



INTER ALIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE
COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2026

*News, invitations,
photos and more*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Investing in the Next
Generation of Leaders*

**REMEMBERING JUDGE
GEORGE BROWN, JR.**

*Coming Up: Beyond the Runway:
SRQ Airport's
Expansion and Its Impact on Our
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Greetings Fellow Manatee County Bar Association Members

By Daniel VanEtten, Esq.; MCBA President

I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve you and the MCBA as the president for the 2026/2027 year. I'm fortunate in that my presidency follows a series of dedicated past presidents, and will be supported by a fantastic Board of Directors and an amazing Executive Director, Graceann. Please know that the programs and events provided to MCBA members would not be possible without the Board Members volunteering their time and Graceann's tireless work.

I know I speak on behalf of the Board of Directors when I say that we are excited about the events in store for MCBA members this year. There is a wonderful lineup of speakers, such as Paul Hoback and Judge Haworth, who are anxious to present at our monthly meetings. Our traditional events, such as the holiday and spring parties, will be returning. Sprinkled throughout the year will also be various other fun and learning events, such as Judge Williams' upcoming CLE event on October 2nd, which I invite you all to attend.

Now, I'm going to make an ask of each of you. Help us make the MCBA the best that it can be. If your colleagues are not already members, please ask them to join. If you attend an MCBA event, please invite another attorney to come with you. The more members we have, the more we can accomplish together. Through increased participation, we should be better able to serve our members, our profession, and our community.

Being a member of the local bar is about more than simply attending a few events each year. It is an opportunity to get to know the attorneys and judges we work with every day outside of the courtroom. Practicing law can be demanding, and having a strong local legal community makes the practice more enjoyable and, I believe, makes all of us better lawyers. Whether you have been practicing for thirty years or are attending your first bar event, there is a place for you in the MCBA.

Ultimately, the success of the MCBA this year will depend on all of us. The Board can organize events, invite speakers, and come up with new ideas, but an organization is only as strong as the participation of its members. So please come to an event, bring a colleague, volunteer for a committee, or simply introduce yourself to someone you haven't met before.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you throughout the year. Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president. I'm excited about what we can accomplish together and hope to make this a year for which we can all be proud.

DISCLAIMER: The views and opinions expressed in each Inter Alia article are solely those of its respective author and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the MCBA or its Board of Directors.



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MCBA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wednesday, September 2, 2026..... MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, September 9, 2026.....MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Friday, September 18, 2026.....Investiture of Judge Andrea Johnson
Wednesday, September 30, 2026 ... September Membership Luncheon
Friday, October 2, 2026..... Probate & Guardianship Bench Bar Lunch
Wednesday, October 7, 2026 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, October 14, 2026.....MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, October 28, 2026 October Membership Luncheon
Wednesday, November 4, 2026 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, November 11, 2026.....MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, December 2, 2026 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Friday, December 4, 2026 Annual Holiday Party
Wednesday, December 9, 2026 ...MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, January 6, 2027 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, January 13, 2027.....MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, January 27, 2027 January Membership Luncheon
Wednesday, February 3, 2027 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, February 10, 2027 ...MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, February 24, 2027February Membership Luncheon
Wednesday, March 3, 2027 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, March 10, 2027MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, March 31, 2027March Membership Luncheon
Wednesday, April 7, 2027 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, April 14, 2027MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Friday, April 30, 2027MCBA Spring Soiree at The Beach
Wednesday, May 5, 2027 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, May 12, 2027MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, May 19, 2027LAW DAY LUNCHEON
Wednesday, June 2, 2027 MCBA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, June 9, 2027MCBA YLD Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, June 30, 2027 Annual Membership Luncheon

Young Lawyers Division Plans 2026-27 Year!

By Tyler Dixon, Esq.; MCBA YLD President

Welcome to the 2026 – 2027 Bar Year! I am honored to serve as president of the Young Lawyers Division of the Manatee County Bar Association and look forward to strengthening and creating new relationships within the MCBA throughout this year.

This year, the YLD will place a renewed emphasis on the importance of meeting and growing with other Young Lawyers. The MCBA YLD has, and will continue to, provide Young Lawyers with the opportunity to engage with each other, both personally and professionally. While the practice of law is certainly demanding, the value in building relationships within your local legal community cannot be overstated. I am happy to report that Young Lawyers in Manatee County have recognized this value, as reflected in the YLD's recent membership growth.

