



HISTORY OF THE WOMEN LAWYERS SECTION OF THE BIRMINGHAM BAR ASSOCIATION

Beginning around 1979, a group of like-minded women lawyers who had been friends in law school, or who had become friends after starting their legal careers, planned regular social gatherings just to get together with each other. After a few such occasions, their discussions turned to their status as lawyers and to creating an organization to meet their professional and personal needs. These women were visionaries who felt the needs of women lawyers were greater than the profession's ability at the time to meet them. For more than a decade, they continued to talk about what form and structure such an organization might take, gleaned any useful information from other women's bar organizations nationwide. Finally in 1994 the Women Lawyers Section of the Birmingham Bar Association (hereinafter "WLS") was born and is open to any member of the Birmingham Bar Association.

The focus of the WLS is on the professional and personal concerns and needs of women lawyers. In addition, the founders recognized the need to encourage the participation of women lawyers in the bar association and to inspire charitable activities, as well as networking and mentoring. Under the auspices of the WLS, members have reached out into the community to help women and children in need, frequently partnering with the YWCA to help those in its shelters and programs.

The WLS has dedicated officers and board members who meet monthly to plan events and activities. These individuals, in addition to other members who serve on committees, provide the numerous volunteer hours and means for the smooth running of the section's many activities. The WLS continues to expand its numbers and offer meaningful opportunities for the professional growth of its members. Each year is concluded with an annual meeting, when new officers and board members are elected. Then a festive celebration with good food and sisterhood wraps up the year's end.

WOMEN LAWYERS SECTION OF THE BIRMINGHAM BAR ASSOCIATION CHILDREN'S LIBRARY FOR FAMILY COURT

The Family Court of Jefferson County Alabama (hereinafter "Family Court") located in Birmingham, Alabama hears juvenile dependency and delinquency cases. At Family Court, children whose cases are pending, parents, siblings and other family members wait in a large holding area on church style pews until their cases are called. This process often takes a large part of a morning or a day. The area is devoid of toys or items to help parents and children occupy time while they wait. The Women Lawyers Section of the Birmingham Bar Association saw the need to assist Family Court with providing a more child friendly waiting area.

In January 2008 representatives of the WLS met with Family Court administration and the Presiding Judge to propose the idea of a children's library area. The WLS collected children's books from attorneys and law firms. Donations were encouraged through a book drive with drop off sites at many law firms in a variety of locations throughout the area. By working with the Birmingham Bar Foundation, donors received a charitable donation tax receipt at the point of drop off. Approximately 600 books were collected. The WLS discussed with Family Court applicable building construction restrictions, child safety, the design of the existing room and wall mural, and the organization of books for the library. It was decided that the books would be housed a play area near the waiting room. Children would have space to read and play and would also be able to hear cases being called on the docket. Crate-style storage cubes were used to shelve the books along the wall under a painted mural. The crates are low to the ground so children can reach inside and are plastic so as to reduce injury. They can also be converted to seating. The height of the crates allows for a full view of the wall mural and colors were chosen to coordinate with the painting. Signs were constructed to advise parents and children that the library area was available for use. Children are allowed to take a book with them upon leaving Family Court. A plaque was also constructed acknowledging the donation of the children's library by the WLS and

also the WLS member who provided primary funding for the project. The project was completed in January 2009 at an approximate cost of \$500.

Family Court is very excited about the library and children are using the reading area. Within a couple of days after installation of the books, Leatha Gilbert Immediate past chair of the WLS made a visit to Family Court on a case she had pending. Leatha states, “I just got back from Family Court and I popped downstairs to check out the books and there were several children reading and enjoying them. One little girl was so engrossed that she was oblivious to what was going on around her.” In addition, Jefferson County Family Court Administrator Jeff McGee writes:

[T]hank you and the Birmingham Bar Women Lawyers Section for the generous donation of books and storage cubes to Family Court’s Children’s Area. Our clients often spend long hours in an uncomfortable courthouse waiting room that offers nothing for active children. The Children’s Area is a little respite for the families with young children. The books and brightly colored storage cubes your group donated are a welcome addition. With the new paging system, the families will no longer be restricted to the wooden benches of the waiting room, and instead can wait in the children’s area until called. With all the stresses these families come into our building with, the Children’s Area may be a little bright spot for the kids.

