarships were awarded this year to Barbara Conley of the 157th District Court in Houston and LaDena Ferrell at the Denton County District Courts. Congratulations to you both! Please remember, it is never too early to apply for a scholarship, just check the TACA website for an application.

I would like to take this opportunity to also congratulate all of our raffle winners this year. Below is a list of each prize and winner. I hope that all of our winners have been able to put these great prizes to use.

Flip Video	David Sinder
Itouch	Cathy Adams
\$50 Walmart Gift Card	Monica Garcia
\$25 Old Navy Gift Card	Sylvia Noriega
2 Night Stay at any Omni	Jerome Coleman
DVD Player	Carmen Ortiz
DVD Player	Regina Green
\$100 Best Buy Gift Card	Shay Taylor
Canon Printer	Sylvia Noriega
PSP	Esther Peralta
Wii	Pam Hotchkiss
Playstation 3	Javier Mireles
Gateway Netbook	Jana Furlow
Dynex 32" Flat Screen TV	Cathy Burnett

Once again, *THANK YOU* to all our TACA members. We could not have done it without your generosity and support. See you in San Antonio.



"Scholarship Recipients (l to r): Barbara Conley, LaDena Ferrell, Susan Vahala, Sylvia Buitron, Monica Gracia

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Dear Board and TACA Members:

You don't know how humbled I am that you have given me the chance to serve on your Board. Thank you so much!

I want each of you to know I am here to serve you. Please feel free to call me or email me with any ideas you have to make this organization better. Or, if you have a complaint I still welcome the chance to hear from you. It is only through our networking, our willingness to talk to one another and our willingness to bring ideas to the table that our organization can grow.

I also welcome the chance to speak to new coordinators and administrators around the state. Since it is hard for the Board to know when new employees come aboard, I would ask you to take the time to email me their names and email addresses so that we can personally welcome them.

Sincerely,
Denise Spalding
Membership Committee Board
Liaison



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2010 TACA CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

March 5.....April Journal Deadline
April 1Conference Registration Open
June 14-18Professional Development Program
July 1Declaration of Candidacy Deadline
July 2.....August Journal Deadline
August 15Scholarship / Barrow Award Nomination Deadline
September 21-24Annual Judicial Education Conference
October 12-1534th Annual TACA Education Conference

**NOMINATIONS
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MEET THE NEW EDUCATION CO-CHAIR

**JENNIFER BOLTON, 425TH DISTRICT COURT,
GEORGETOWN**



Jennifer Bolton has served as Court Administrator for the 425th District Court since its inception in January 2007. She previously served as Court Coordinator for the 264th District Court in Bell County, Texas. Prior to her work in the courts, she was a legal assistant for ten years specializing in family and civil law. She is a graduate of the Texas Center for Judiciary's Professional Development Program (PDP) for Court Coordinators, Managers, and Administration and now serves as a faculty member with the program.

**MEET THE NEW SCHOLARSHIP
VICE CHAIR**

**LILIA ANN GUTIERREZ, 117TH DISTRICT COURT,
CORPUS CHRISTI**

I have been a member of TACA since 2008. I have attended all three phases of the Professional Development Program and am currently attending the Texas Court Management Program. I am a Certified TCLEOSE Police Officer (Reserve Officer for Pct. 1 Constable Rudy Caceres). For the past 7 ½ yrs, I have been Court Manager for the 117th District, the Honorable Sandra L. Watts. Ten years prior to this position, I served as a District Court Bailiff for the 319th and 347th District Courts respectively. My court has jurisdiction over Felony cases, Family Law and some Civil Cases. I am responsible for all court settings in these matters and other duties (DCO's, Court Docket, etc.).



I have enjoyed attending the TACA seminars and networking with other TACA members. But the most rewarding part of these seminars has been reuniting with everyone I have met throughout the years. Judge Watts was very supportive when I asked her permission to be Vice Chair of the Scholarship Committee. I look forward to working with everyone on the TACA Board.

MEET THE NEW PUBLICATIONS CHAIR

MELINDA MATA, 111TH DISTRICT COURT, LAREDO



I was born in Laredo, Texas. I am married with two children, Tony (22) and Joshua (18). I am the Court Administrator Assistant for 111th District Court. I started working for Judge Raul Vasquez as a Receptionist/Secretary on May of 2001. As a matter of fact, he was my very first employer 29 years ago when I started my paralegal career. The Judge tells me it took me some time, but I had to come back to work for him again. I started working as a Legal Secretary in 1980 with Judge Vasquez in his private law office. I worked and went to school to become a certified Paralegal, which I received in August 1990. I continued working as a paralegal for attorneys Leal & Bratt and Congressman Henry Cuellar until 2000 when I was offered the job I presently hold. In addition, I recently became a licensed Texas Realtor.

Besides TACA, I have been a member of the National Association of Legal Assistants, volunteered in various activities for Breast Cancer, helped with children's Angel Wish and am active with my parish's activities.



MEET THE NEW PUBLICATIONS VICE CHAIR

LISA ROGERIO, 49TH DISTRICT COURT, LAREDO

Born in Albuquerque, NM, I grew up as an Air Force brat. When my father retired we came to live in Laredo, where I attended Nixon High School. After college, I returned to Laredo and married my high school sweetheart, Luis. We've been married 23 years and have three children, Victoria (18) is a college freshman, Vivian (17) is a high school senior and Luis III (12) is in the 7th grade. I've worked for Judge Joe Lopez as the Court Administrator for the 49th District Court since he took the bench three years ago. In my prior life, I worked for Time Warner Cable as the area Marketing Manager for sixteen years. I've been a Rotarian for 17 years and am currently the President of my Club. In addition, I sit on the Board of the Imaginarium (area children's museum) and work with the booster clubs at my children's schools.