The YLD's commitment to establishing meaningful connections will come to life through exciting social and professional events. This Year, Young Lawyers will have continued opportunities to eat with, learn from, (and shoot the breeze with), Judges from the 12th Judicial Circuit at the YLD's "Table for 10" events. After a successful inaugural event, the YLD will continue its "Spheres of Influence" series, where Young Lawyers can hear from and engage with Local Leaders, showcasing the importance of fostering relationships you're your Community and how our legal careers can be used to make a positive impact within Manatee County. In order for Young Lawyers to stay up-to-date on these YLD events, and the YLD's social events, I encourage all Young Lawyers to get connected with the YLD on it's Facebook Page, LinkedIn Page, and MCBA Flyers as they come in!

For Membership, please take time to encourage the Young Lawyers around you to get engaged with the MCBA. Without a pat on the back, there are plenty of reasons to join (but a million excuses to not). I would challenge each member to invite, or drag – up to you, 1 Young Lawyer to each Monthly Luncheon this year. I mean free lunch and CLE credit, c'mon.

I am certain that this will be a great year for the MCBA and it's YLD. There is a great deal to look forward to, and I am excited to see what we will accomplish together.

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Dahlia Al-Haleem, Esq.

Florida State University

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2026

Firm/Office: Mackey Law Group, P.A.

Area(s) of Practice: Civil Litigation

Christopher CJ Augustine, Esq.

Stetson University

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2025

Firm/Office: Hamilton Price, P.A.

Area(s) of Practice: Personal Injury,
Construction, Civil Litigation

Carol Bello, Esq.

Cooley School of Law

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2023

Firm/Office: Imler Law

Area(s) of Practice: Workers' Compensation,
Labor & Employment

William Lee Clark, Esq.

West Virginia University College of Law

Year Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2011

Firm/Office: The Clark Firm, PA.

Area(s) of Practice: Personal Injury, Product Liability

Molly Puig, Esq.

Cooley School of Law

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2026

Firm/Office: Mackey Law Group, P.A.

Area(s) of Practice: Civil Litigation, Family Law

Peter Radke, Esq.

Nova Southeastern University

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2018

Firm/Office: Hale Law

Area(s) of Practice: Personal Injury

Michelle Robles, Esq.

Barry University

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2019

Firm/Office: Robles Law, P.A.

Area(s) of Practice: Estate Planning, Elder Law,
Probate & Trust Litigation

James Siegfried, Esq.

University of Mississippi

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 1996

Firm/Office: Office of The Public Defender

Area(s) of Practice: Criminal, Government Administration
& Regulation, Civil Litigation

Melissa Finley Williams, Esq.

University of Florida

Date Admitted to The Florida Bar, 2012

Firm/Office: Finley Williams Law, PA

Area(s) of Practice: Guardianship,
Estate Planning, Elder Law

OATH OF ATTORNEY

9.22.2026

Take the oath of admission to The Florida Bar at your local courthouse.

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Judge Hall 11:15 am-11:45 am DeSoto Courthouse	Judge Dees 3 pm-3:30 pm Manatee JC	Judge Hankin 11 am-11:30 am Silvertooth JC	Judge Bruning 3 pm-3:30 pm South County Courthouse



Welcome Fall!

Tuesday, September 22nd

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\$35 for guests**

Wednesday, September 30th, 2026

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

Paul Hoback brings more than 25 years of leadership experience in the aviation industry to his role as President and Chief Executive Officer of Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority, which operates the Sarasota Bradenton International Airport.

Prior to joining SRQ, Hoback served as Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer for the Allegheny County Airport Authority, which operates Pittsburgh International Airport and Allegheny County Airport. In this role, he provided leadership, oversight, and strategic direction for all capital development projects, public safety, maintenance, and operations. This included leading PIT's \$1.7 billion Terminal Modernization Program and \$220 million Airside Renovation.

Hoback now leads SRQ during a time of strategic growth and expansion, focused on enhancing passenger experience, strengthening community partnerships, and ensuring the airport's continued economic impact on the Sarasota-Bradenton region.

Special Thanks to Our Annual Sponsors



A Day Worthy of a Judge, and a Historian



Panoramic view of Judge Smith with dignitaries, colleagues, family and friends

Some people leave the bench. Others leave a legacy.

