

First Recipients of Bar's Scholarships Attend National Judicial College

by R. Thomas Warburton

In October, the first group of Alabama judges to receive grants from the state bar's Judicial Scholarship Fund attended the General Jurisdiction Course presented at the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada. The judges spent long days in the classroom attending sessions focusing on general substantive law, formal discussion groups on the topics covered and additional informal but educational time with judges from other states exchanging ideas on the efficient administration of justice. Circuit Judge Scott Donaldson, a scholarship recipient and attendee, described the experience:

"The National Judicial College experience was extremely helpful to me as a judge in many ways. We had extensive instruction in substantive law subjects such as evidence, search and seizure, and alternative sentencing programs. We

exchanged ideas with judges from across the nation about courtroom management and protocols. And perhaps just as importantly, we spent two weeks thinking and studying about our roles as judges and how we can improve our service to the people we serve here in our own jurisdictions."

Additional judges in attendance at the General Jurisdiction Course whose attendance was funded by the bar were Etowah County Circuit Judge Clark Hall, Coffee County Circuit Judge Jeffery Kelly, Mobile County District Judge George Hardesty, Mobile County Circuit Judge Sara Stewart, and Monroe County District Judge George Elbrecht. Jefferson County District Judge Norm Winston, also attending the college in October, noted that, "Alabama had a very strong contingent of judges in attendance, many of whom were selected as presenters for the session-ending projects before the collective class and faculty. The state bar was very generous along with all who helped fund this valuable educational experience."

The Judicial Scholarship Fund was established by the bar in 2006 on the recommendation of its Judicial Liaison Committee, which recognized a shortfall in funding for judicial education causing Alabama judges to be unable to attend the Judicial College. Through a fundraising campaign undertaken by the committee in late 2006 and early 2007, members of the bar contributed close to \$100,000 to fund this worthy cause. Additional recipients of bar scholarships are slated to attend the General Jurisdiction program in April and October 2008.

Calhoun County Circuit Judge Malcolm Street summed up the judiciary's thoughts on the program:

"I was privileged to go to the National Judicial College in the late 1970s, and it was an invaluable experience being taught alongside other judges in a team format. Sadly, Alabama judges in the recent past have not been able to attend this program because of financial constraints. I salute the bar for being so forthcoming with its financial resources. We are very thankful." ▲▼▲



Alabama judges attend premier training program at the National Judicial College in Reno

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