



# INTER ALIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE  
COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

MAY 2026

*News, invitations,  
photos and more*

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM ANNUAL  
SPRING EVENT AT THE BEACH**

*Governor DeSantis Appoints  
Three New Judges to  
The 12<sup>th</sup> Circuit*

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*Coming Up: Celebrate  
America 250 Law Day  
Luncheon*

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*By Daniel VanEtten, Esq; MCBA President Elect*

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America. This makes the United States of America the (second) longest lasting constitutional republic that is still in existence. Over those 250 years, innumerable people have invested into the United States their hopes, dreams, and visions for which they believe this nation stands. In attempting to manifest those beliefs, these individuals had dedicated their labor and, in many cases, their very lives, in furtherance of the ideals for which this great nation stands. We should all be proud to work on carrying forward that noble tradition by working to ensure that those ideals last the next 250 years, as well.

A way in which some people have attempted to express the spirit of those beliefs and ideals is through their recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Our own wonderful bar organization incorporates the pledge into each of its meetings. Let us therefore take a moment to look at the history of the pledge, including its creation, evolution, and the legal challenges to it, as its story is a wonderful example of one of the many aspects of what makes this nation great.

The Pledge was first written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy as part of a campaign to promote national unity during the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival. The United States did not officially recognize the Pledge for another half century. During this intervening half century, it was not uncommon for different organizations to utilize different verbiages in their recital of the Pledge. These microcosms of innovations eventually gave rise to a standard pledge that the United States' Congress adopted.

In 1942, the United States' Congress formally recognized the Pledge through its enactment of the Flag Code. Prior to this time, various governmental organizations, including at the state level, utilized some form of the Pledge. However, even prior to United States' Congress's enactment of the Flag Code, the Pledge was subject to legal challenges.

In the case of *Minersville School District v. Gobitis*, 310 U.S. 586 (1940), a lawsuit was brought on behalf of two school children who were expelled from school for refusing to recite the Pledge. These school children argued that their school's requirement that they salute the flag and recite the Pledge was a violation of their constitutional rights as they were Jehovah Witnesses. The

Supreme Court found that the school was within its rights to compel the students to salute the flag and recite the Pledge. Only one justice wrote a dissent and explained that:

The guarantees of civil liberty are but guarantees of freedom of the human mind and spirit and of reasonable freedom and opportunity to express them... The very essence of the liberty which they guarantee is the freedom of the individual from compulsion as to what he shall think and what he shall say...

This dissent stood the test of time far better than the Court's ruling, as a mere three years later, the Supreme Court reversed its ruling in *Minersville*.

In 1943, the Supreme Court again took up the issue of school children being forced to recite the pledge in the case of *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*. 319 U.S. 624 (1943). In *Barnette*, suit was again filed on behalf of school children who were expelled for refusing to salute the flag and recite the Pledge. This time, the Court found that it was unconstitutional to compel students to salute the flag and recite the Pledge. The Court elegantly explained that:

If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.

Accordingly, the saluting of the flag and reciting the Pledge has been a personal choice since that time. However, that is not to say that the Pledge did not further evolve or face further legal challenge.

In 1954, Congress amended the Pledge to include the words "under God." This change was spurred by a pushback against communist state atheism. Such pushback should come as no surprise as this change took place during the height of the red scare and McCarthyism.

In 2004, the Supreme Court took up a challenge filed on behalf of a student to the words "under God" in the pledge in the case of *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, 542 U.S. 1 (2004).

*Continued on page 5*

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*Celebrating America 250!*

*Continued from page 3*

In *Elk Grove*, an atheist student was being taught the Pledge at school. The student argued that the inclusion of these words was a violation of his constitutional rights. While this case was ultimately decided against the student on procedural grounds, various written opinions issued by the justices indicated that they would have ruled against the student’s argument on substantive grounds as well.

On the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation, we have a pledge born out of the commemoration of Columbus’s voyage, refined through microcosms of innovation, adopted through governmental process, amended to align with evolving thought, challenged by vastly different viewpoints of the religious spectrum, and subject to legal challenge and interpretation. The legal challenges to the Pledge have been weighed against the constitutional protections found in the document upon which our constitutional republic is built.

Is everyone happy with the Pledge and its current legal status? Probably not. But that’s not a bad thing. After all, the founding fathers were not all happy with the form of the constitution when it was enacted. However, even that document has evolved in much the same way as the Pledge has. What’s important is that our Courts afford our citizens a venue in which they can challenge, without punishment and through a civil process in which they are afforded dignity, governmental regulation to which they object and where their challenge is weighed against a clear standard. Our work as officers of the Courts helps to ensure that those who inherit our nation 250 years from now have this same opportunity and right.