On July 31, 2026, Manatee County celebrated both when the community officially recognized **Judge Gilbert A. Smith, Jr.** with "Judge Gilbert Smith Day," honoring decades of service to the law, the judiciary and the community he has spent a lifetime helping shape.

And there could hardly have been a more fitting setting for the occasion.

Judge Smith's final day on the bench took place in the **Gilbert A. Smith, Sr. Jury Assembly Room**, named for his father, who also served as a local judge. It was a fitting full-circle moment for a family whose name has been woven into the legal history of Manatee County for generations.

Judge Smith might have preferred that the circle keep going a little longer.

After all, he had hoped to remain on the bench through the end of the year. But even judges have to follow the rules. Florida's Constitution requires judges to retire upon reaching age 75, bringing his judicial career to a close on July 31.

After 18 years on the bench, however, "retirement" may be something of a technical term for Judge Smith.

He is not exactly the disappearing type.

For Judge Smith, the courtroom may be behind him, but history is waiting just outside the door. A lifelong student of Manatee County and its colorful cast of characters, he plans to continue his work as an author and historian—researching, writing and preserving the stories that might otherwise disappear with time.

His book *Lawyers and Legends of Manatee County* chronicles the people, personalities and events that shaped

the local legal community, while *Legends of the Bench* explores the history of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit and the judges who served from 1855 through 1979. His retirement reading list, unsurprisingly, includes more research and more writing, including plans to continue the story of the local judiciary into the modern era.

That seems entirely appropriate.

Because Judge Smith has always understood that history isn't simply a collection of dates and dusty names. It is made by people, interesting people, complicated people, memorable people; and, he has a particular talent for finding the stories behind the names.

His career has reflected that same appreciation for people and community. Beyond the courtroom, he has been a mentor, community volunteer, Kiwanian, Boy Scout leader and advocate for children. His service has reached well beyond the walls of the courthouse.

So perhaps "Judge Gilbert Smith Day" is more than a retirement tribute.

It is a thank-you.



Judge Smith with family

A thank-you for the years spent on the bench. For the wisdom, humor and humanity brought into the courtroom. For the mentorship offered to generations of lawyers and young people. And for recognizing that the history of a community is worth preserving and that someone has to be curious enough to tell it.

Fortunately for Manatee County, Judge Smith isn't finished telling those stories.

The robe may be retired.

The historian is just getting started.

Well done, Judge Smith. And happy Judge Gilbert Smith Day!

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- Annual FCPC Membership
- Door Prizes
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CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Amanda Reichert, President of the Family Court Professional Coalition, REALTOR®, Certified Divorce Real Estate Expert (CDRE®)

Magistrate Natalya Evans, Judicial Liaison - Twelfth Judicial Circuit Family Division

2026 Florida Family Law Updates: Cases, Statutes, Rules, and Clinical Considerations

Sharon O'Day, Esq.

Stephanie Roth, LMHC (Florida and New York)

Vexatious Litigation and the New Statute

Andrea K. Holder, Esq., Dax Nelson, P.A.

Lyndsey E. Siara, Esq., General Counsel, Office of Court Counsel, Sixth Judicial Circuit

Home Is Where the Heartbreak Is

Judge Diana M. Tennis, Administrative Circuit Judge in Florida's Ninth Judicial Circuit, Family Division

Don Moll, Certified Divorce Lending Professional "CDLP®"

Christine Profito, Psy.D.

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Judge Andrea McHugh, Circuit Judge in Florida's Twelfth Judicial Circuit Court, Family Division

Wesley Backer, Esq., Florida Department of Children and Families

Crissa Harman, LMHC, The Florida Center for Early Childhood

Elizabeth Davis, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Judicial Perspectives: Insights for Court-Involved Professionals

Moderated by **Stephanie Roth**, LMHC (Florida and New York)

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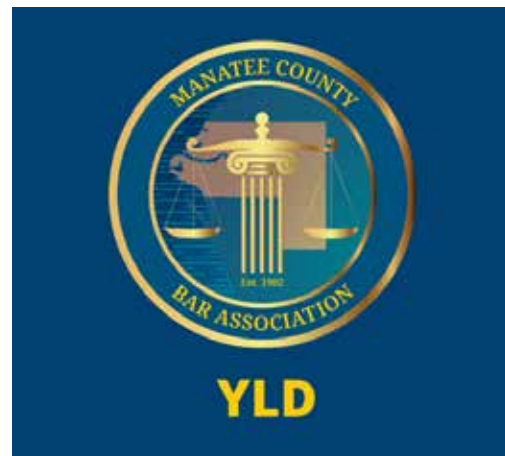
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Investing in the Next Generation of Leaders



The Manatee County Bar Association is proud to recognize the law firms that support the professional growth and leadership development of our Young Lawyers Division (YLD) by encouraging their attorneys to serve on the YLD Board of Directors.