ACTION PLANNING & CURRICULUM MEETING

BY MARINDA STRYKER, SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR



Wow! What an exciting TACA conference in Corpus Christi. I hope that everyone had a great time and returned to the courts with a lot of valuable information. As a member of TACA, you may not realize how much time and effort is put into having these conferences, but as our Board and Chairs can tell you, it takes a lot of planning and dedication to the organization to have a successful conference.



Believe it or not, the Board and Chairs have already begun the planning for the 2010 conference in San Antonio. We met the first week of December in Huntsville to start getting ready for 2010. While planning for next year, we reviewed all the evaluations, comments and recommendations for future conferences and came across some very



helpful and insightful comments and requests from our members. There are always so many suggestions it is hard to pick out the ones that would be most suitable and enjoyable for everyone.

This was my second year to be a part of the Action Planning & Curriculum meeting, and I am amazed at all the hard work that is put in to making our education conferences not only educational, but fun. We spent two days discussing different topics for plenary and break-out sessions and that was just the tip of the iceberg. Now that the AP&C meeting is over, we will spend the rest of the upcoming year making sure that everything is perfect for next year's conference. After being a part of the planning process, I have a greater respect for all those that put their extra time and energy into making sure that each conference runs smoothly. Thanks to the Board and Chairs for letting me be a part of this amazing organization.



**TACA would like to thank the following
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WINNING THE INBOX WAR: SIMPLE TIPS TO CONTROLLING AND MANAGING EMAIL CAN KEEP YOUR INBOX FROM MANAGING AND CONTROLLING YOU

BY MARIA SPROW

Congratulations . You have 1,094 unread messages in your email inbox. And there's another new email being delivered right now.

And now. ...

And now. ...

A decade ago, or maybe 15 years ago, people received mail once a day, in the mornings, and we'd check our work messages once a day, in the mornings, and then our home messages once a day, after work. That was back when we got our news twice a day, with the morning paper and the 6 p.m. or 10 p.m. news, and back when cell phones were still an extravagance, when research was still conducted at libraries.

Today, the mail never stops coming. There is no limit to the amount of information and news a person can find, but there is also no limit to the amount of information and news that can find you.

For many, email is an addiction. For addicts, the inbox is always open. A new email must be glanced at immediately, whatever else is happening at the time. Just the subject. Just for a second. Then it can be ignored. Addicts get so nervous without their email that phone companies developed iPhones and Blackberries with special interfaces and keyboards to let people send and receive their messages from the grocery store, the cattle ranch, the golf course. Addicts will refresh their inboxes even if their inboxes are set to refresh automatically, on their own, and even if they aren't expecting any emails. Eventually, addicts may succumb to their inboxes and electronic communications entirely, and fuse together. The condition is called Twitter. It spreads like poison ivy and affects its victims at all hours of the day.

Fortunately, time management experts have developed some techniques for addicts and those overwhelmed by their inboxes to use to take control of their lives back from the information-sharing instruments that are now deemed so necessary for survival.

Why Email Addiction Occurs

There are several theories out there as to why email and electronic communications have such addictive powers.

One such theory is that people have been conditioned to check email based on the knowledge that checking email has been rewarding in the past. In behavioral psychology, that is called operant conditioning, which is also how many dog trainers train pets. Taken further, studies have shown that if a behavior is rewarded each and every time, a pet won't work as hard to get the reward; by rewarding them for a behavior only sometimes, or randomly, instead of each and every time, the pet works harder in hopes of getting the reward.

It's the difference between expectation and anticipation. Checking email is a behavior that produces a reward some times, but not all the time, so a person will check their email often, always hoping that they'll get a reward.

According to Tom Stafford, the coauthor of the neuropsychology book and Weblog *Mind Hacks: Tips and Tricks for Using Your Brain*, one way to break that operant conditioning and decrease the amount of time a person wastes on needlessly checking email is to wait, and not immediately check an email after receiving an alert, so that the behavior becomes dissociated with the reward.

Getting Unplugged

According to Austin-based productivity trainer Maura Thomas, successful email management is about mastering control.

"You need control over the information you receive on a daily basis, control over the tools that bring you that information, and control over your own behavior," said Thomas, who founded the Web site RegainYourTime.com. "If you can master control over these three things, you will be the most productive, and the most relaxed, all the time."

During a lunch and learn session sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives earlier this year, Thomas said it's important to realize what, exactly, email is and how it is responded to. Most people, she said, operate under a system of reactions; email is a stimulus that creates need for a reaction.

Though email is often considered a time-saver – it's faster than the United Postal Service, and typing is faster than writing – email doesn't really save much time for most people, especially when taking into consideration other forms

of electronic communication, which is just email in another format: texting, web surfing, Instant Messaging.

That's because email never ends. It's a hamster's wheel in which people are being constantly flooded with information while having little time to react to and process that information. When a person doesn't have time to react to the information they are receiving, finding time to be proactive – to take control – seems difficult, and that's when email starts causing people to feel stress and confusion, Thomas said.

"Ideally, if you operated at peak productivity, you would spend less time being reactive and more time being proactive," she said. "(You would) have the ability to assess the best use of your time at any moment and take immediate and appropriate action."

When it comes to how to spend time on email, Thomas's first recommendation is to focus on doing something else first – preferably something off of a to-do list. Starting off each day by being proactively productive can help break the dependence to email.

Instead of checking email with the receipt of each new message, Thomas recommended scheduling time to check email twice a day – but actual time, so that each message can be processed the first time it's read, or integrated into a to-do list if responding to a particular email will take up too much time.

"Having your email client always open, with messages automatically downloading and giving you an indicator, means that your email is controlling you," she said. "Turn off the automatic download, so that messages only come in when you click send or receive."

That, she said, puts the control back into a person's hands and keeps a person from having to constantly multi-task, which is what a person does when they go back and forth between their email notifications and their task-at-hand.

The ability to multi-task is a myth, she added, because humans can't really actively process more than one or two thoughts simultaneously.

That's why driving a car while using a cell phone is so dangerous.