### MCBA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<b>Wed., May 6, 2026</b> .....	MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
<b>Fri., May 8, 2026</b> .....	12th Circuit Bench Bar Conference
<b>Wed., May 27, 2026</b> .....	Law Day Membership Luncheon
<b>Fri., May 29, 2026</b> .....	Investiture of Judge Ellis
<b>Wed., June 3, 2026</b> .....	MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
<b>Wed., June 10, 2026</b> .....	MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
<b>Wed., June 24, 2026</b> .....	Annual Membership Luncheon
<b>Wed., September 30, 2026</b> .....	September Membership Luncheon
<b>Wed., October 28, 2026</b> .....	October Membership Luncheon
<b>Fri., December 4, 2026</b> .....	Annual Holiday Party

\*dates are subject to change

## Welcome New Members

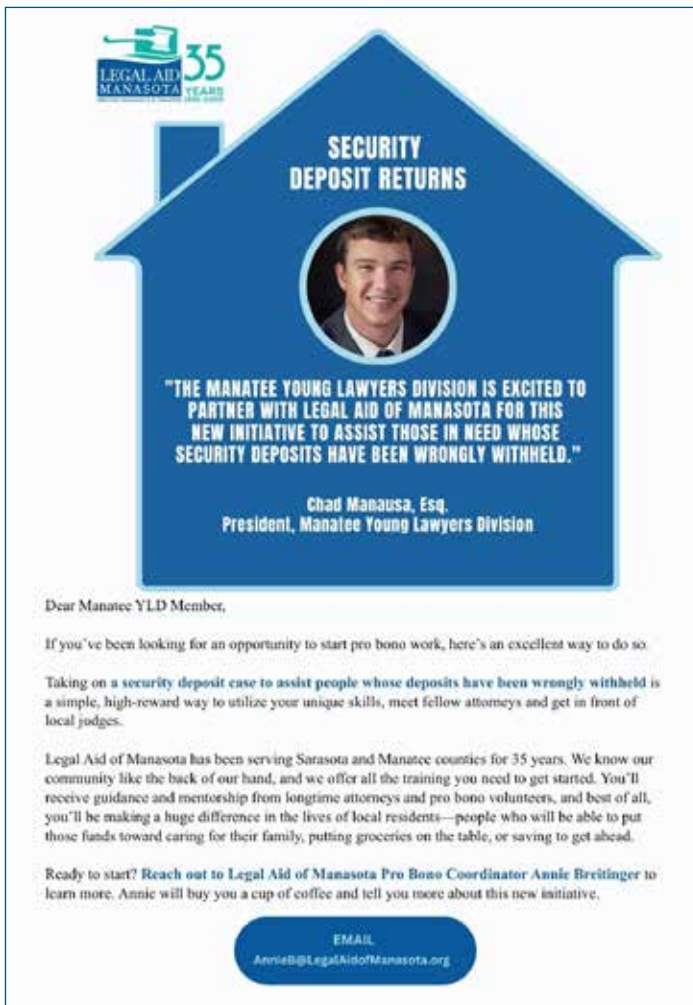
**Lindsey L. Fabel, Esq.**  
 University of Miami School of Law  
 Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2025  
 Firm/Office: Mackey Law Group, P.A.  
 Area(s) of Practice: Wills, Trusts & Estates

**Martha Fajardo, Esq.**  
 Ave Maria School of Law  
 Year Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2024  
 Firm/Office: Hope Family Services, Inc.  
 Area(s) of Practice: Family Law

**Hon. John M. Guard**  
 Tulane School of Law  
 Year Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2000  
 Firm/Office: Second District Court of Appeal  
 Area(s) of Practice: Appellate Practice,  
 Civil Litigation, Criminal Appellate

**Grace Anne Monnig, Esq.**  
 Baylor School of Law  
 Year Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2025  
 Firm/Office: Welter Law Firm  
 Area(s) of Practice: Civil Litigation,  
 Labor & Employment, Bankruptcy

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**Chad Manausa, Esq.**  
President, Manatee Young Lawyers Division

Dear Manatee YLD Member,

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Legal Aid of Manasota has been serving Sarasota and Manatee counties for 35 years. We know our community like the back of our hand, and we offer all the training you need to get started. You'll receive guidance and mentorship from longtime attorneys and pro bono volunteers, and best of all, you'll be making a huge difference in the lives of local residents—people who will be able to put those funds toward caring for their family, putting groceries on the table, or saving to get ahead.

Ready to start? Reach out to Legal Aid of Manasota Pro Bono Coordinator Annie Breitingner to learn more. Annie will buy you a cup of coffee and tell you more about this new initiative.