The WLS will monitor the Family Court reading area twice each year, collect additional books annually, and update date the space as needed. In addition, the WLS is processing requests from others such as the Domestic Violence Court to provide similar library areas at courthouses serving children and families.

Other women lawyers associations can easily duplicate and adapt a children’s library or reading area at courthouses within their geographic regions. Eight (8) WLS planning committee members were needed to coordinate the book drive, purchase the shelving and install the library area at Family Court. The cost of the children’s library was minimal and included the purchase of shelving and a recognition plaque. The project could also be expanded to include providing additional items of education or entertainment for the area or by establishing reading areas at other courthouses. The appreciation shown to the WLS by

Family Court, the evidence of children using the library, and the requests received by the WLS to duplicate the reading area at other courthouses, reflect the project's ability to exist as a worthwhile undertaking by other women's bar associations. The project is easily maintained and/or duplicated from year to year and can be accomplished with a minimal outlay of time and money. Moreover, the benefits are great. Children and families are served in that their visits to Family Court less stressful. Judges, Courts, citizens and families are also able to see the active role of the WLS in helping the Court system better serve the public and operate more effectively.

BOOK DRIVE!!

TO BENEFIT JEFFERSON COUNTY FAMILY COURT










JULY 1st - AUGUST 31st 2008



SPONSORED BY:

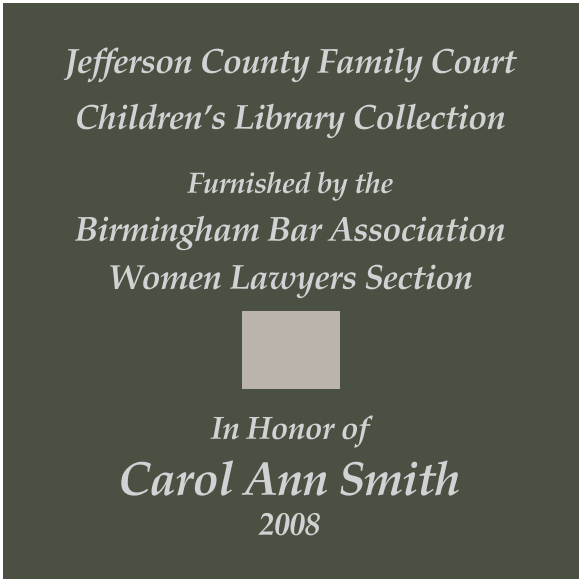
THE BIRMINGHAM BAR ASSOCIATION WOMEN LAWYERS SECTION

**Please donate your new or used children's books
to be used by children visiting Jefferson County Family Court.
Children's Books can be donated and a tax receipt obtained
at the following locations:**

-  ▪ **Burr & Forman**, 3400 Wachovia Tower, 420 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203. Contact Ashley Hattaway (458-5135 or ahattawa@burr.com)
-  ▪ **Birmingham Bar Center**, 2021 2nd Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. Contact Crystal McMeekin (251-2231 or bbfound@bellsouth.net)
-  ▪ **Judge Caryl Privett's Chambers, Jefferson County Civil Courthouse**, Room 550, 716 R Arrington Jr. Blvd North, Birmingham, AL 35203. Contact Judge Privett (325-5388 or carylprivett@mindspring.com)
-  ▪ **Law Offices of Gene Sellers**, 3410 Independence Drive, Ste. 200, Homewood, AL 35209. Contact Leatha Gilbert (870-5500 or lgilbert@gsellerslaw.com)
-  ▪ **Judge Virginia Vinson's Chambers Jefferson County Criminal Justice Center**, Room 705, 801 R Arrington Jr. Blvd North, Birmingham, AL 35203. Contact Judge Vinson (214-8683 or vavinson@aol.com)
-  ▪ **Sirote & Permutt**, 2311 Highland Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205. Contact Jaime Erdberg (930-5189 or jerdberg@sirote.com)
-  ▪ **Waller, Lansden, Dortch & Davis**, 1400 Regions Harbert Plaza, 1901 6th Ave. North, Ste. 1400, Birmingham, AL 35203. Contact April Rogers (214-6380 or april.rogers@wallerlaw.com)

