

THE ALABAMA STATE BAR LEADERSHIP FORUM

Celebrating Five Years: Reaching out to a New Generation of Servant Leaders

By Edward M. Patterson



Left to right are Cynthia Ransburg-Brown, R. Thomas Warburton, William N. Clark, Ashley E. Swink, and Kimberly T. Powell at the recent Leadership Forum Alumni party in Hoover. Clark was the recipient of a commemorative plaque, honoring his vision, dedication and commitment to the Leadership Forum.

On a bitterly cold evening on January 15, 2009, it was warm and jovial inside as over 120 attorneys and guests gathered at the second annual Leadership Forum Alumni cocktail party and banquet at Marriott Renaissance Ross Bridge in Hoover to begin year five of the Leadership Forum. Cynthia Ransburg-Brown (Class 4), of Sirote & Permutt, PC, presided over the evening. The event was part of the two-day Class 5 orientation. Popular ‘humorist-at-law’ Sean Carter, of Mesa, Arizona, was the after-dinner speaker. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of a fifth-year milestone commemorative plaque to former Alabama State Bar President

William N. Clark of Birmingham. The presenters, R. Thomas Warburton (Class 4) of Bradley Arant Boult Cummings, LLP, Birmingham, and Ashley E. Swink (Class 4) of Richardson Callahan & Frederick, LLP, Huntsville, recalled Clark’s outstanding vision, dedication and commitment to the ASB Leadership Forum.

On May 21, 2004, during Clark’s term as president, the Board of Bar Commissioners unanimously adopted the following resolution:

“Be it Resolved that the Alabama State Bar shall establish a leadership forum to produce committed and involved lawyers willing and able to fill significant leadership

roles in the local and state bar associations, in communities and in state organizations and to serve as role models in matters of ethics and professionalism with the program to be implemented by the President and Executive Council of the Alabama State Bar with periodic review by the Board of Bar Commissioners.”

The theme of the orientation was “Fundamentals of Leadership and Professionalism.” The class heard from ASB President J. Mark White; former Governor Albert P. Brewer; J. Anthony McLain, state bar general counsel; Robert Holmes, Jr., senior vice president, Alabama Power Company; Dr. Wayne Flynt, professor emeritus, Auburn University; Allison Black Cornelius, founder, BlackBOARD Consulting Company; Honorable William Pryor, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit; and Stephen F. Black, director, Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility at the University of Alabama.

Patrick H. Graves, Jr. of Huntsville and Alyce M. Spruell of Tuscaloosa served as the first co-chairs of the Leadership Forum

Planning Committee. Since that time, Fred M. Haston, III (Class 1), Keith Jackson (Class 2), Kimberly T. Powell (Class 3) and Sam David Knight (Class 4) have served as co-chairs. Today, forum alumni take the major lead in planning the sessions which motivate participants to embrace the concept of “servant leadership.”

Class 5 includes another 30 of the best and brightest young attorneys in the state. The forum boasts 238 applications in five years, 150 attorneys selected to participate and 145 graduates when the five annual sessions conclude in May. From an initial budget of \$13,000 to a present budget of \$42,000, the programs have expanded to add training sessions not only at the state bar building, but at other locations, including Alabama’s Black Belt community, Hyundai Motor Manufacturing facility, the Alabama State Capitol, the Alabama

Education Association building, and Balch & Bingham conference facilities in Birmingham, with orientation sessions held at various RSA Renaissance Marriott conference facilities. Trips include the Rosa Parks Museum, Civil Rights Institute, 16th Street Baptist Church, Brown Chapel AME Church, and E.D. Nixon Elementary School. Over 150 attorneys, judges, law and university professors, national leadership consultants, and leaders in the educational, political, business and military community have offered their services as faculty members.

While some state bars have difficulty filling designated places in their leadership programs, Alabama’s forum continues to receive annually an average of 75 applications for 30 positions, and enjoys both prestige and popularity as it remains strategically focused on its original mission. Bill Clark’s vision of “a leadership forum to produce committed and involved lawyers willing and able to fill significant leadership roles” is now an established reality. ▲▼▲

Planning Committee. Since that time, Fred M. Haston, III (Class 1), Keith Jackson (Class 2), Kimberly T. Powell (Class 3) and Sam David Knight (Class 4) have served as co-chairs. Today, forum alumni take the major lead in planning the sessions which motivate participants to embrace the concept of “servant leadership.”

Class 5 includes another 30 of the best and brightest young attorneys in the state. The forum boasts 238 applications in five years, 150 attorneys selected to participate and 145 graduates when the five annual sessions conclude in May. From an initial budget of \$13,000 to a present budget of \$42,000, the programs have expanded to add training sessions not only at the state bar building, but at other locations, including Alabama’s Black Belt community, Hyundai Motor Manufacturing facility, the Alabama State Capitol, the Alabama



Edward M. Patterson is currently the assistant executive director of the Alabama State Bar. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Law and a former law clerk to retired

Associate Justice Hugh Maddox of the Alabama Supreme Court. Patterson served as assistant general counsel of the Alabama State Bar prior to entering private practice for 14 years where he concentrated in real estate, banking and general business law. He is the recipient of the Alabama State Bar Award of Merit for outstanding and constructive service to the legal profession in Alabama.