**EMAIL**  
AnnieB@LegalAidofManasota.org



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## BLUE SKY PREPARATIONS

### How Legal Aid Is an Unlikely Partner in Hurricane Preparedness



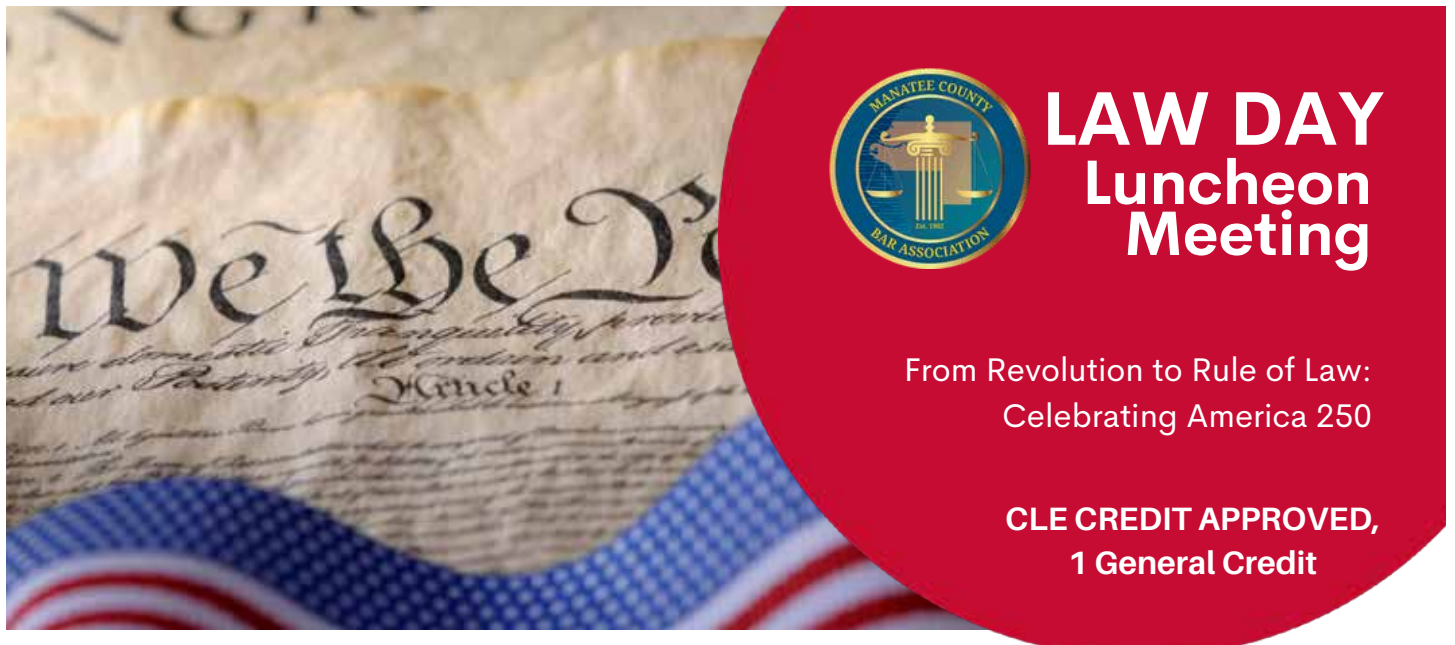
Water – Check. Flashlights – Check. Snacks – Check. If you're like me and my hurricane squad...slushie machine to make margaritas and frozé – check.

Is "Clear Title To Your Home And Property" on your hurricane preparedness checklist? In low-income neighborhoods throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties, generations of families live in houses and mobile homes to which they may be legally entitled, but for which they lack proper record title. Without proof of clear title, owners cannot receive emergency relief for natural disasters, apply for home-improvement loans, participate in Federal, State or Local grant funding programs, acquire Homestead exemptions and often cannot acquire the necessary permits for much needed home repairs and other maintenance.

Legal Aid of Manasota provides free legal services to assist residents in obtaining clear title. Often this involves filing probate to transfer the title to their name. Additionally, we assist in recording official documents, completing title searches and archiving property records.

Now is the time to get records such as this in order. Legal Aid of Manasota is ready to help our neighbors get clear title to their properties.

Interested in learning more about assisting low-income residents in obtaining clear title or other pro bono opportunities? Contact Annie Breitingner at [AnnieB@legalaidofmanasota.org](mailto:AnnieB@legalaidofmanasota.org)



# LAW DAY Luncheon Meeting

From Revolution to Rule of Law:  
Celebrating America 250

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US Congressman W. Gregory Steube  
Florida's 17<sup>th</sup> District

**Wednesday, May 27th, 2026**

**Manatee Performing Arts Center- Kiwanis Hall  
11:30 Networking & Lunch, Noon Meeting Start**

Get ready for an inspiring and patriotic look ahead as Congressman W. Gregory Steube FL17 brings the America 250 Celebration to life—honoring 250 years of our nation's history in a way you won't want to miss.

This dynamic presentation will include the pivotal role lawyers have played since the founding of America, from shaping the Constitution to defending the freedoms we cherish today. Join us for an energizing event that celebrates our past and ignites pride in the profession that helped build the nation!

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# Cell Phone Evidence – so much to know!

Kevin Horan, retired FBI Special Agent Supervisor Dialed It Up at the MCBA March Luncheon!



*L to R: Nelon Kirkland, Kevin Horan, Amy Kenyon, Alyson Battaglia, Joe Battaglia (MCBA Director) and James Lynch (MCBA President)*

The hour flew by at our March General Membership Luncheon when Kevin Horan, retired FBI Special Agent Supervisor and co-founder of Precision Cellular Analysis & Courtroom Shield presented “ Understanding Cell Phone & Digital Evidence in Litigation: What Lawyers Need to Know, and What They Often Get Wrong”. Drawing from his extensive investigative career, Horan provided valuable insight into how digital evidence is collected, analyzed, and utilized in today’s legal landscape. Attendees gained a deeper understanding of the critical role mobile data plays in modern cases, leaving better equipped to navigate this rapidly evolving area of law. There was so much more to learn, members quickly provided feedback to the MCBA Board to have Mr. Horan return for a more extensive “deep dive” into the topic. Stay tuned!

## ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY

We are seeking a versatile Associate Attorney to join our Real Estate Group and provide exceptional client-first representation for a sophisticated roster of housing providers, including Fortune 500 companies, national operators, and resident-owned communities. The ideal candidate will have 5+ years of experience with a background in some combination of commercial and real estate litigation and dispute resolution, commercial and residential transactions, community association law, and manufactured housing. We are looking for an action-oriented professional capable of delivering sophisticated legal analysis in an approachable manner with effective implementation. This role offers a competitive salary and benefits package, the opportunity to work alongside a dedicated team in a premier downtown Sarasota bayfront office, and the flexibility of periodic work-from-home options.

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*Alison Frate*, Juris Doctor Candidate at New York Law School. Phone: 203-501-8336, [www.linkedin.com/in/alison-frate](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alison-frate)

*Alvise Mutti*, Juris Doctor Candidate at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. Phone: (941) 323-7998 [alvise.mutti@law.northwestern.edu](mailto:alvise.mutti@law.northwestern.edu)

*Faith Moore*, Juris Doctor Candidate at University of Wisconsin Law School. Phone: (941) 376-8259 [faithmariamoore@gmail.com](mailto:faithmariamoore@gmail.com) [www.linkedin.com/in/faithmariamoore](https://www.linkedin.com/in/faithmariamoore)



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### QUESTIONS?

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✉ [Yantee.Hines@Manateeclerk.com](mailto:Yantee.Hines@Manateeclerk.com)  
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## Judge Gilbert Smith Receives the Kent C. Schulz Award for Distinguished Leadership

Judge Gilbert Smith of the 12th Judicial Circuit Court is the 2026 recipient of the Kent C. Schulz Award for Distinguished Leadership, recognizing service, leadership, and commitment to the Manatee County community, the Leadership Manatee Alumni Association recently announced.

Smith will be honored at the annual Leadership Manatee Alumni Association Kent C. Schulz Luncheon on May 13 at noon at the Manatee Performing Arts Center.

Tickets for the luncheon are available at [events.leadershipmanateeaa.org/kentschulz](https://events.leadershipmanateeaa.org/kentschulz). To read the article in its entirety, visit: [Herald Tribune](#)

**Are You 40 years old or younger?**

**Or, have you been a lawyer for 5 years or less?**

If you can answer yes to either or both of those questions, our Young Lawyers Division wants you to join its dynamic group! The YLD Board of Directors is currently seeking volunteers to serve on the board for the 2026-27 year. If you would like to learn more, please contact YLD President Chad Manausa by May 20th. Be part of making our YLD all it can be!

**Contact Chad at: [cmanausa@grimesgalvano.com](mailto:cmanausa@grimesgalvano.com)**

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# 2026 BACK to the Beach!

There are some traditions you don't just attend—you feel them. Our annual Membership Beach Party on stunning Anna Maria Island is exactly that kind of experience: part celebration, part reunion, and entirely unforgettable.

For decades, this event has been a highlight of our calendar, drawing members, colleagues, and friends together for an evening that perfectly captures the spirit of our community. And this year? It felt even more special.

After last year's unexpected relocation due to the impacts of the 2024 hurricanes and storms, we were thrilled to return to our true home, our traditional stretch of sand, where so many memories have been made. There was something meaningful about being back, as if the tide itself welcomed us with open arms.

The evening delivered everything we've come to love and expect. The air buzzed with laughter and conversation as members kicked off their shoes and settled into beachside bliss. Delicious food kept everyone fueled, while the DJ set the tone with a soundtrack that had people swaying, singing, and eventually dancing barefoot in the sand.



Dustin Wagner, MCBA President and DJ James Lynch, Judge Charles Sniffen and Judge Matt Whyte enjoying the party



Annual sponsors, Mike & Carlye Barberio of Heritage Process smile for the camera



Dustin Wagner and MCBA Treasurer Brandon Robinson smile for Inter Alia



Graceann Frederico smiling with one of the Heritage Process gift baskets



Dustin Wagner and Past President Steve Dye saying "Beach Party"



Dustin Wagner & Spencer Heintz... it's a Selfie!



Dustin Wagner and Chef Eric Bruce take a break from grilling

Many thanks to our roving photographers, Dustin and Graceann, who captured some great photos!

As the sun began its slow descent, the party took on that magical golden glow that only the Gulf Coast can deliver. Conversations paused, drinks were raised, and all eyes turned westward for the main event—the sunset. And of course, the hopeful search began for that elusive coastal phenomenon: the "green flash." Whether spotted or simply imagined, it's a tradition within the tradition and one that keeps us looking just a little closer, and staying just a little longer.

More than anything, the night was about connection. It was about celebrating not only where we are as an organization, but the relationships that have been built and strengthened over the years, many of them right there on that very beach.

Being back on Anna Maria Island wasn't just a return to a location, it was a return to tradition, resilience, and the simple joy of being together.

Special thanks to our Annual Sponsors and a tremendous shout out to The Grimes Family for their generosity in keeping this tradition alive!

Here's to sandy feet, unforgettable sunsets, and many more years of this cherished gathering.

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Key responsibilities include: Conducting extensive and complex legal research; drafting pleadings, memorandums, and resolutions/ordinances; and assisting attorneys in litigation matters from case inception through trial.