Serving on the YLD Board is more than adding another commitment to a busy schedule. It is an opportunity for young lawyers to build leadership skills, strengthen relationships within our legal community, give back through community service, and help shape the future of the Manatee County Bar Association.

We are especially grateful to the firms that make this possible by supporting their attorneys' involvement:

The Law Offices of Tyler A. Dixon, Esq.

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Your support matters! When law firms encourage their young attorneys to get involved, everyone benefits—from the attorneys who gain valuable leadership experience, to our Bar Association and the community we proudly serve.

To our participating firms: **thank you for investing in your attorneys, supporting the YLD, and helping cultivate the next generation of leaders in our legal community.** We appreciate you!

UPCOMING 2026 HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Labor Day

CLERK & COURTS CLOSEDMonday, September 7

Yom Kippur

CLERK CLOSED TO PUBLIC/COURTS CLOSEDMonday, September 21

Veterans' Day

CLERK & COURTS CLOSED Wednesday, November 11

Thanksgiving Day

CLERK & COURTS CLOSED Thursday, November 26

Friday after Thanksgiving

CLERK & COURTS CLOSEDFriday, November 27

Christmas Eve

CLERK & COURTS CLOSEDThursday, December 24

Christmas Day

CLERK & COURTS CLOSEDFriday, December 25

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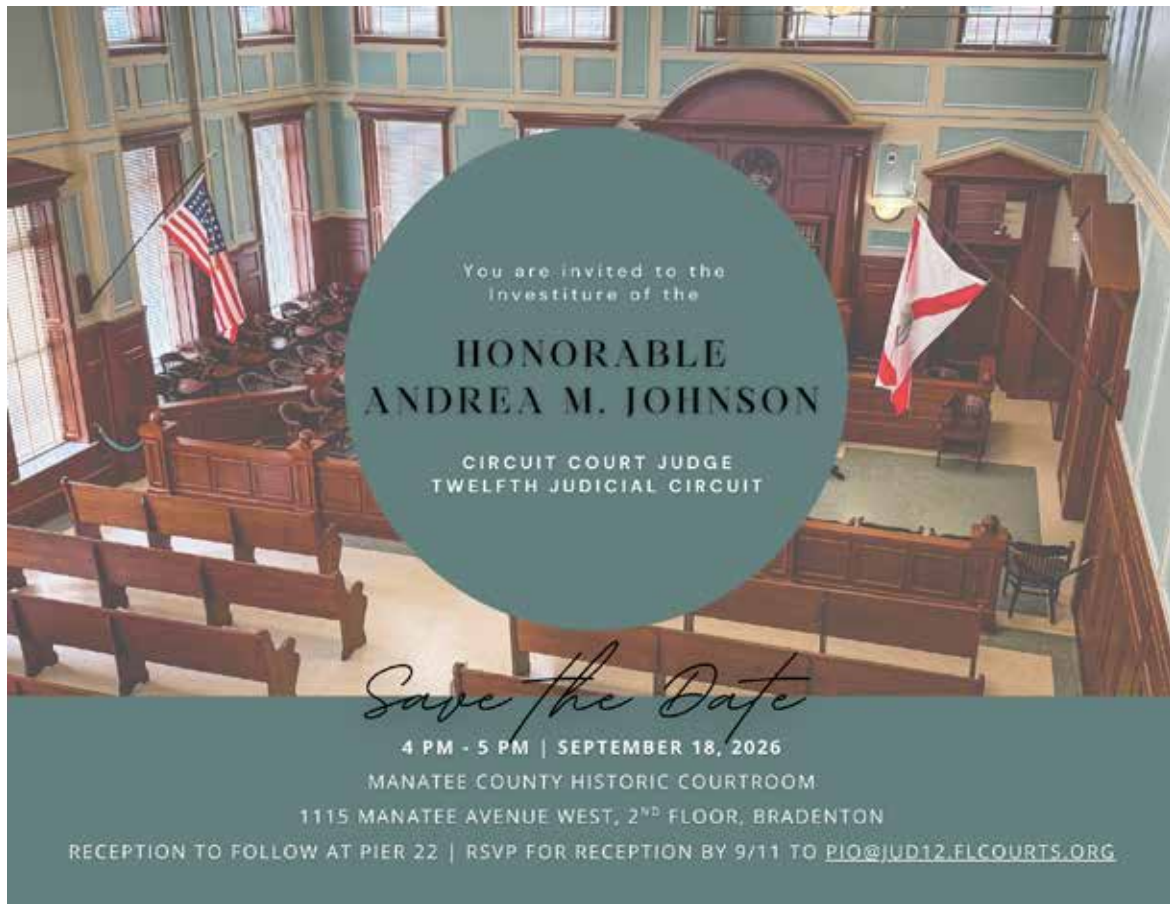
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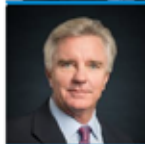
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REMEMBERING JUDGE BROWN



