

# REPORTS OF THE SECTIONS

## FAMILY LAW SECTION

Winship C. Tower, Chair

Generous contributions of time and efforts by members of the Family Law Section and its Board of Governors allowed the section to accomplish a good deal during 1998-1999. New members of the Board of Governors this year included Mona S. Flax of Virginia Beach, Susan M. Hicks of Fairfax, and Ellen S. Weinman of Roanoke. Lynne Marie Kohm, Professor of Law at Regent University Law School, continued to serve as the Section's Law School Liaison with energy and conviction.

The videotape, "Spare the Child," completed the year before, was distributed this year to the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts through the Commonwealth as well as to Social Service Departments, lawyers and members of the public.

The Family Law Section Continuing Legal Education Committee, chaired by Julia S. Savage, organized and presented three different continuing legal education programs, in conjunction with the Virginia CLE office. In April, the Fifteenth Annual Advanced Family Law Seminar was offered in conjunction with the Virginia CLE office. "Top Lawyers Trying Tough Cases" featured nationally recognized family law lawyers and expert witnesses conducting mock custody and business valuation trials. The Seminar had almost 150 attendees and received high marks. The afternoon before the Seminar, the Section hosted representatives from local family bar organizations for a presentation by Ninth Circuit Court Judge Prentis Smiley, Jr., on the development and use of standardized forms and procedures by the Circuit Courts in the litigation of equitable distribution and support. Timothy Szabo's committee put in long hours to identify the local family bar organizations and developed a comprehensive mailing list to use for this annual effort to bring local family bar leaders together.

The Section remains indebted to Richard E. Crouch, and his son John Crouch, who produce quarterly the Family Law Section's newsletter and provided enormously useful recent case summaries as well as highlights of legal developments in the field and contributions by other members of the Section. John Crouch represented the Section and attended the July ABA meeting in Atlanta, where he learned of hot issues and cases nationwide on which to report to the Board of Governors.

The Family Law Section has continued to build relationships with Virginia law schools. Our Law School Liaison, Professor Lynne Marie Kohm, organized a group of volunteer law students to assist the Board of Governors with legal research concerning emerging issues in family law. Professor Kohm's students were very helpful in researching the Covenant Marriage Study for the Section's report to the legislature on this very important issue.

In May, the Section honored the achievements of law students from each Virginia law school who had shown unusual aptitude and commitment to the field of family law. This award was presented to each of the law students in conjunction with the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

Torrence M. Harman of Richmond agreed to Chair a committee to update and republish the "Financial Issues in Divorce" booklet, which will contain up to date basic information for both lawyers and clients. The booklet should be available through the Virginia State Bar by next year.

The Section created a new ADR/Mediation Committee, also chaired by Ms. Harman, to tackle the issue of unauthorized practice, confidentiality, education and training of mediators.

Professor Lynne Marie Kohm chaired the Adoption Committee and completed the up to date Adoption Pamphlet, which will be published and available through the Virginia State Bar offices.

At the annual meeting in Virginia Beach, Robert E. Shepherd, Jr., Professor of Law, University of Richmond was presented with the Section's Lifetime Achievement Award, in recognition of his dedication and accomplishments in

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the field of juvenile law throughout his career. Following the presentation of the award, Torrence M. Harman moderated a continuing legal education program focusing on three recent and significant Virginia appellate decisions. The lawyers who represented the litigants entertained the audience with their analysis of the issues as well as their, often humorous, "behind the scenes" war stories. In addition, the Section co-sponsored and provided speakers from the Joint Committee on ADR program on medication at the June Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach.

Also, at the annual meeting, the Section hosted the kick off meeting of the Virginia State Bar Technology Task Force, which was attended by representatives of all Sections of the Virginia State Bar and representatives of the Judiciary. The Technology Task Force will explore the impact on the practice of law of computer and communications technology, including electronic filing, electronic evidence, the development of web sites, ethics, and the like.

Special thanks are due to Richard D. Balnave who has completed his term on the Board of Governors. On behalf of the Section, I thank him for his contributions to the work of the Section and his years of active service, including his year as Chairman of the Board of Governors. Newly elected officers of the Family Law Section are: David D. Masterman, Vienna, Chair; Terrence R. Batzli, Richmond, Vice-Chair; and Torrence M. Harman, Richmond, Secretary. The newly elected members of the Board of Governors are Kenneth B. Murov, Newport News; J. Patrick McConnell, Richmond; and Franklin R. Blatt, Harrisonburg. Professor Lynne Marie Kohm of Regent University Law School was reelected again to serve as the Law School Liaison. ❀