

Fall 2012



Points of Interest

POINTS OF INTEREST is the newsletter of the Tennessee Bar Foundation and IOLTA program (Interest On Lawyers' Trust Accounts)

Editor's note: Grants from the Tennessee IOLTA program are awarded to organizations that provide services in one of two categories, either the provision of civil legal assistance to the indigent or the improvement of the administration of justice. For 24 years, a growing number of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) organizations have received IOLTA dollars to support their efforts to improve the administration of justice. They do so by training volunteers who are then appointed by juvenile courts to advocate for individual children (or sibling groups) who have been abused or neglected. The CASA volunteer researches the child's situation, may help facilitate social services and then recommends to the court the best possible permanent placement for that child.

During 2012, 18 CASA programs that serve 35 Tennessee counties (see page 3) will receive \$73,740 in IOLTA grants to continue this work. The executive director of one of these programs, Laura Swanson of Wilson County CASA in Lebanon, is a survivor of child abuse. She did not have the benefit of a CASA volunteer when she was removed from her mother's home, but she was able to beat the odds. Her professional life now centers on ensuring that children in similar circumstances have the involvement of a well-trained CASA volunteer. Read her courageous story (at right). On the back page, see the result of a CASA volunteer's involvement in another child's life.

Silent no more

By Sabrina Garrett, adapted from
The Lebanon Democrat

Every year, Laura Swanson, the executive director of CASA of Wilson County, trains numerous volunteers to help children going through difficult situations.

She can easily explain the mindset of these children to CASA [Court Appointed Special Advocates] volunteers, because she has been in their shoes. She knows what it is like to carry everything you own in a black garbage sack, and Swanson bravely shared her own story.

"My parents were divorced when I was three years old. Later, my dad was in a federal prison. I lived with my single mother, and, during that time, I was a child abuse victim."

After suffering through abuse for two years, at the age of 12, Swanson shared her secret with her seventh-grade teacher.

"I actually didn't know her that well. School started in August, and I told her about my abuse either later in the month of August or sometime in September," she said.

"I cried and told her everything. She put her arms around me and walked me down to the school nurse. She and the school nurse talked for a few minutes, and they made a phone call."

Swanson soon found herself seated in the Department of Human Services office.

"As I sat in the room with the worker who interviewed me, I became embarrassed and almost decided to tell her that I had lied. I hated the questions



she asked me," Swanson admitted.

She understands now that the worker was doing a job, and it saved her from further abuse.

Since her father was in jail and her single mother could no longer protect her, Swanson was taken to live in a group home.

"I had all of my life in a black garbage bag and these people that I didn't know were going through all of it."

Two weeks later, Swanson was taken to her first foster home.

"They had all these rules that I had never had before. Everyone had to make his or her bed and everyone had to eat breakfast," she said.

Although she was unaware of it at the time, her seventh-grade teacher had gone through the process to become a foster parent. Swanson was soon moved to a second foster home — with that teacher.

Swanson said the young couple had children of their own, but welcomed her and loved her.

She remembers going into her new room and the couple's 3-year-old daughter telling her that she had left her a surprise in a drawer.

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Legal History Project

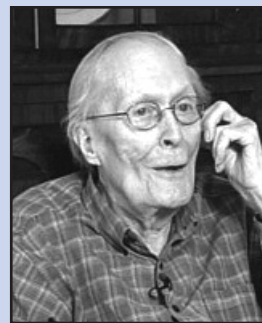
The Foundation's Legal History Project continues its mission of recording the memories of Tennessee's senior lawyers. As of September 2012, 79 individual interviews have been completed. This past year, six of the Foundation's Fellows conducted friendly "depositions" with the men pictured at right. In addition to their varied law practices, the members of this group are serving or once served as a municipal, federal district, federal appeals or state Supreme Court judge, as state Attorney General or as speaker of the state House of Representatives. Each interviewee provided insights into his personal background and experience in the legal community and reminisced about people, places and events.

The Foundation is also pleased to announce that the Legal History Project collection (current and future), is now a part of the holdings of the Tennessee State Library and Archives. The interview masters will be housed in perpetuity, in a secure, temperature and humidity controlled environment. DVD reference copies are available to the public at the Library, just west of the Capitol, in downtown Nashville. A Finding Aid for the collection may be accessed directly from the Library's website: <http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/2012-007.pdf>.

Copies of the Project's interviews may also be borrowed or purchased from the Foundation. The entire list of interviewees and the seven, 30-minute "best of" entertainment video collages, are available to view on the Foundation's website, www.tnbarfoundation.org.