The successful candidate will be detail-oriented, able to quickly and effectively prioritize tasks, and be comfortable working independently to meet deadlines. A good working knowledge and understanding of business English and basic math are required, along with excellent spelling and grammar. Proficiency with modern business software (Microsoft Office, e-mail systems, and Adobe Pro) is essential.

If this position aligns with your skills, please visit [www.mymanatee.org](http://www.mymanatee.org) to complete an application for the open paralegal position. Don’t miss the opportunity to join our team!

Please direct questions to Patricia Nolan at [patricia.nolan@mymanatee.org](mailto:patricia.nolan@mymanatee.org).

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**Samuel Kirk Campbell**

Last Known Street Address: **4320 First Ave. Dr. NW**

City/Town: **Bradenton, FL**

Date of Birth: **9/17/62**

Date of Death: **4/25/26**

Approximate Timeframe Will May Have Been Created: **2018-2026**

Please Contact with any Information:  
**Stacey Hudon (Niece): 941-720-3103**  
[HUDON.stacey@gmail.com](mailto:HUDON.stacey@gmail.com)

**Marie T. Little**

Last Known Street Address: **5107 20th Ave W.**

City/Town: **Bradenton, FL 34209**

Date of Birth: **8/26/1927**

Please Contact with Any Information:  
**Sharon Freeman (daughter): 941-545-0899**  
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## Congratulations, Judge Jacqueline B. Steele!

Recently, Judge Jacqueline B. Steele was honored with the 2026 Frances Perkins Award by The Florida Bar's Workers' Compensation Section Women in Work Comp Committee. The award was presented to Judge Steele by Dawn Traverso, Chairperson of the Women in Workers Comp Committee.

The Frances Perkins Award was given in recognition of Judge Steele's years of dedication, leadership, and meaningful contributions to the legal community.

Please join us in congratulating Judge Steele on this well-deserved honor!



Photo credit: The Florida Bar Workers Compensation Section



## Trauma-Informed Practice: Smart Lawyering with Heart



Dr. Mike Barnes

Our recent online CLE, **The Trauma Informed Legal Practice**, was both insightful and impactful, giving attendees practical tools to better understand how trauma can affect clients, communication, and the legal process. Presented by the dynamic father-son team of **Dr. Mike Barnes** and **Attorney Patrick Barnes**, the course blended professional expertise with real-world perspective in an engaging and accessible format.

Members came away with valuable strategies for creating a more compassionate, effective, and client-centered practice—proving once again that meaningful CLE can be both educational and relevant to today's legal profession.

The CLE was free for MCBA Attorneys and received 1 General/1 Mental Health & Wellness Credit by The Florida Bar.



Patrick Barnes

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**- Dr. Janelle Coutts**  
**NASA Analytical Lab Branch**  
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- Demonstrate a strong reputation for professionalism and ethical conduct
- Possess sound judgment, discretion, and strong communication skills
- Are committed to fostering a respectful and collegial legal environment

For more information or to volunteer your services, please contact Mary Hawk, Chair, at [mhawk@beckerlawyers.com](mailto:mhawk@beckerlawyers.com), or Mary Ann Floyd, Court Liaison, at [mfloyd@jud12.flcourts.org](mailto:mfloyd@jud12.flcourts.org).

## Governor DeSantis Appoints Three Judges to 12<sup>th</sup> Circuit!

On April 24th, 2026, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of three new judges to serve the 12th Circuit.

Guy Flowers was appointed to the 12th Judicial Circuit Court. He has served as a County Judge for DeSoto County since 2022. He previously served as an assistant state attorney in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit.

Andrea Johnson has worked as Partner and Chair for Barnes, Walker, Goethe, Perron, Shea & Johnson PLLC since 2025 and was a solo practitioner for the Law Offices of Andrea M. Johnson. Andrea is a Past President of the Manatee County Bar Association and has been appointed to fill a vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Lon Arend.

Hillary Ellis was appointed to the Manatee County Court. She worked as an attorney for The Law Place since 2023 and previously served as an assistant state attorney for the 12th Circuit.

Congratulations to our newest judges!



## It's Time to Renew Your MCBA Membership!

Now through the end of June, all MCBA members are encouraged to renew online for the **2026–27 membership year**. Renew by **July 1** to avoid additional fees and ensure uninterrupted inclusion in the **Official Manatee County Bar Online Membership Directory**.

Your MCBA membership offers outstanding value, including:

- **Complimentary meals** at our General Membership Luncheons
- **Online directory listing** on the MCBA website (public and searchable)
- **Free or low-cost CLE opportunities**
- **Free or discounted tickets** to signature events such as:
  - o Annual Holiday Party
  - o Spring Social/Beach Party Events
  - o Vintage Attorney Recognition/Past President Event
  - o Law Day Luncheon
  - o Java with the Judges
  - o Young Lawyers Division events
  - o And more!
- **Digital subscription** to *Inter Alia*, our member newsletter

**Renew online by July 1 and you'll also be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon Gift Card!** The winner will be notified by email and announced in the Summer 2026 edition of *Inter Alia*.