"We're actually switching back and forth rapidly between those things. It's called cognitive switching," Thomas said, "and the ability to do it peaks around age 20. When switching between two tasks, you are probably giving at most 40 percent of your attention to each of those tasks, and the other 20 percent – at least – is required for the switching. Study after study has shown that switching both lengthens the time it takes to complete a task, and decreases the quality or accuracy of the output."

Recognizing that most emails tend not to be urgent is important to curing an addiction; most people still turn to the phone for an actual crisis or emergency.

"There are very few industries where it would be unacceptable to for you to go three or four hours without checking your email," Thomas said.

The most difficult aspect of managing email isn't urgency, but willpower.

"If your email is always open and always downloading, then nothing ever gets 100 percent of your attention," she said. "I'm not telling you to never multi-task. I'm just suggesting that you be more selective and more thoughtful about when you do it, rather than having that be your default method of operating."

During the time that is set aside for checking email, she added that it's a good idea to devote to at least one minute to every email, whether it's important or not. If it's spam or an email from a corporation or vendor, the minute can be spent hitting the "unsubscribe" link, usually featured in tiny print at the bottom of the email. That will keep similar emails from taking up more time in the future, but recognize that the "unsubscribe" button is really only good if the information sent by the vendor or agency isn't something that a person will want to search for later. Some mailing lists really are time-savers, because they keep a person from having to surf Web sites daily or weekly in search of updates.

A different solution some people use to handling the influx of newsletters, coupons and marketing messages is to have them automatically sent to a separate folder, rather than the inbox, by modifying the existing preferences. (In Microsoft Outlook, for instance, there is a "create rule" option along the top toolbar of an open message, which allows users to automatically move future emails from specific addresses or with specific subjects into a designated folder.

The "create rule" tool can also be used to display a New Item Alert window or a sound notification, if emails from certain addresses are always pertinent.)

The downside to bypassing those emails is that they build up, Thomas said.

"It's bad enough to see how many unread messages are in my inbox. If I had those high numbers in other mailboxes too, it would stress me out," she said. "Plus it wouldn't be as efficient if I had to click through a bunch of folders to see what needed my attention. Also, the concern there is that I never get around to looking at some of those folders, so my number of emails grows and grows."

For more important emails, that minute can be spent responding to the email, or at least discovering what it will take to properly respond.

She also recommended spending the minute moving messages out of the inbox. If a message's contents aren't required to be saved for open records purposes (see sidebar), it can be deleted. While she doesn't recommend creating too many other folders – most email clients now have sophisticated search engines that makes taking time to organize email unnecessary – she did recommend creating a “filed” folder and a “to do” folder.

Writing Better Emails

How an email is written and use of email etiquette can also go a long way to reducing the stress associated with receiving and responding to messages.

Studies have shown that every time a person stops what they are doing to check an email, it takes one minute to refocus on the prior task-at-hand – which can add up to a lot of wasted time.

According to Vanguard Technology Vice President of Client Services Chris Bonney, who writes a blog on how to “simplify your technology lifestyle” at <http://chrisbonney.typepad.com>, the more email that is written, the more email that is received. Emails have a high response rate – some experts say that six out of 10 emails generate a response, while others point out that sending one email to five people has the potential to receive five responses – so one solution is to reduce the amount of email that is sent in the first place. That can be done by doing simple things, such as not responding with one-word “Thanks” emails, and not hitting “reply to all” when responding to a mass email – think listservs or meeting notices – with a personal message that would be best served being sent to just one person. If a person is tempted to “reply to all” on a message, think about the other recipients first: will the information be helpful for them, or will they think it's clutter?

“Consider context and consider intention,” Bonney recommends on his blog. “Who are you sending the email to? At what time of day are you sending it? Is it the weekend? Who's copied? Suddenly, you're not just dispelling information or delegating action.” Instead, the intent of an email may be something negative – assigning blame, covering up something that wasn't done, perpetuating a round-the-clock work cycle.

“Be honest with yourself in email and it can have a ripple effect throughout all of your business communications,” Bonney said. “Know that by sending your subordinate a non-urgent email late on a Friday, you're sending a cloaked message along with it that says, ‘Don't think about getting out of here early today.’”

Another stress that comes from email is deciding what needs to be done for each email that is received. If a coworker sends an email out to a department head and several other coworkers, does that person want a response from everyone involved, or are they just sharing information?

Some communications experts recommend making it common practice to utilize the “to” and “cc” fields differently when sending an email message to multiple recipients: the “to” field for people from whom a response is wanted, and the “cc” field for people who are being kept in the loop, or for whom the information may be helpful, but no action is required. While spreading such a practice around the work place may take time, it could ultimately result in less confusion and wasted time.

“The first thing that I see people doing is that when they go in to check on their email on a daily basis, they are not making good, hard decisions the first time they read an email. So what happens is, they are reviewing an email five, six, seven times before they make a decision on the action they need to take. So obviously when you are duplicating your effort over and over and over again, you end up wasting a lot of time that you don't need to do,” said Randy Dean, the author of *Taming the Email Beast* in a podcast available online.

Finally, to improve the responses received from an email, consider the format and where information is buried within the email. Communications experts recommend some simple tips: instead of starting an email with a long introduction or background, start with the action – what is wanted from the reader. Use short paragraphs, so that the reader doesn't get lost. And utilize an email's signature function, so that the reader doesn't have to search for necessary contact information.

Bonney recommends utilizing a P.S. structure to bring attention to a particular piece of information.

“I recently sent this as a P.S.,” he blogged. “I really thought that webinar was great. By the way can you forward me the slides?” This is an email whose primary message was not answered for another 24 hours, but I had those slides within 20 minutes.”

This article was originally published by the Texas Association of Counties in its bimonthly magazine, County. The magazine is available online at www.county.org/resources/library.