Former Manatee County Judge George Brown, Jr. passed on June 4, 2026, at the age of 80. He began his legal career in private practice in Bradenton, partnering with Robert Schultz and later with John Beck, Pat Cunningham and Joe Roback. He then served as a County Judge in Manatee County for nearly 40 years, retiring from the bench in February 2013. Later, he returned to the bench in a senior status, presiding over foreclosure cases and retiring for a second time in September 2022. Judge Brown was a true example of humility, wisdom, intelligence and calm temperament on the bench. By his accounting, he presided over more than 500 jury trials.

Judge Brown was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on November 16, 1945. He graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a Bachelor of Science degree, after which he served his country as a Marine Corps officer. He then attended law school and obtained his Juris Doctor at the University of Florida.

Judge Brown was active with his church and with the Bradenton Kiwanis Club.

He and his wife Margaret had 11 children (both natural and adopted) and 14 grandchildren.

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**OCTOBER
2026
Luncheon
Meeting**

Judging: 37 Years in
the 12th Circuit

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Judge Lee Haworth, 12th Circuit

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**Free for MCBA Members
\$35 for guests**

Wednesday, October 28th, 2026

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

Join Judge Lee Haworth, for a fascinating, entertaining, and unforgettable look back at 37 years on the bench in the 12th Judicial Circuit.

From the characters who made their mark to the cases that shaped the law, Judge Haworth will share stories from a remarkable career and reflect on how the practice of law, and the judiciary have evolved along the way.

Expect history, insight, a few surprises, and plenty of anecdotes... maybe a surprise guest or two!

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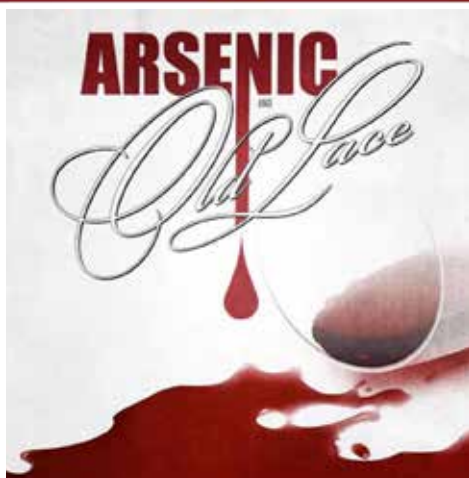
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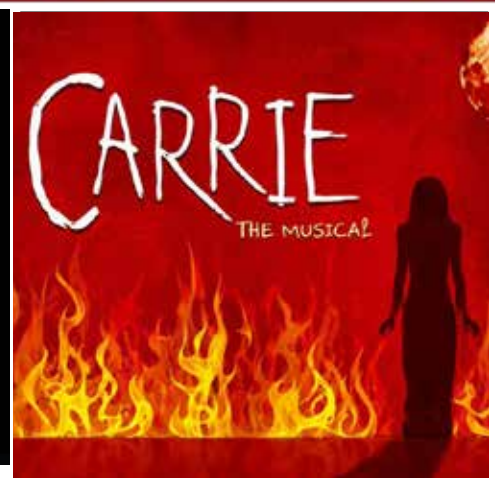
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