Check your emails as the renewal notices will be sent to the email we have on file for you. If you would like to renew today, please use the following link:

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PUBLIC NOTICE  
 2026 VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD  
 APPLICANTS FOR SPECIAL MAGISTRATE

Opportunities now exist for appraisers and attorneys, who are licensed in the State of Florida and meet the following criteria to serve as Special Magistrate(S) to the 2026 Value Adjustment Board, pursuant to Florida Statute 194.035 and Chapter 12D, Florida Administrative Code, for the purpose of taking testimony and making recommendations with regard to:

1. The Special Magistrate must meet the following qualifications
  - a. A Special Magistrate must not be an elected or appointed official of the county.
  - b. A Special Magistrate must not be an elected or appointed official or employee of a taxing jurisdiction or of the State.
  - c. During a tax year in which a Special Magistrate serves, her or she must not represent any part before the board in any administrative review of property taxes.
  - d. All Special Magistrates must meet the qualifications specified in Section 194.035, F.S.
2. A Special Magistrate appointed to hear issues of exemption, classifications, and portability assessment difference transfers shall be a member of the Florida Bar, with no less than five years experience in the area of ad valorem taxation and having received training provided by the department, or with no less than three years of such experience and having completed training provided by the department.
3. A Special Magistrate appointed to hear issues regarding valuation of real estate shall be a state certified real estate appraiser with not less than five years experience in real property valuation and having received training provided by the department, or with no less than three years of such experience and having completed training provided by the department. A real property valuation Special Magistrate must be certified under *Chapter 475, Part II F.S.*
  - a. A Florida certified residential appraiser appointed by the Value Adjustment Board shall only hear petitions on the just valuation of residential real property of one to four residential units and shall not hear petitions on other types of real property.
  - b. A Florida certified general appraiser appointed by the Value Adjustment Board may hear petitions on the just valuation of any type of real property.
4. A Special Magistrate appointed to hear issues regarding valuation of tangible personal property shall be a designated member of a nationally recognized appraiser's organization with no less than five years experience in tangible personal property valuation and having received training provided by the department, or with no less than three years of such experience and having completed training provided by the department.
5. All Special Magistrates shall attend or receive an annual training program provided by the department. Special Magistrates substituting two years of experience must show they have completed the training by taking a written examination provided by the department. A Special Magistrate must receive or complete any required training prior to holding hearings.
6.
  - a. The Value Adjustment Board or Board legal counsel must verify a Special Magistrate's qualifications before appointing the Special Magistrate.
  - b. The selection of a Special Magistrate must be based solely on the experience and qualification of such magistrate, and must not be influenced by any party, or prospective party, to a board proceeding or by an such party with an in interest in the outcome of such proceeding. Special Magistrates must adhere to Rule 12D-9.022 F.A.C., relating to disqualification or recusal.

Please note that hearings will take place October, November and December of 2026, and January and February of 2027. Availability for these dates is necessary for consideration of appointment.

Qualified individuals wishing to apply should submit a resume on or before Friday, June 5, 2026, at 4:30 p.m., to:

Angelina "Angel" Colonnese  
 Value Adjust Board  
 Attn: Vicki Tessmer  
 P.O. Box 25400  
 Bradenton, FL 34205  
 (941)741-4058  
 Or  
 VAB@manateeclerk.com

## UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Florida is currently accepting comments as to whether full-time United States Magistrate Judge, Michael J. Frank (Panama City) and part-time United States Magistrate Judge Midori A. Lowry (Gainesville) should be recommended for reappointment. Additional details regarding the submission of comments is available on the Court's website at [www.flnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.flnd.uscourts.gov) or by using the links below. Comments must be received by May 14, 2026.

<https://www.flnd.uscourts.gov/news/reappointment-full-time-united-states-magistrate-judge>

<https://www.flnd.uscourts.gov/news/reappointment-part-time-united-states-magistrate-judge>

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# Young Lawyers Division Meet at Table for Ten with Judge Matt Whyte and Surprise Guest!

On April 29th, our Young Lawyers Division held another successful Table for Ten event, bringing together a group of young attorneys for an evening of conversation, connection, and mentorship over dinner. This evening's table host was Judge Mathew Whyte who was joined by a surprise guest, Senior Judge Lee Haworth!

Designed to create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, the event gave participants the opportunity to ask questions, gain practical insight, and build relationships outside the courtroom setting. By sharing a meal and candid discussion, Table for Ten helps make the bench more approachable while offering valuable guidance to the next generation of legal



Photo l to r: YLD Director Max Shrem, Rose Kasweck, Judge Lee Haworth, Daniela Gomez, Judge Matt Whyte, YLD President Chad Manausa, YLD Secretary Abigail Galati, Kate Welch, Angelina Stratton and YLD Director Jennifer Myers

professionals. It was an engaging and memorable evening that highlighted the importance of mentorship and volunteering within our legal community. Special thanks to the staff at Westminster Manor for hosting the Spring event.



