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FROM THE MCB PRESIDENT



President Cary Davis

New Home, New Beginnings

Moving.

Whether into a new home, a new job, a new city or state – moving is a major life event. Daunting, for sure, but also invigorating, exhilarating. An opportunity to reflect, reassess, reimagine, dream, improve.

You plant your flag in the new place and lean on the things you carried with you – tangible and intangible, lessons learned, memories, aspirations – to make your next chapter better, wiser, more purposeful than your last.

We are in the midst of that exciting phase now as a Bar family.

In early February, we moved out of the Bar & Foundation Center and into our new home in the historic Addison Building on the corner of East Morehead Street and South McDowell Street. Our new address is 831 East Morehead Street, Charlotte, NC 28202. We are leasing a 3,500-square-foot suite, ideally configured for the needs of our Bar staff. Our space is comfortable and professional; the Classical Revival-style building exudes a certain *je ne sai quoi* charm; and the location, at once historic and vibrant, sits astride Dilworth and Midtown, across from The Pearl medical innovation district, the soon-to-be home of the Wake Forest University School of Medicine – Charlotte.

In sum, an ideal hub from which to launch our Bar’s momentous next chapter.

Continuing the moving-as-metaphor theme, our physical move coincides with our moving from an “integrated” bar model to a “bifurcated” bar. Effective July 1, the entity now known as the Mecklenburg County Bar will split into two new organizations: the 26th Judicial District Bar (the “mandatory” bar that performs the statutory functions of local bars, to which you must belong) and the Mecklenburg Bar Association (the “voluntary” bar that will carry on the non-statutory functions you most associate with bar organizations, like CLE programming, sections and committees, pro bono, professional networking, bar league sports).

Because membership in the Mecklenburg Bar Association (“MBA”) is voluntary, we’ll have to earn your business, provide compelling reasons for you to join. We’re excited about that, excited about the opportunity to reimagine, dream, improve, excited about making our Bar better, more responsive to our members, more relevant to your law practices and professional lives. We’ve spent the better part of two years getting ready for this moment. You’ll be hearing a lot more from us in the coming months. In the meantime, if you’re looking for information on MBA



Financial Literacy as a Tool for Trafficking Survivor Recovery

By Meredith Barnette, MCB Communications Committee

We can all agree that human trafficking is an inherently abhorrent and depraved crime, and freeing victims from their traffickers is an important goal. However, often we forget that while victims are freed from physical exploitation, they are left with financial and other issues that hinder recovery. Sarah Byrne, Partner at Moore & Van Allen, has spearheaded the effort to provide victims with financial wellness tools needed to survive and thrive. In a recent interview, she provided some background and insight on the firm's innovative financial literacy online tool for survivors.

WHY AND HOW WAS THE ONLINE TOOL ESTABLISHED?

Attorney Byrne has worked for years with the firm's Human Trafficking Pro Bono Project, which was born out of a need to focus on the whole recovery picture for victims, not just the legal issues connected directly to the trafficking. The pro bono project includes legal support such as expunction of criminal records, family law assistance, victim-witness advocacy, and name changes as well as assistance with credit repair and financial issues.

While coordinating comprehensive legal assistance for victims, she started hearing about financial issues survivors were faced with after trafficking stopped. She revealed that victims of human trafficking suffer financial abuse, in addition to other forms of abuse, and are often saddled with identity theft and debilitating debt that is forced on them by their trafficker, and therefore are left with financial instability and poor credit rating that hinders their ability to live their daily life. Victims also usually don't have basic financial skills such as knowledge of banking and financial concepts, managing money, budgeting, and investing.

Byrne and others started helping victims with credit repair, including guiding banks on the FAST (Finance Against Slavery & Trafficking) Survivor Inclusion Initiative, administered by the United Nations University, to enable trafficking victims to open accounts without the usual requirements of documentary identification, good credit history, account minimums, etc. Trafficking victims soon alerted her to the need for more resources to become financially literate, and working together with Lexington Law and Credit.com, the online tool was launched in 2023 in connection with the observance of the United Nations' World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

WHAT IS THE ONLINE TOOL?

