

Young Lawyers Division of the Hillsborough County Bar Association

Composition and Purpose:

The Hillsborough County Bar Association is a non-profit county bar association in Florida comprised of approximately 3,500 voluntary members. Hillsborough County is located on the west coast of Florida and extends to Tampa Bay. The Young Lawyers Division of the Hillsborough County Bar Association (the "HCBA YLD") consists of all active members of the Hillsborough County Bar Association who are under 36 years of age or who have been admitted to practice less than three years. The HCBA YLD has approximately 1,000 members and is the largest and most active section of the Hillsborough County Bar Association.

As outlined in the HCBA YLD By-Laws, the purposes of the HCBA YLD are as follows:

- To provide a forum for young and new lawyers to learn of the duties responsibilities, and problems of the young and new members of the Bar;
- To provide opportunities for continuing legal education of particular benefit to young and new lawyers;
- To provide assistance to young and new members of the Hillsborough County Bar Association;
- To stimulate the interest and participation of young and new lawyers in the activities of the Hillsborough County Bar Association;
- To carry out projects for the betterment of relations between the Bar, Bench, Community, and Scholastics;
- To promote young and new lawyers' participation in *pro bono* legal service programs; and
- To better coordinate young and new members of the Hillsborough County Bar Association with their counterparts in other national, state, and local bar associations.

The HCBA YLD is governed by a 16 member Board of Directors, which includes the President, the President Elect, the Immediate Past President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Parliamentarian, seven Directors, and three Ex Officio Members. The President and the Directors are elected by the HCBA YLD membership and the Officers (the Secretary, Treasurer, and Parliamentarian) are appointed by the President. The Ex Officio Members consist of the HCBA YLD's local representatives on the Board of Governors of the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division and a liaison to the Hillsborough County Bar Foundation (the fundraising

arm of the Hillsborough County Bar Association) who is appointed by the President. The HCBA YLD Board of Directors meets once a month during the bar year.

The HCBA YLD operates its various programs and events through a highly organized committee structure. The HCBA YLD has seven main operating committees, including the Long Range Planning Committee, the Professionalism and Ethics Committee, the Members Services Committee, the Events Committee, the Youth Projects Committee, the Law Week and Law Related Education Committee, and the *Pro Bono* Committee. Each of these committees has various subcommittees for specific projects for which the committee is responsible. These committees are overseen by Committee Chairs who are appointed by the HCBA YLD President. Members of the HCBA YLD Board are assigned by the President to serve as liaisons to the various committees and are responsible for reporting the activities of their assigned committee to the HCBA YLD Board of Directors at its monthly meetings.

Communication with Members:

In addition to “word of mouth” communication among members, the HCBA YLD formally communicates to its members through various modes. First, the HCBA YLD provides members with notice of specific meetings, projects, and events through “blast” e-mails and faxes periodically sent to the entire HCBA YLD membership. Second, the HCBA YLD publishes a biannual YLD newsletter, *The HCBA Young Lawyer*, to report to members on HCBA YLD activities that occurred and to promote upcoming projects and events. Third, the HCBA YLD has a page in the *Lawyer*, a monthly magazine published by the Hillsborough County Bar Association and distributed to the entire Hillsborough County Bar Association membership. The HCBA YLD utilizes this page to advertise and promote upcoming HCBA YLD projects and events. Finally, the HCBA YLD holds quarterly lunch meetings in which it provides announcements regarding HCBA YLD activities and informs members of upcoming meetings, seminars, projects, and events.

Programs:

The HCBA YLD operates numerous *pro bono* and public service projects to enable young lawyers to give back to the community in a way that enhances the image of the Hillsborough County Bar Association and the legal profession in general. The HCBA YLD also provides educational opportunities for young lawyers to learn about the practice of law and it offers social and networking opportunities for young lawyers to meet other lawyers and judges in the legal community. The following are some of the programs organized and administered by the HCBA YLD:

Pro Bono Projects

Migrant Farm Worker Project. The Migrant Farm Worker Project is a *pro bono* project intended to benefit poor migrant farm workers who work in or near Hillsborough County. Each year thousands of migrant farm workers travel to parts

of Florida to pick citrus and other fruit during the harvest season. Though these workers greatly contribute to the success of Florida's agricultural industry, they remain one of the poorest groups of people in the community. On the first Thursday of every month during the harvest season (October through April), HCBA YLD members travel to the Good Samaritan Mission, located in a rural part of Hillsborough County, to lend legal advice to migrant farm workers. Through this project, the HCBA YLD has been able to help the poor farm workers by providing them with legal advice on various issues and by referring them to appropriate legal and social services.