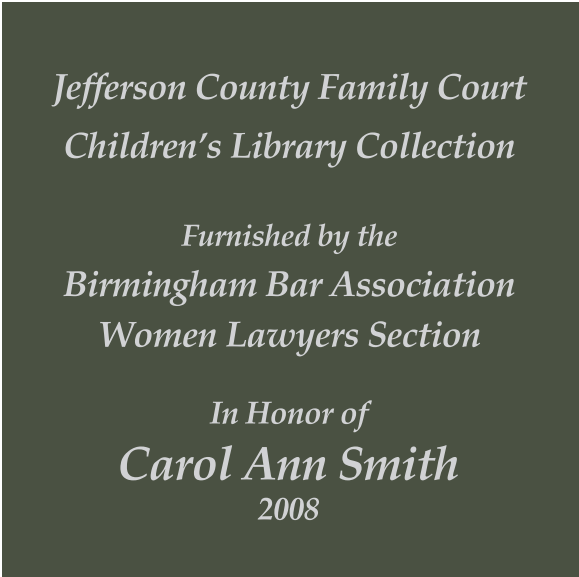


All Design Rights Reserved



Option A

NEED NEW LOGO
It will not have a box around it-
You will see just the outline
of the "W" and logo that is
inside box to match
color of copy



Option B

Without Logo
Layout



FAMILY COURT OF JEFFERSON COUNTY

120 2nd Court North
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, 35204-4765

Jeffrey F. McGee, Court Administrator/
Chief Probation Officer

Randall Jones
Deputy Court Administrator

Telephone: 205-325-5482
Fax: 205-325-5080

Elaine Davis
Administrative Assistant

December 5, 2008

Crystal Hartley McMeekin, J.D.
Birmingham Bar Foundation
2021 2nd Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203

Dear Crystal:

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and the Birmingham Bar Women Lawyers Section for the generous donation of books and storage cubes to Family Court's Children's Area. Our clients often spend long hours in an uncomfortable courthouse waiting room that offers nothing for active children.

The Children's Area is a little respite for the families with young children. The books and brightly colored storage cubes your group donated are a welcome addition. With the new paging system, the families will no longer be restricted to the wooden benches of the waiting room, and instead can wait in the children's area until called. With all the stresses these families come into our building with, the Children's Area may be the little bright spot for the kids.

Thank you for your gift to Family Court and to the families we serve.

Sincerely,

Jeff McGee
Court Administrator

WOMEN LAWYERS SECTION
of the
BIRMINGHAM BAR ASSOCIATION
2201 2nd Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203



WOMEN LAWYERS SECTION of the BIRMINGHAM BAR ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1994



MISSION STATEMENT

The Women Lawyers Section of the Birmingham Bar Association exists to foster the personal and professional development of women with law degrees, and to enhance the quality of life and the culture of the legal community.

HISTORY OF THE SECTION

Beginning around 1979, a group of like-minded women lawyers who had been friends in law school, or who had become friends after starting their legal careers, planned regular social gatherings just to get together with each other. After a few such occasions, their discussions turned to their status as lawyers and to creating an organization to meet their professional and personal needs. These women were visionaries who felt the needs of women lawyers were greater than the profession's ability at the time to meet them. For more than a decade, they continued to talk about what form and structure such an organization might take, gleaned any useful information from other women's bar organizations nationwide. Finally in 1994 the Women Lawyers Section of the Birmingham Bar Association was born and is open to any member of the Birmingham Bar Association.