10 Tips for Reducing Email Stress

1. If a Web site or company is sending regular unwanted email, take time to unsubscribe from its email listing. Most spam messages or largely-distributed mailings offer simple unsubscribe links, which will keep you from having to skim through or ignore more of the same later.
2. Empty your inbox. Create a "filed" folder and a "to do" folder, and move read messages into those folders accordingly, so that the inbox is only used for new emails.
3. If you respond to an email via email, always include the message's thread in the response. That will keep you and the recipient from having to search through older emails in order to follow the dialogue, and it will allow you to delete the original emails, so long as you save the emails in your sent folder.
4. Create a separate email account to use when signing up on Web sites for groups or services. Keep your work email account open for just work-related reasons and your personal email account open for friends and family; a third account can be used for things like Internet shopping receipts, news subscriptions and other times when an entering email account is requested to view an Internet page.
5. Think before you respond, keeping the receiver of the email in mind. Can you include more information in a single email, so that one request won't require multiple responses? Is the information being sent pertinent, and why is it being sent?
6. Utilize the subject line as best as possible.
7. Don't use email to say no to something, or for discussing a controversial subject. Email doesn't convey emotion and tends to hide a person's inhibitions when it comes to saying something that could be construed in the wrong way, or would not be said during a person-to-person interaction.
8. Think about utilizing the phone first, especially for simple or fast tasks or conversations.
9. Don't conduct group discussions via email. Remember that emails can be subject to both Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act rules. Simply stated, but not fully stated, an email discussion may be subject to Open Meetings Act laws if it is sent to commissioners court members and discusses county business. An email may be subject to Public Information Act rules if it discusses county business or action. For questions about email as it relates to Sunshine laws, call the Texas Association of Counties' free legal hotline at 888-ASK-TAC4.
10. Turn off automatic email alerts, so that your focus can be on one task at a time. Designate certain periods of time for checking email.

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Texas Association for Court Administration Financial Report August 20, 2008 – August 19, 2009

TACA Checking Account

Beginning Balance	\$11,453.89
Ending Balance	\$16,188.62

TACA Savings Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 79,852.21
Ending Balance	\$ 75,186.24

TACA Goodwill Scholarship Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 5,134.56
Ending Balance	\$ 9,177.74

TACA Total Balance	\$100,552.60
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LEGAL INFORMATION VS. LEGAL ADVICE—DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE LAST FIVE YEARS

BY JOHN M. GREACEN, DIRECTOR OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS FOR THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

In 1995 my article “No Legal Advice From Court Personnel What Does That Mean?” was the first published attempt to examine critically the standard court instruction to staff not to give legal advice. It explored legal and practical definitions of the term “legal advice” and suggested guidelines a court could give staff members on what answers they can and cannot provide. This article reviews that article’s discussion and recommendations, as well as developments during the past five years.

“No Legal Advice” argued that the phrase “legal advice” had no inherent meaning to the courts or to court staff who were required to interpret it. The use of a vague term has negative consequences for the courts and the public; it causes staff to limit unnecessarily the flow of information to the public about court operations and it creates opportunities for discrimination among different categories of court users. The article addressed the concerns that cause courts to prohibit their staffs from providing information about court processes to the public—concerns about their “practicing law,” about their giving incorrect information, and about their binding the judge by such incorrect information. It articulated five general principles that court staff should keep in mind in answering questions:

- Court staff have an obligation to explain court processes and procedures to litigants, the media, and other interested citizens.
- Court staff have an obligation to inform litigants, and potential litigants, how to bring their problems before the court for resolution.
- Court staff cannot advise litigants whether to bring their problems before the court, or what remedies to seek.
- Court staff must always remember the absolute duty of impartiality. They must never give advice or information for the purpose of giving one party an advantage over another. They must never give advice or information to one party that they would not give to an opponent.
- Court staff should be mindful of the basic principle that neither parties nor their attorneys may communicate with the judge *ex parte*. Court staff should not let themselves be used to circumvent that principle by conveying information to a judge on behalf of a litigant, or fail to respect it in acting on matters delegated to them for decision.

Finally, the article suggested 11 guidelines for staff to use in responding to questions. The first six are positive statements. All staff are expected to perform the following tasks:

- Provide information contained in docket reports, case files, indexes and other reports.
- Answer questions concerning court rules, procedures, and ordinary practices. Such questions often contain the words “Can I?” or “How do I?”
- Provide examples of forms or pleadings for the guidance of litigants.
- Answer questions about the completion of forms.
- Explain the meaning of terms and documents used in the court process.
- Answer questions concerning deadlines or due dates.

The last five are negative statements. In providing information, staff will not:

- Give information when you are unsure of the correct answer. Transfer such questions to supervisors.
- Advise litigants whether to take a particular course of action. Do not answer questions that contain the words “Should I?” Suggest that questioners refer such issues to a lawyer.
- Take sides in a case or proceeding pending before the court.
- Provide information to one party that you would be unwilling or unable to provide to all other parties.
- Disclose the outcome of a matter submitted to a judge for decision until the outcome is part of the public record, or until the judge directs disclosure of the matter.

Responses to the article

Many judges and court managers used the article and its recommendations in creating policies and training for court staff. And a court manager from Canada reported that it is the standard reference point for the courts of Canada as well. I have conducted training sessions for court administrators and court staff based on the principles set forth in the article in both federal and state courts throughout the country. The guidelines have been included in the curriculum of the “Litigant Without Lawyers” seminars presented by the Maricopa County Superior Court and in educational sessions at conferences of the National Association for Court Management and its Mid Atlantic Association for Court Management.

The Michigan Court Support Training Consortium, under a grant from the Michigan Judicial Institute, developed an interactive training program using compact disk interactive technology, called the Legal Advice CD-i program, based on the principles set forth in the article. That training program has been widely used by courts in other states and received the Justice Achievement Award from

the National Association for Court Management in 1998.

Several states have adopted their own guidelines derived from those suggested in the article.