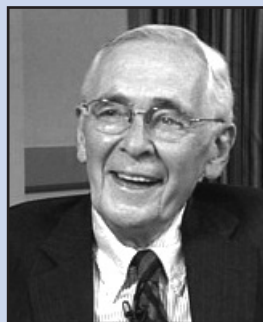
JUSTICE WILLIAM M. BARKER, CHATTANOOGA
Interviewed by
T. Maxfield Bahner



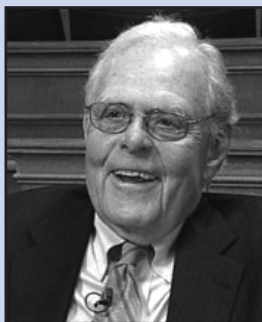
WILLIAM L. (DICK) BARRY, LEXINGTON
Interviewed by
Barri Bernstein



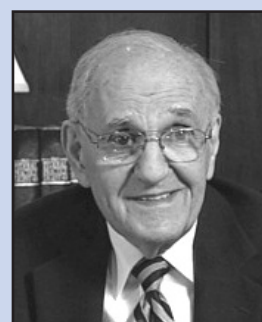
W. J. MICHAEL CODY, MEMPHIS
Interviewed by
William H. Haltom, Jr.



JUDGE THOMAS A. HIGGINS, NASHVILLE
Interviewed by
Thomas H. Peebles III



JUDGE GILBERT S. MERRITT, NASHVILLE
Interviewed by
N. Sue Van Sant Palmer



ARVIN H. REINGOLD, CHATTANOOGA
Interviewed by
Jerry H. Summers

2012 Interviewees

Completed: Judge Herschel P. Franks, Chattanooga; Harris A. Gilbert, Nashville; Honorable William L. Jenkins, Rogersville
Scheduled: Justice Penny J. White, Knoxville

Silent no more

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"She had left me books and puzzles," Swanson said.

"They treated me so kindly and with so much love and respect ... I will always be so thankful to my seventh-grade teacher for showing me that there was a better way to live life."

"After my father was released from prison [Editor's note: on charges unrelated to his daughter], I was able to go and live with him," she said. Although her life was at a steadier pace, Swanson dealt with the effects of her childhood abuse into her late twenties.

She said that through counseling, church and sharing stories with others, she overcame her past.

"One of the things that is helpful is to know that others have had similar experiences and can say, 'I know what you mean. I know exactly what you've been through,'" she said.

Swanson knows that statistically, she shouldn't be where

she is today. "People who are in those type situations [typically] don't go to college, go on to get a Master's Degree. They are not the director of a non-profit organization. I've not let the circumstances in my life dictate what I'm going to be."

As fate would have it, Swanson has dedicated her life to helping others in situations that she has experienced firsthand.

"I never meant to end up in this line of work. When I graduated from college, I applied for a job out of the newspaper not really knowing what it was," she said.

"It wasn't until I was well into my work at the Department of Children's Services that I realized that I was doing the kind of work that saved me all of those years ago."

A few jobs later, CASA found her.

"The work that our volunteers do with children is incredible. Volunteers take time to listen and talk to children," Swanson said.

Article continues on page 4.

Tennessee IOLTA Grant Recipients & Awards 2012

(Arranged by location of recipient's *main* office. Many organizations serve a broader geographic area.)

Athens

CASA Corridor of East Tennessee — \$4,000
The H.O.P.E. Center, Inc. — \$3,000

Chattanooga

Community Reconciliation, Inc. — \$5,000
Southeast Tennessee Legal Services — \$3,000

Cleveland

CASA of Bradley County — \$1,240

Clinton

Community Mediation Services — \$4,000

Columbia

Hope House — \$4,000

Cookeville

Aging Services for the Upper Cumberland — \$8,400
Dismas House of the Upper Cumberland — \$5,760
Genesis House, Inc. — \$6,000
Mediation Services of Putnam County — \$4,000
UCHRA CASA of Putnam County — \$2,500

Crossville

Avalon Center — \$9,000
VORP/Community Mediation Center, Inc. — \$8,000

Franklin

Williamson County CASA, Inc. — \$3,000

Hohenwald

Mid South Mediation Services — \$9,000

Jacksboro

CASA of Campbell County, Inc. — \$5,000

Jackson

Madison County CASA — \$3,000
West Tennessee Legal Services, Inc. — \$36,193
Wo/Men's Resource & Rape Assistance Program — \$2,500

Johnson City

CASA of Northeast Tennessee — \$3,500

Kingsport

CASA for Kids, Inc. — \$8,000

Kingston

CASA of the Ninth Judicial District — \$4,000

Knoxville

CASA of East Tennessee, Inc. — \$1,500
Catholic Charities/Immigrant Services — \$2,500
Catholic Charities/Parent Place — \$5,000
Legal Aid of East Tennessee — \$106,204
Public Defender's Education Advocacy Project — \$8,400

Knoxville, cont.