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**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2026-05.4**  
(Amends 2025-13a.4)

**SECOND AMENDED JUDICIAL ASSIGNMENTS 2026**  
The following judicial assignments are effective June 1, 2026.

Chief Judge	Honorable Diana L. Moreland
Acting Chief Judge (in absence of Chief Judge)	Honorable Frederick P. Mercurio
DeSoto County Administrative Judge	Honorable Don T. Hall
Manatee County Administrative Judge	Honorable Frederick P. Mercurio
Sarasota County Administrative Judge	Honorable Hunter W. Carroll

**CIRCUIT COURT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGES**

**Civil Division**

Honorable Hunter W. Carroll (Sarasota County)  
Honorable Charles Sniffen (Manatee County)

**Unified Family Court** (DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties - has operational authority to implement UFC policy and procedures circuit-wide)  
Honorable Edward Nicholas

**Family Division**

Honorable Andrea McHugh (Sarasota County)  
Honorable Edward Nicholas (Manatee County)

**Hague Convention Cases (pursuant to AO 2025-19.12)**

Honorable Andrea McHugh (Sarasota and DeSoto Counties)  
Honorable Edward Nicholas (Manatee County)

**Criminal Division**

Honorable Danielle Brewer (Sarasota County)  
Honorable Frederick P. Mercurio (Manatee County)

**Probate/Guardianship Division**

Honorable Charles E. Williams (Sarasota County)  
Honorable Diana L. Moreland (Manatee County)

**CIRCUIT CIVIL – MANATEE & SARASOTA COUNTIES**

Civil Division B	Manatee County	Honorable Charles Sniffen
Civil Division D	Manatee County	Honorable Stephen Matt Whyte
Civil Division A	Sarasota County	Honorable Dana Moss
Civil Division C	Sarasota County	Honorable Hunter W. Carroll
Civil Division H	South Sarasota County	Honorable Kevin Bruning
Civil Division R	Manatee and Sarasota Counties	Honorable Diana L. Moreland

**CIRCUIT CRIMINAL – MANATEE & SARASOTA COUNTIES**

Felony Division I	Manatee County	Honorable David Ryan Felix
Felony Division III	Manatee County	Honorable Frederick P. Mercurio
Felony Division V	Manatee County	Honorable Teresa K. Dees
Felony Division II	Sarasota County	Honorable Donna Padar
Felony Division IV	Sarasota County	Honorable Thomas W. Krug
Felony Division VI	Sarasota County	Honorable Danielle Brewer

**UNIFIED FAMILY COURT – MANATEE & SARASOTA COUNTIES**

**A. FAMILY DIVISION- MANATEE & SARASOTA COUNTIES**

Family Division 3	Manatee County	Honorable Edward Nicholas
Family Division 4	Manatee County	Honorable Kennedy Legler
Family Division 1	Sarasota County	Honorable Rochelle T. Curley
Family Division 2	Sarasota County	Honorable Andrea McHugh
South County Family Division 1		Honorable Kevin Bruning
South County Family Division 2		Honorable Andrea McHugh

**B. JUVENILE DIVISION - MANATEE & SARASOTA COUNTIES**

Division J	Manatee County	Honorable Gilbert A. Smith, Jr.
	<i>Dependency cases</i>	
Division K	Manatee County	Honorable Susan B. Maulucci
	<i>Delinquency cases, crossover cases</i>	
	Sarasota County	Honorable Maria Ruhl
	<i>All Dependency and Delinquency cases</i>	

**PROBATE & GUARDIANSHIP DIVISION -MANATEE & SARASOTA COUNTIES**

Manatee County	Honorable Diana L. Moreland
Sarasota County	Honorable Charles E. Williams
South County Probate & Guardianship	Honorable Charles E. Williams

**CIRCUIT COURT – DESOTO COUNTY**

All Circuit Civil (other than Division R), Unified Family, Circuit Criminal, Juvenile Dependency and Delinquency, Probate and Guardianship	Honorable Don T. Hall
Civil Division R	Honorable Diana L. Moreland

**PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS – DIVISION P**

Division P Administrative Judge	Honorable Stephen Walker	
Comprehensive Treatment Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Stephen Walker
Drug /Opioid/ Veteran's Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Stephen Walker
DUI Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Stephen Walker
Health Care Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Stephen Walker
Community Care Court	Manatee County	Honorable Stephen Walker
CTC Manatee	Manatee County	Honorable Stephen Walker
Drug Court, Veteran's Court	Manatee County	Honorable Stephen Walker
Early Childhood Court	Manatee County	Honorable Stephen Walker

*All problem-solving courts are assigned to Division P. The problem-solving courts listed below are presided over by the following judges:*

DeSoto Drug Court	DeSoto County	Honorable Guy Flowers
TYLA Court	Manatee County	Honorable Susan B. Maulucci
Community Care Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Kennedy Legler
Early Childhood Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Maria Ruhl
OPTIONS Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Maria Ruhl
Truancy Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Andrea McHugh
TYLA Court	Sarasota County	Honorable Shannon Hankin

**COUNTY COURT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGES**

DeSoto County	Honorable Guy A. Flowers
Manatee County	Honorable Renee L. Inman
Sarasota County	Honorable Maryann Olson Uzabel

**DESOTO COUNTY COURT**

All County Civil and Criminal	Honorable Guy A. Flowers
-------------------------------	--------------------------

**MANATEE COUNTY COURT**

*Please see Administrative Order 2026-04.4 for case types assigned to each division.*