The focus of the Section is on the professional and personal concerns and needs of women lawyers. In addition, the founders recognized the need to encourage the participation of women lawyers in the bar association and to inspire charitable activities, as well as networking and mentoring. Under the auspices of the Section, members have reached out into the community to help women and children in need, frequently partnering with the YWCA to help those in its shelters and programs.

The Section has dedicated officers and board members who meet monthly to plan events and activities. These individuals, in addition to other members who serve on committees, provide the numerous volunteer hours and means for the smooth running of the Section's many activities. The Section continues to expand its numbers and offer meaningful opportunities for the professional growth of its members. Each year is concluded with an annual meeting, when new officers and board members are elected. Then a festive celebration with good food and sisterhood wraps up the year's end.

PURPOSE AS SET FORTH IN THE BY-LAWS

The purpose of the Section shall be to encourage the participation of women in the practice of law, to enhance the quality of life for women who have chosen law as a profession, to provide role models and mentors for women seeking to enter or grow in the profession, and to provide an environment which fosters cooperation between and among women thereby enhancing the profession as a whole.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SECTION EVENTS

► Affiliation with the Birmingham YWCA in many charitable and civic activities. In 1999, the Section was awarded the Annual Public Service Award by the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations for its special partnership with the YWCA.

► Participation in a variety of projects and programs at the YWCA including an annual Spring Clothes Drive for *My Sister's Closet*, providing clothing for women who have been in shelters and are re-entering the workplace; the annual *Santa's Workshop*; a baby shower to collect supplies for infants in the shelter facility and day-care program; a series of legal clinics for YWCA clients; and a benefit banquet honoring Nina Miglionico with all proceeds donated to the YWCA in her honor.

► Sponsor outings to the Birmingham Zoo for women and children from various shelters.

► In 2002, the Section became a sponsor in MOMENTUM, which has been recognized as Alabama's premiere leadership development program for women. Five Section members were among MOMENTUM's inaugural graduating class.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

► Clothes Drives for Bread & Roses Shelter.

► Sponsored *Lawyers Cases For Kids* and collected over 1,000 pieces of luggage for children in foster care in Jefferson County.

► Sponsored a project entitled *Tots To Teens and In Betweens* to benefit children through the Department of Human Resources for Jefferson and Shelby Counties.

► Reception honoring the women judges on the municipal, state, and federal benches with Justice Janie Shores as the keynote speaker.

► In addition to charitable activities, the Section sponsors programs each year such as: *Eradicating Gender Bias in the Courtroom*; *Effective Negotiation and Communication Skills*; *Rainmaking and Marketing Tips*; *Balancing the Practice Of Law With Family And Personal Interests*; and *Girls Can Do Anything*, a program in conjunction with *Take Your Daughters To Work Day* which featured women in many diverse and non-traditional careers. Other recent programs have included: *Public Office Issues In The New Millennium*; *Success in the Business of Law: Marketing & Management for the New Millennium*; *Communication: The Art of Selling Your Ideas Through Passion, Persuasion & Power*; and *Making A Difference As Women Lawyers*.

► The Women Lawyers Section also encourages fun for its members! The Section sponsors several social gatherings each year such as light lunches, dine-arounds, receptions for new women bar admittees and the Annual Meeting.

MEMBER BENEFITS

► Excellent Networking Opportunities with Other Lawyers and Judges

► List Serve for Information Exchange, Including Job Opportunities

► Newsletters and Free CLE Seminars and Programs

► Community Service Opportunities to Benefit Women and Children in the Birmingham Area

► Service to the Bar Association and the Legal Community

► Representation for the Section Each Year on the Birmingham Bar Association Executive Committee and the Birmingham Bar Foundation Board of Directors.

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER (____) _____ - _____ FAX NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

☐ Annual dues of \$30.00 must be submitted with this application.

☐ Make checks payable to the Birmingham Bar Association and mail to:

Birmingham Bar Association / 2201 2nd Avenue North / Birmingham, AL 35203

WOMEN LAWYERS SECTION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I am a member of the Birmingham Bar or have made application to the Birmingham Bar Association and make application herewith pending approval by the Birmingham Bar Association.







