

Arlington Bar Association

The Arlington Bar Association (ABA) was founded in 1961 by three Arlington attorneys – James Knapp, James Cribbs and Clyde Ashworth. The mission of the Bar Association was to demonstrate to the public that Arlington lawyers were “organized”, “respectful of each other” and “respected by the judges.”

Soon after its founding, ten of the twelve attorneys that practiced law in Arlington at the time were members. One of the first Bar events in 1961 was a trip to Washington, D.C. where five of the members were sworn in as members of the Bar of the United States Supreme Court. The next year, December 1962, the Bar persuaded Vice Presidential candidate, Lyndon B. Johnson, to deliver his Tarrant County speech at Arlington State College rather than Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

The Arlington Bar’s first major social event was an early fall “Welcome Back to Work BBQ” honoring the local judiciary. The courthouses had no air-conditioning in 1961 so the courthouses were closed for the summer. The original BBQs did not include any women so the

Bar Association created a “Morals Committee.” Their job was to enforce three rules at the BBQ – “No gambling”, “no lady dancers” and no “dirty movies.”

The Arlington Bar BBQ was an instant success drawing 167 attendees. The first woman to attend was Tarrant County’s first female judge, Eva Barnes, who attended the 1964 BBQ. The BBQ was held annually for 50 years (1961-2011) and was attended by many prominent Texas attorneys and politicians including John Connelly, Lloyd Benson, Jim Wright and Gib Lewis. Hundreds of Tarrant County judges have been honored at the legendary “Arlington Bar Association BBQ.”

The spirit of the founder’s legendary BBQ still lives on at the Arlington Bar Association in the form of a spring Fish Fry honoring the Tarrant County judiciary. Appropriately, the Fish Fry is held in Arlington at the Ashworth Homeplace hosted by Clyde Ashworth’s son, Bruce Ashworth. Ashworth Place was the location of many of the BBQs from 1964-1982.

Today, the Arlington Bar Association has over one hundred members and strives to build on the original objectives of the Bar’s founders. The Bar continues to promote a professional

environment of mutual respect, continues to honor the judiciary and continues to earn the respect of the local judges.

In the last decade, the Arlington Bar Association has increased its focus internally on providing meaningful services to the membership and externally on providing value to the Arlington community.

In 2010, the Arlington Bar Association expanded by welcoming the newly-created Arlington Young Lawyers Association (AYLA). The ABA and AYLA collaborated to create a new tradition – the Halloween Chili Cookoff. It was an instant success growing each of the last three years in corporate and community sponsorships, participation of cookoff teams from the legal community and general attendance. The Cookoff is judged by Tarrant County judges and the proceeds of the event go to benefit Legal Aid of Northwest Texas.

This year one of the ABA's objectives was to expand the local CLE opportunities for its members. The existing CLE program continues to bring quality CLE programs to the member/CLE meetings held monthly at local Arlington establishments. This year's speakers and programs included State Senator/Gubernatorial Candidate, Wendy Davis – "Texas Legislative

Issues”; Judge Matt Hayes – “Update on the Rules of Civil Procedure;” Bill Greenhill – “Texas Grievance Process”; Jason Sneed – “United States Supreme Court Update;” Don Hase – “Texas Indigent Criminal Defense;” Matt Rick – “Update on Family Law;” Randy Johnston – “Malpractice Avoidance;” and Larry Gaydos – “Ethical Issues in Organizational Representations.”

In addition to the regular monthly CLE programs, the Bar developed a program that brings some of the best State Bar CLE programs to Arlington. ABA members have the opportunity to attend programs locally at reasonable rates and at a time and place that conveniently fit into their busy schedules. This year’s programs included “Building Blocks of Wills, Estates and Probate;” “Advanced Personal Injury;” “Choosing and Courting a Jury;” “Firearms Law;” “Guardianship and Ad Litem;” “Handling Your First Jury Trial;” “Family Law;” “Advanced Employment Law;” “Ultimate Motion Practice;” and “Law Firm Management.”

Finally, the ABA recently partnered with the University of Texas Arlington to co-sponsor a free CLE dinner event with two programs – “Wealth Transfer Tax Update” and “Charitable Remainder Trusts and Charitable Lead Trusts.”

The ABA is involved in three other community service projects. First, the ABA assists West Texas Legal Services by holding the monthly Arlington Legal Clinic. Second, the ABA and AYLA jointly put on a Christmas party for the children of Mission Arlington. Finally, the ABA runs a Lawyer Referral Service. This year the regular Lawyer Referral Panel was augmented with a separate panel of Arlington attorneys who are board certified in many areas of specialization including personal injury, criminal law, family law, civil trial, bankruptcy-consumer law, estate planning and probate, oil and gas law, commercial real estate, tax, immigration and nationality, business law, social security and disability law and labor and employment. The Lawyer Referral Service also greatly expanded and modernized their marketing program to reach a broader spectrum of potential clients.

For more information about the Arlington Bar Association, or to become a member, visit arlingtonbar.com to obtain an application or contact Larry Gaydos at 817-307-6024.

Membership is open to any attorney that practices or resides in Arlington.

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