Pro Se Litigant Project. The *Pro Se* Litigant Project entails HCBA YLD members working with local judges to prepare and make available informational materials to *pro se* litigants regarding the civil litigation process. In Hillsborough County, many *pro se* litigants have access to informational materials that specifically pertain to small claims court, but they do not have access to materials on general civil litigation, including filing requirements, discovery deadlines, etc. Through this project, the HCBA YLD intends to assist *pro se* litigants, and the court, by providing basic procedural information to *pro se* litigants to help them navigate through the legal system.

Youth Projects

Santa Claus Hotline/ Holidays in January Project. The Santa Claus Hotline and Holidays in January Project are two related holiday programs to benefit underprivileged children in the Tampa Bay area. The HCBA YLD organizes and administers a Santa Claus Hotline to provide lawyers and others in the community the opportunity to place requests for HCBA YLD volunteer "Santas" to call their children with personalized holiday greetings. The HCBA YLD charges a small fee for the calls from Santa and the monies collected are used for the HCBA YLD's annual Holidays in January Project. The Holidays in January project consists of a holiday party for underprivileged children that may not have benefited from other holiday charity programs. The party is held at a small amusement park where children can play video games and ride the amusement park rides. Lunch is provided and, near the end of the party, Santa arrives with gifts for each child. Year after year, the HCBA YLD recommits to this project because it brings so much joy and happiness to the children involved.

Steak & Sports Day. Steak & Sports Day is a project that the HCBA YLD holds annually for the benefit of orphans at the Children's Home in Tampa, Florida. HCBA YLD lawyers spend the day with the children grilling steaks, playing sports, and engaging in various other fun activities. The HCBA YLD provides the food and T-Shirts for the children and organizes games and activities, such as kick ball, basketball, face-painting, and swimming. Steak & Sports Day is a great way for the HCBA YLD to provide some fun to a group of 100 or more wonderful children who have had the misfortune of becoming orphans under the some of the most tragic life circumstances.

A Time to Read. A Time to Read is a project in which HCBA YLD members assist in teaching young school children how to read. The project consists of HCBA YLD young lawyers committing one hour a week to reading to children at a local elementary school. This project is flexible in that it allows the young lawyers to schedule their one hour reading time around their own schedule. This project provides HCBA YLD members a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child.

Educational Opportunities

“Afternoon at the Courthouses” Seminar. The “Afternoon at the Courthouses” seminar is a Continuing Legal Education accredited seminar held annually by the HCBA YLD. The seminar is held in a real court room (either in state or federal court) and consists of state and federal judges speaking on various topics geared to educate and prepare young lawyers for the practice of law. The seminar includes tours of both the state and federal court houses in downtown Tampa.

State Court Trial Seminar. The State Court Trial Seminar is a Continuing Legal Education accredited seminar aimed at teaching young lawyers how to put on an effective case at trial. Prominent local trial attorneys and local state court judges provide pointers on trial practice through all phases of a trial, from voir dire to closing arguments. For each trial phase, there is a presentation from both a plaintiff and a defense perspective (by members of the local plaintiff and defense bars) as well as useful comments and insight provided by an experienced trial judge.

Law Week and Law Related Education:

Law Week Activities. The HCBA YLD is responsible for organizing and managing numerous activities in Hillsborough County during Law Week. These activities include court house tours, speakers in classrooms, and mock trials for local elementary and middle school children. HCBA YLD members organize and recruit volunteers for these events and numerous HCBA YLD members serve as tour guides for the court house tours, speakers, or judges for mock trials.

High School Mock Trial Competition. The HCBA YLD is involved in administering the Hillsborough County high school mock trial competition for The Florida Law Related Education Association. The competition takes place at the state court house for the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida located in downtown Tampa. HCBA YLD members organize the event and serve as coaches for the various high school teams that participate in the competition. The winner of the Hillsborough County competition advances to a state-wide high school mock trial competition to compete against other teams who represent other counties in Florida. The winner of the state-wide competition advances to a national competition.

Social and Networking Opportunities

Quarterly Luncheons. The HCBA YLD holds quarterly lunch meetings to provide its members the opportunity to gather and socialize. These quarterly lunch meetings typically feature a prominent speaker, usually someone connected to the legal profession. This year the speakers have included the Florida Attorney General and the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court. In past years, the Lt. Governor of Florida, the President of the American Bar Association, and the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida have served as speakers at the HCBA YLD's quarterly lunch meetings.

YLD Happy Hours. The HCBA YLD periodically hosts Happy Hours for its members throughout the bar year to enable young lawyers to network and socialize in a relaxed environment. The Happy Hours often occur after HCBA YLD seminars to give the young lawyers the opportunity to meet and mingle with the judges and prominent lawyers who served as seminar speakers. The Happy Hours occasionally may take the form of more formal "Important Persons" receptions. For example, in August of 2003 the HCBA YLD converted one of its Happy Hours into a reception to host two important members of the Florida Legislature who serve on committees in charge of the funding of the Florida state court system.