- In 1997, the Michigan Judicial Institute prepared and distributed a booklet entitled, *Legal Advice v. Access to the Courts: Do YOU Know the Difference?* The booklet provides general guidelines, together with specific applications of those guidelines through the use of questions and answers. The booklet was endorsed by the Michigan Supreme Court as a model for providing information to the public and access to the Michigan court system.
- In June 1998, the New Mexico Supreme Court adopted a standard notice entitled “Information Available from the Clerk’s Office.” It requires all courts to post that notice “in lieu of any other notices pertaining to the topic of information or advice that court staff may or may not provide.” The notice sets forth the information that court staff can and cannot provide and includes information on how to find a lawyer; New Jersey has created a similar notice.
- In November, 1998, the Ventura County Superior Court adopted guidelines for its employees staffing its Self Help Legal Access Center.
- The Supreme Court of Florida, with one dissent, has adopted a rule of court, Florida Family Law Rule 12.750, entitled “Family Self Help Programs,” that sets forth the services that court “self help” staff can and cannot provide.
- A Customer Service Advisory Committee for the Judicial Branch, created by order of the Iowa Supreme Court, has developed *Guidelines for Clerks Who Assist Pro Se Litigants in Iowa’s Courts*. The Iowa Supreme Court recently approved the guidelines. The Advisory Committee also developed a guidebook for clerks containing 25 pages of model responses to frequently asked questions.
- A Task Force on Unrepresented Litigants of the Boston Bar Association conducted a comprehensive study of the needs of self-represented litigants in all levels of courts in Massachusetts. Its August 1998 *Report on Pro Se Litigation* is one of the most thorough treatments of the topic, including extensive recommendations to the courts and the bar for improving their programs. Exhibit F of that report is a set of “Sample Staff Guidelines” for Massachusetts courts.
- Finally, in 2000, the Utah Judicial Council adopted guidelines for all court staff in that state.

Critiques

Jona Goldschmidt and his colleagues have criticized the suggested guidelines on two grounds. First, they believe that the article does not go far enough in its analysis of the court’s obligation to provide information to the public. The United States Constitution, through the privileges and immunities clause, the First Amendment, or the due process or equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment, may create a fundamental right of access to the courts for persons representing themselves.

The closest that any U. S. Supreme Court opinion has come in articulating such a broad right of access is Justice Brennan’s concurring opinion in *Boddie v. Connecticut* (1971), finding that Connecticut’s mandatory filing fee for divorce cases violated an indigent person’s right to due process. Justice Brennan objected to language in the majority opinion limiting the reach of the decision to divorce proceedings—“the exclusive precondition to the adjustment of a fundamental human relationship.” Justice Brennan wrote: I cannot join the Court’s opinion insofar as today’s holding is made to depend upon the factor that only the State can grant a divorce and that an indigent would be locked into a marriage if unable to pay the fees required to obtain a divorce. A State has an ultimate monopoly of all judicial process and attendant enforcement machinery. As a practical matter, if disputes cannot be successfully settled between the parties, the court system is usually . . . the only forum effectively empowered to settle their disputes. Resort to the judicial process by these plaintiffs is no more voluntary in a realistic sense than that of the defendant called upon to defend his interests in court. . . . I see no constitutional distinction between appellants’ attempts to enforce this statutory right and an attempt to vindicate any other right arising under federal or state law. . . . The right to be heard in some way at some time extends to all proceedings entertained by courts.

If there is such a right of access to the courts, then, argues Goldschmidt and colleagues, the courts must provide information sufficient to enable self-represented persons to exercise that right.

The significant and as-yet-unanswered question is whether self-represented litigants’ rights obligate the state to take affirmative steps to provide them with some form of “adequate” legal assistance. Until a definitive ruling on this question is made, courts should—if only for efficiency reasons—begin (or continue) to develop creative means of guiding the increasing number of self-represented litigants through the legal process.

Second, Goldschmidt and colleagues argue that the guidelines are too general in nature. They believe that court staff need explicit direction on the answers to be given to specific questions, not just general direction differentiating legal information from legal advice. All courts owe their staff the support of an operating manual, describing basic court operations and instructing them how to handle routine matters. These materials, in turn, serve as a reference for staff in answering questions from the public. The most extensive manual of this sort that I have seen is the *Clerk’s Practice and Procedure Guide* developed by the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Mexico. The judges of the court instructed the clerk to develop the manual in order to give lawyers who did not specialize in bankruptcy law the basic information they would need to practice before the court. With the help of a committee of the local bankruptcy bar, the court prepared a manual detailing the court’s procedures with respect to all parts of the bankruptcy process. The manual is available to the public. It also serves as a resource for court staff in answering questions

posed by the public.

A knowledgeable staff

My experience in providing training on this topic all over the country has convinced me that lack of staff knowledge of procedures is not a significant impediment to the ability of court staff to provide information to the public. In training sessions I ask participants to write down the questions they have the most difficulty answering and use them as the basis for the discussion. I ask for volunteers to answer the questions, following my suggested guidelines. Experience has shown that court staff are extraordinarily knowledgeable about court procedures, requirements, and practices. With one exception, some participant in every seminar has been able to provide the procedural or substantive information needed to answer a question. The exception was in Delaware, where all participants agreed there was no answer to a particular question—their case management information system did not provide the requested information.

My experience suggests, therefore, that court staff throughout this country *know the correct answers* to the questions they are asked by the public. Consequently, courts should not delay authorizing their staff to provide procedural information until they develop detailed guidebooks or reference materials.

As additional courts develop rules and guidelines, they are becoming more detailed. See, for instance, the elaboration provided by the Florida rule of court and the draft Iowa guidelines. In addition, the drafters of the Iowa guidelines have included a substantial number of standard answers to frequently asked questions. Some such standard answers, based on the most common questions that recur in training sessions on this subject, appear at the end of this article.