Division 1	Honorable Renee L. Inman
Division 2	Honorable Hillary Ellis
Division 3	Honorable Jacqueline B. Steele
Division 4	Honorable Melissa Gould
Division 5	Honorable Heather Doyle

**SARASOTA COUNTY COURT**

Criminal/Civil Division A	Honorable Maryann Olson Uzabel
Criminal/Civil Division B	Honorable TBD
Criminal/Civil Division C	Honorable Shannon Hankin
South County Criminal/Civil Division E	Honorable Erika N. Quartermaine
South County Criminal/Civil Division F	Honorable Megan Leaf

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Paul Hudson  
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Michael L. King  
Rebecca L. Mockovciak  
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**TRUANCY COURT GENERAL MAGISTRATES**

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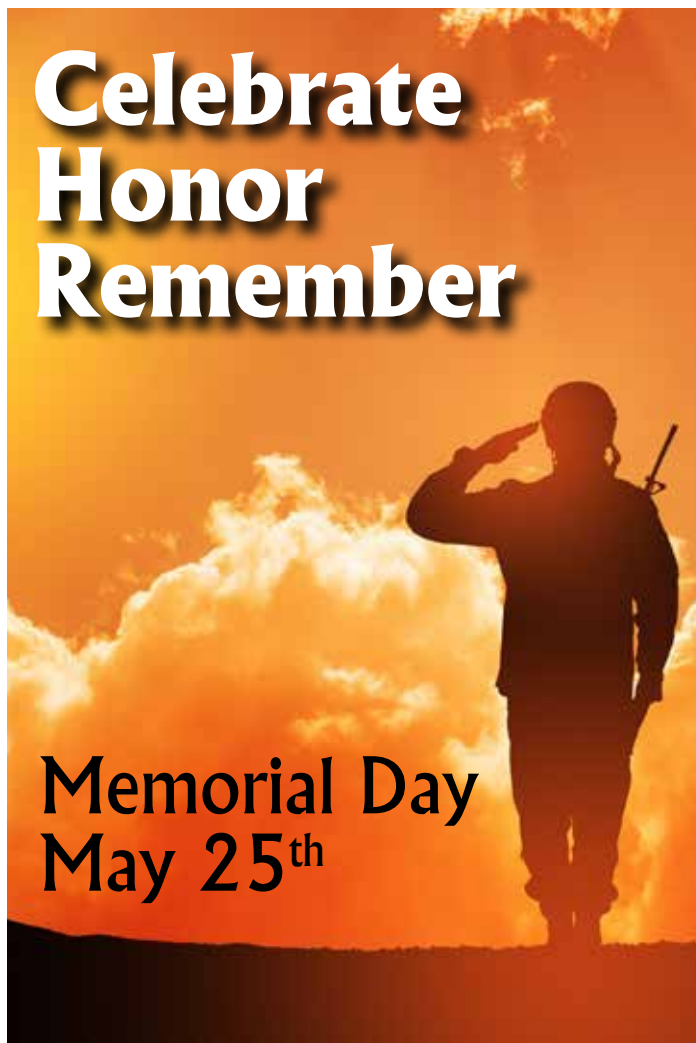
Matthew K. Peters

**DONE AND ORDERED** in Bradenton, Manatee County, on April 29, 2026.

**DIANA L. MORELAND, CHIEF JUDGE**  
TWELFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF FLORIDA

Original: Clerk of Court, Sarasota County

Copy to: All Judges, Twelfth Judicial Circuit  
Kimberly Miller, Court Administrator, Twelfth Judicial Circuit  
IT Dept.  
Clerk of Court, Manatee County  
Clerk of Court, DeSoto County  
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# 12TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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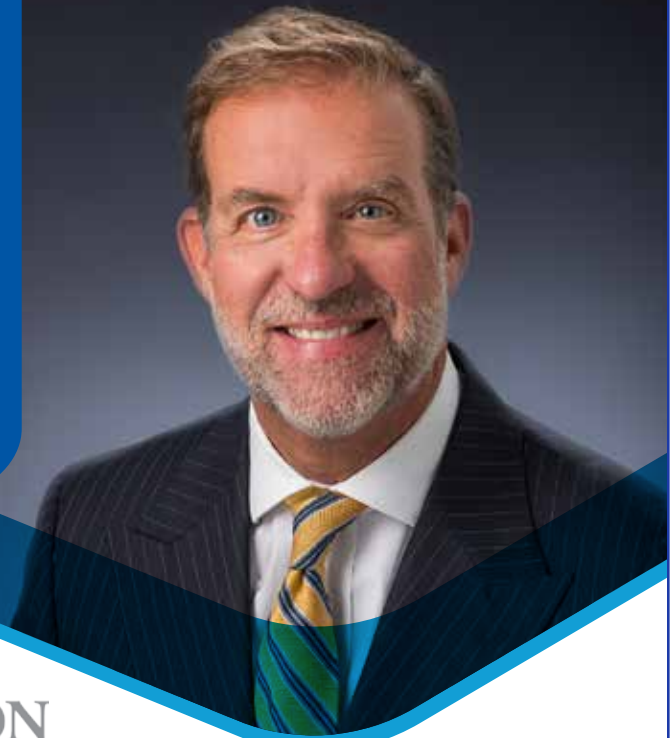
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