Sexual Assault Center — \$5,000
YWCA Knoxville — \$7,000

Lawrenceburg

Kid's Place / A Child Advocacy Center — \$3,000

Lebanon

HomeSafe, Inc. — \$4,000
Wilson County CASA — \$4,500

Lexington

CASA of Henderson County, Inc. — \$4,000

Madisonville

CASA Monroe — \$3,000

Manchester

CASA Works, Inc. — \$6,500

Maryville

Blount County Children's Advocacy Center — \$3,000

McMinnville

Families in Crisis — \$5,000

Memphis

CASA of Memphis & Shelby County, Inc. — \$5,000
Community Legal Center — \$27,700
Exchange Club Family Center of the Mid-South, Inc. — \$5,000
Memphis Area Legal Services, Inc. — \$75,336
YWCA/Greater Memphis — Immigrant Women's Svcs. — \$10,000

Morristown

CEASE, Inc. — \$5,000

Murfreesboro

CASA of Rutherford County — \$6,000
Domestic Violence Program, Inc. — \$8,000

Nashville

CASA, Inc. — \$4,000
Exchange Club Family Center, Inc. — \$6,000
Legal Aid Society of Middle TN & the Cumberland — \$121,467
Morning Star Sanctuary — \$5,500
TN Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence — \$19,300
Tennessee Justice Center — \$181,000
Tennessee Justice for Our Neighbors — \$5,000

Springfield

CASA of Robertson County — \$5,000

Total: \$800,000

**The Tennessee Bar Foundation
publishes *Points of Interest*.**

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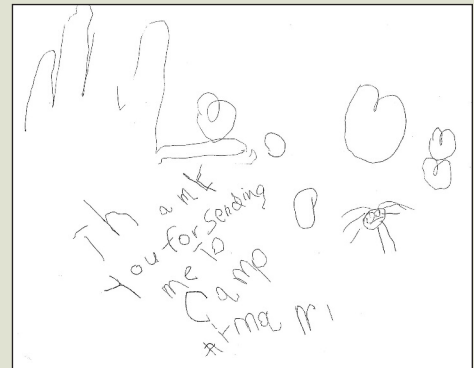
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A CASA program case story from Middle Tennessee ...

Two children, a brother and sister, ages 3 and 6, were removed from their mother and “safety placed” in the homes of relatives. A CASA volunteer was appointed by the court to assist in the case. The boy was placed with a stay-at-home grandparent and the girl went to her great aunt, a single, working woman. The mother slowly made her way through the requirements of the permanency plan, and, after a few months, it became evident that the children were not going home as quickly as once thought. The children were thriving in their respective placements, so arrangements were made for those to continue. Unfortunately, school would soon be out, and the aunt had no money for summer childcare. The Department of Children’s Services told the families that if the aunt could not find childcare for the girl, both children would have to come into state’s custody. They would be placed in a foster home, with

strangers. Upon hearing this possible scenario, the children’s CASA volunteer went to work. She convinced a community resource agency to offer a “matching” grant and then sought funds to equal that amount. Within 24 hours, everything was set. The girl would be heading to day camp for the summer and both children could remain in the safety of their relatives’ homes. The thank you “note” from the girl is reproduced below. ■



Silent no more

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“I never had a CASA volunteer. The county where I am originally from still doesn’t have a CASA program. Only 45 of the 95 counties in Tennessee have a CASA program.”

Swanson hopes that through her story, someone will be inspired — inspired to get out of a bad situation, inspired to move forward or inspired to forgive.

“Forgiveness doesn’t mean forgetting,” she clarified.

“It means no longer wanting to hurt those who have hurt you. I have forgiven all that need it, for me, not for them. I am so happy in my life and all is well in my soul.

“My life experiences have made me who I am and I’m so happy with who I am.”

For more information on how CASA programs help children in similar situations, contact the state association at www.tncasa.org or call 800-TNCASA1 (800-862-2721). ■

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