A just outcome

Russell Engler, Professor of Law and Director of Clinical Programs at the New England School of Law, has written a thought-provoking article arguing that judges, mediators, and court staff *should* provide legal advice to self-represented litigants. Engler argues that most persons representing themselves in court do so because they cannot afford to retain counsel. Without competent advice concerning available options and their advantages and disadvantages, litigants cannot obtain a just outcome. He argues that principles underlying the concept of the court's impartiality must be reconsidered. Instead of giving no advice to either side, Engler believes that the court must give whatever help is needed to *both* sides, giving more help to one side than to the other where needed. He argues that true impartiality exists when both parties are fully informed of their rights, their procedural options, and the benefits and detriments arising from exercising them.

The most obvious instance in which the court has an obligation to provide different levels of help to one side than to the other is when one side is represented by counsel and the other is not. In order for the courts to do justice, Engler argues, the courts must be prepared to provide whatever assistance is needed to both sides in order for them to understand their rights and remedies and make a reasoned, informed judgment of their best interests. Current restrictions on court staff, mediators, and judges inhibit their ability to ensure justice. He poses the problem of the mediator who is prohibited from informing one party that his proposed settlement terms are foregoing a remedy to which he is clearly entitled by law. His article goes on to argue that the type of advice needed, and who should provide it, depends on the context—the nature of the legal proceeding and the type of dispute.

Professor Engler's analysis is thought-provoking. He forcefully points out the injustices that can result from imbalances in the power and knowledge of self-represented parties. However, his view that a dispute cannot be resolved justly without fully informing both parties of every substantive and procedure right and option available is not one to which I am willing to subscribe. It is neither necessary nor realistic to expect the courts to serve not only as dispute resolvers but also as counselors and advocates for both sides.

Unauthorized practice of law

Much of the concern about court staff providing information arises from apprehension they will be practicing law without a license. In my view, laws or court rules prohibiting the unauthorized practice of law do not apply to court staff performing tasks at the direction of the court. Preoccupation with the topic of unauthorized practice of law focuses attention on the wrong issues and provides either too much or too little guidance to the courts on what information their staff should and should not provide.

First, as a matter of law, when court clerks are providing information that the courts direct them to provide, they cannot be engaged in the *unauthorized* practice of law. The courts have authorized them to do what they are doing. When the authorization comes from the state court of last resort, which is the body responsible for deciding what constitutes the practice of law, there can be no doubt that court staff are insulated from any statute or rule prohibiting the unauthorized practice of law. The Supreme Court of Florida recognized this principle in its family court rule on self-help programs. Section (e) of Rule 12.750 reads:

(e) Unauthorized Practice of Law. The services listed in subdivision (c), when performed by non-lawyer personnel in a self-help program, shall not be the unauthorized practice of law.

A committee of the Washington State Bar Association has reached the same conclusion. The Committee to Define the Practice of Law worked for almost a year and a half to develop a comprehensive definition of the practice of law for the State Bar Association to recommend to the state supreme court for adoption. Section (b)(2) of its Definition of the Practice of Law excludes "serving as a

court house facilitator pursuant to court rule” . . . “whether or not [it] constitute[s] the practice of law.”

The attorney general of Vermont has applied this reasoning to court staff activities authorized by the trial court, not the court of last resort. In Vermont, the unauthorized practice of law is prohibited by rule of the state supreme court. An attorney wrote to the Vermont attorney general asking that it commence a criminal contempt proceeding to enforce that rule, complaining about an advertised job description that included the following duties of a court case manager: “assist litigants to complete court documents and to understand the judicial process” and ensure “that all persons involved in child support actions understand the court process, their rights under the law and all documents that they are asked to file or agree to.” The complaint also questioned the court’s production and distribution of various booklets that define legal terms and discuss the divorce process. While expressing his opinion that the activities set forth in the job description did not constitute the practice of law, Chief Assistant Attorney General William Griffin noted that “[e]ven if they did, since the activities are authorized by the Court and performed on its behalf, the Attorney General would be hard pressed to argue that they are unauthorized.”

Analyzing this issue in terms of the unauthorized practice of law focuses attention on what lawyers do, not on what courts must, and must not, do. First, courts must provide self-represented litigants with the information they need to bring their cases before the court. Whether or not there is a constitutional right to access to the courts, there are overwhelming policy reasons for the courts to provide effective access. That is what courts are for—to serve as the forum for resolving disputes. For the courts to enjoy the public trust and confidence of the people, they must make their services practically, as well as theoretically, available to the public. So, the focus of the courts must be on providing the information that citizens need in order to avail themselves of the courts’ dispute-resolving services.

The limitations on the court staff in answering questions from the public arise not from what lawyers do, but from the principle of impartiality central to public trust and confidence in the courts. Court staff should not advise a person accused of crime whether to plead guilty—not because lawyers give such advice, but because that advice causes the court staff, and hence the court itself, to be taking sides in the outcome of the case.

An example where courts are misled by looking to unauthorized practice of law principles, rather than to the needs of the courts, is with respect to court forms. Some courts consider the choice of the appropriate form for a litigant to use to be a function that lawyers perform for their clients and therefore restrict the role that staff can play in pointing out the correct form to a litigant requesting assistance. See, for instance, the discussion of this issue by Goldschmidt and colleagues.

As a practical matter, court staff are fully competent to direct litigants to the correct form. This service constitutes an essential part of the information a litigant needs in order to be able to present his or her case to the court. And, because the court provides equal services to all litigants—e.g., to petitioners as well as respondents—the court does not depart from its impartial role in providing forms and directing litigants to their proper use.

By focusing on the issue of the unauthorized practice of law, courts may not go far enough in limiting the role that staff can play. For instance, does the fact that a particular court staff member is a lawyer free the court from concerns arising from the court’s need to remain impartial? Or, in Arizona, where there is no unauthorized practice of law statute, can the courts decide that there are no limitations on the role that their staff should play in assisting litigants?

Finally, the ethical opinions analyzing the functions that clerks can and cannot perform from the standpoint of the unauthorized practice of law draw the same line in the same place as does my analysis based on the principle of maintaining the court’s impartiality. The Massachusetts Advisory Committee on Ethical Opinions for Clerks of the Court reviewed five scenarios that regularly occur, approving clerk conduct in three and disapproving it in the remaining two. In summarizing its opinion, it stated:

[P]roviding assistance with filling out forms and offering procedural advice clearly do not run afoul of the prohibition on the practice of law. Drafting documents, taking over a case and becoming an advocate on behalf of a litigant would clearly violate the prohibition.

Suggested answers to recurring questions

Here are some of the most common questions presented by participants in seminars on this topic, and suggested answers:

Do I need a lawyer?

You are not required to have a lawyer to file papers or to participate in a case in court. You have the right to represent yourself. Whether to hire a lawyer must be your personal decision. You may want to consider how important the outcome of this case is to you in making that decision. A lawyer may not cost as much as you think. I have information on the Lawyer Referral Service if you want help in finding a lawyer who specializes in your kind of case. [Lawyers participating in the Albuquerque Bar Association lawyer referral service offer one half hour of consultation for \$25 plus tax.]

Should I hire a lawyer?

Same as above.

Can you give me the name of a good lawyer?

The court cannot recommend a particular lawyer. I have information on the Lawyer Referral Service if you want help in finding a lawyer who specializes in your kind of case.

Should I plead guilty?

You need to decide that for yourself.

What sentence will I get if I plead guilty [or do not plead guilty]?

The judge will decide what sentence to impose based on the facts and the law that apply to your case. I cannot predict what the judge will do.

What will happen in court?

Suggested answer to a plaintiff in a small claims case: The judge will call on you to present your evidence first. Then [he][she] will call on the other side to present its evidence. The judge will ask questions if [he][she] needs clarification. When the judge has heard all the evidence, [he][she] will announce [his][her] decision.

What should I say in court?

You must tell the truth.

How do I get the money that the judge said I am entitled to?

You are responsible for taking the steps necessary to enforce a judgment (or an award of child support). Here is a pamphlet that describes the procedural options available to you. When you decide what option to pursue, I can provide you with the appropriate forms. [It may be appropriate to refer a litigant to an agency for help, e.g, with child support enforcement.]

What should I put in this section of the form?

You should write down what happened in your own words.

What should I put down here where it says “remedy sought”?

You should write in your own words what you want the court to do.

Would you look over this form and tell me if I did it right?

You have provided all of the required information. I cannot tell you whether the information you have provided is correct or complete; only you know whether it is correct and complete.

I am not able to read or write. Would you fill out the form for me?

In that case, I am able to fill out the form for you, but you have to tell me what information to put down. I will write down whatever you say and read it back to you to make sure what I have written is correct.

What do I do next?

Describe the next step in the court process.

I want to see the judge. Where is his office?

The judge talks with both parties to a case at the same time. You would not want the judge to be talking to the [police officer] [landlord] about this case if you were not present. Your case is scheduled for hearing on ____ at _____. That is when you should speak with the judge.

The judge heard my case today but did not make a decision. When will he decide?

There is no way for me to know when the judge will issue a decision in your case. In general, judges try to reach a decision within [60] days of taking a case under advisement. But there is no guarantee that the judge will decide your case within that time.

Original article can be obtained on the American Judicature Society website at www.ajs.org.

Announcement

- What:** Texas Forum on Courts and Self-Represented Litigants
- Where:** Belo Mansion, Dallas, Texas
- When:** April 8 & 9, 2010
- Contact:** TexasCourtForum@gmail.com

In many Texas jurisdictions, the number of litigants representing themselves in court is increasing, particularly in the area of family law. What affect does this have on the Texas courthouse? How are Texas courts responding? What strategies have other states employed to address the impact self-represented litigants (SRLs) have on the legal process?

Texas Access to Justice Commission's Special Projects Committee will hold a spring forum to ask and answer these questions.

The Texas Forum on Courts and Self-Represented Litigants, to be held April 8 and 9, in Dallas, will bring together judges, court clerks, courthouse staff, legal aid programs, county law librarians, and private bar members.

Planning for the Forum is in its early stages. If you would like to learn more about the agenda and registration information when it becomes available, please email TexasCourtForum@gmail.com and you will be sent updates.

NACM BOARD EXTENDS GREAT DISCOUNT TO TACA MEMBERS

BY DAVID SLAYTON, URBAN DIRECTOR,
NACM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The National Association for Court Management (NACM) is the premier national court management organization with over 2,000 members from all court jurisdictions in the United States, as well as from Canada and other nations. NACM is dedicated to the improvement of court management at all levels of courts through the exchange of information and education.

The NACM Board has recently approved a special registration rate for TACA members to attend the NACM Annual Conference in New Orleans in 2010. The registration rate has been reduced to \$50 off of the early bird rate...so you get a great deal for this outstanding training that is in our back yard. That makes the conference registration rate \$575 whether you are currently a member or not. The topic for the conference is "Wisdom in Action: Proven Court Practices" and will focus on the best ways to conduct business in our courts today. The session topics include items such as:

- Nationally-known speaker Greg Gray speaking on Customer Service
- Implementing Differentiated Case Management
- Having effective Judicial Leadership Teams
- How to best deal with Self-Represented Litigants

Be sure to budget and look for this conference...NACM won't be this close again soon.

Go to the next conference for FREE

The NACM Board has approved the membership incentive plan, which will allow you to go to the NACM Mid-Year or Annual Conference for FREE! As an incentive to increase membership, the NACM Board of Directors will award three levels of awards to NACM members who recruit a significant number of members as listed below:

Level One Award - 8 or more new individual members:

A NACM member who recruits eight or more members will receive a free annual or midyear conference registration, plus have one year of NACM membership fees waived.

Level Two Award - 6-7 new individual members:

A NACM member who recruits between six and seven new members will receive a free annual or midyear conference registration.

Level Three Award - 3-5 new individual members:

A NACM member who recruits between three and five new members will have one year of NACM membership fees waived.

TEXAS NUMBER TWO IN MEMBERSHIP!

Some of you might remember that we have been pushing for a number of years to get Texas membership where it needs to be (much higher). When we started this mission, Texas was seventh overall in statewide membership. As of this writing, Texas stands second behind California. We are gaining on them, but need more members to become #1. Consider joining today not only to get the benefits of membership, but to put Texas right where it belongs....on top!

Membership Discounts Available

NACM has recently approved a new membership discount program. If you join or renew your membership online (www.nacmnet.org), you receive a \$10 discount off of dues. If you are a new member, you get an additional \$15 discount. Plus, remember that your membership dues are tax-deductible.

New Media Guide on its way

NACM is in the process of updating the NACM Media Guide, which many of you have seen (especially if you have completed PDP). The outdated Media Guide will be a much needed revision, but will also include new material on topics such as how courts can use social media in their media process. All NACM members will receive a copy of this publication next summer.

Future Conferences

Just for future planning purposes, below is a list of other upcoming conferences, their locations and topics:

2010 Mid-Year	Colorado Springs, CO Jan 30-Feb 2, 2010	Court Space, Security & Emergency Planning
2010 Annual	New Orleans, LA July 20-24, 2010	Wisdom in Action: Proven Court Practices
2011 Mid-Year	Baltimore, MD February 6-8, 2011	TBA
2011 Annual	Las Vegas, NV July 10-14, 2011	TBA
2012 Mid-Year	Minneapolis, MN February 5-7, 2012	TBA
2012 Annual	Orlando, FL July 15-19, 2012	TBA

Getting Involved

NACM has various committees that could always use your help. The permanent and standing committees generally meet at least quarterly by phone conference, with most of them meeting monthly. The committees provide you an opportunity to get as involved as you would like.

In addition, NACM has recently started a Facebook, LinkedIn, and Wikipedia page. I encourage you to look at those and join them.

As you can see, there is a lot going on with NACM. If you're not a member, we need you. Please visit the NACM website at www.nacmnet.org where you can join or learn more about the association. As always, if you want to visit with me personally, please feel free to email me at dslayton@co.lubbock.tx.us or call me at 806-775-1020.

The following vendors are current Sustaining Members in TACA:

*Thank you for your support
of our Association!*

Advantage Interlock

Members: Tom Chavana, James Hamner, Bill Meadows, Waylen Padgett
946 Calle Amanecer #P
San Clemente, CA 92673
(800) DUI-6580
www.advantageinterlock.com

AmCad

Members: Dan Carlson, Gary Egner, Gilbert Gonzalez
220 Spring Street, Suite 150
Herndon, Virginia 20170
(703) 787-7775
gegner@amcad.com
<http://www.amcad.com/>

Smart Start

Members: Annette Beard, Sally Bridges, Debra Coffey, Dottie McDonald
4850 Plaza Drive
Irving, TX 75063
(800) 800-3394
www.smartstartinc.com

TACA MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

Regular Membership

Any person whose primary duty is to work in the administration of the courts and who is a direct employee of the judiciary, including, but not limited to court coordinators, court managers, court administrators, assistant court coordinators, court bailiffs and court secretaries, shall be entitled to regular membership. Regular members in good standing shall be certified to vote, hold office and serve on committees.

Associate Membership

A person engaged in a related field may become an associate member. An associate member may serve on committees, but may not vote or hold office in the association.

Judicial Membership

TACA encourages members of the judiciary to become members of the association. A judicial member may serve on committees, but may not vote or hold office in the association.

Sustaining Membership

A person, persons, firm or corporation interested in furthering the purpose of this organization is eligible to become a sustaining member. Sustaining members shall not hold office, and shall not serve on committees. Minimum contribution recommended \$200.00.

Please visit the TACA website at www.mytaca.org for more information.

TACA WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS THAT JOINED IN AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, AND NOVEMBER OF THIS YEAR!

Sahira J. Abdool from the Houston Municipal Courts in Harris County; **Ida Alcalá**; **Monica Bautista** from the 49th District Court in Zapata County; **Venessa Benavides** from the 49th District Court in Zapata County; **Rex Billings** from the Houston Municipal Courts in Harris County; **Hon. Rick Campbell** from Shelby County; **Hon. Jayne Choate** from the Justice Court, Precinct 2 in Parker County; **Gilbert Crawford** from the Houston Municipal Courts in Harris County; **Anna I. Cruz** from the County Court at Law in Val Verde County; **Eloy Garcia** from the 430th District Court in Hidalgo County; **Ginny E. Glassburn** from the 89th District Court in Wichita County; **Gwendolyn Goins** from the Houston Municipal Courts in Harris County; **Stacey Kemp** from Collin County; **Cheryl Lopez** from the 325th District Court in Tarrant County; **Deana Mathes** from the Justice Court, Precinct 2 in Parker County; **Isabel Mejia** from the 197th District Court in Willacy County; **Sylvia Mena** from the 49th District Court in Webb County; **Hon. Jerry D. Parr** from the Statutory Probate Court in Denton County; **Wendi S. Pearson** from the 350th District Court in Taylor County; **Kim Plummer** from the 377th Judicial District in Victoria County; **Sandra Powell** from the Auxilliary Coordinator's Office in Tarrant County; **Gregory Prier** from the City of Houston in Harris County; **Sara Rocha** from the County Court at Law in Zapata County; **Miguel "Mike" Sanchez** from the County Court at Law in Cameron County; **Darryl L. Sanders** from the County Court at Law No. 2 in Travis County; **Mary M. Sloan Hammond** from the Houston Municipal Courts in Harris County; **Dealah "Dede" Taylor** from the 75th District Court in Liberty County; **Hon. Judith G. Wells** from the 325th District Court in Tarrant County; **Karen Y. Williams** from the Houston Municipal Courts in Harris County; **Sheron Willis** from the Collin County Clerk's Office in Collin County; **Darla J. Wright** from the 429th District Court in Collin County.



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