The online financial literacy tool was established in July 2023 and is a portal that provides resources for financial wellness. Byrne explained that the tool provides multiple online learning modules (generally 5-10 minutes long) that are intended to help trafficking survivors realize financial empowerment through credit repair, building good credit through safe banking, and cultivating financial literacy to make good financial decisions.

THE TOPICS OF THE MODULES INCLUDE:

- Financial foundations to understand basics of key financial concepts including checking accounts, car loans, preventing overdraft fees, how credit cards work, mobile and online banking, and how to build better credit
- Building financial capability to manage money such as creating a budget, identity protection, how to manage debt, understanding taxes, and developing healthy financial habits
- Building financial resilience to overcome financial crisis - how to save for an emergency, managing loans in difficult times, and the impact of inflation on finances
- Exploring the benefits and costs of buying and owning a home including factors to consider before buying a home and how mortgages work

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COURT COMMUNIQUES

There are exciting events ahead for the Trial Court Administrator’s Office. On March 13, the **Community Resource Fair** will return to the Mecklenburg County Courthouse!

After a long hiatus, this fair will provide an opportunity for members of the public to speak with various agencies across the county.

More details regarding this year’s resource fair are forthcoming.

Court Camp will also return in July! This year’s camp will feature two sessions.

Session I will run from July 8-12.

Session II will run from July 15-19.

Applications and additional details are forthcoming!

eCourts Portal and File & Serve training courses are available virtually. Attorneys are encouraged to visit ccourts.gov/ecourts#training-materials-10473 for more information!



Many Opportunities Available to Serve in the YLD

By Andrew L. Vining, YLD Chair



I hope that the year 2024 is off to a great start. I first want to send out a big thank you to all who came out to our latest social event in February. Your support means a lot to all of us on the YLD Council. Please be on the lookout for future events in the next couple of months.

One event we are especially excited about is a volunteer opportunity with the Humane Society of Charlotte. Typically, this is one of our most well-attended volunteer events of the year, and we are excited to continue our partnership with them. Volunteer spots are limited and typically fill up fast, so please be on the lookout for communication regarding this event. You will not want to miss it.

In anticipation of the YLD’s Annual Meeting, we are accepting nominations for the YLD’s Young Lawyer of the Year award. The recipient will be presented the award at the YLD’s Annual Meeting. Young Lawyer of the Year nominees should reflect the highest level of professional excellence and act to further the mission of both the Mecklenburg County Bar and the YLD. Qualified applicants will show significant contributions to the:

- Mecklenburg County Bar;
- practice of law;
- Charlotte/Mecklenburg County community;
- recipient’s firm or organization; and/or
- recipient’s clients.

To be eligible, the nominee must practice law in Mecklenburg County and meet the definition of a “Young Lawyer” as defined by the YLD (36 years old or younger or within the first 10 years of practicing law in Mecklenburg County). Additionally, the nominee must be a member of the YLD. Please consider nominating any qualified attorneys. Nominations for the Young Lawyer of the year may be made from March 1, 2024 to May 20, 2024. The online form is available at MeckBar.org/YLD.

Additionally, I would like to take the opportunity to invite YLD members to apply for positions with the YLD Council. As a Council member, you have the unique opportunity to shape and influence the present and future of the YLD. This is especially important as we move into the bifurcation of the Mecklenburg County Bar. (You must be a member of the new Mecklenburg Bar Association to be a member of the Young Lawyers Division.) Committee Chairs serve two-year terms and Officers serve one-year terms with meetings to be attended once a month. Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions regarding the YLD Council.

Lastly, I want to highlight a new program that is being offered by the Mecklenburg County Bar. The Mentorship Alliance pairs attorneys for a mentor-mentee relationship. This can really make a difference in the life and career of a young lawyer. Applications are selected on a rolling basis and I highly encourage you to get involved with this great program. Visit MeckBar.org/mentorship-alliance for details.

As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions or suggestions. We look forward to seeing you at future events.

BUDGETING PROCESS 2024-25

The Mecklenburg County Bar Finance Committee will soon review a draft budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year which begins July 1, 2024. This year’s Committee will be reviewing the new budgets for both the 26th Judicial District Bar as well as the Mecklenburg Bar Association. The committee welcomes input from Bar members. Copies of the draft budgets will be available at the MCB Annual Meeting on May 21, 2024. Any member who wishes to see a copy of the draft budget prior to the Annual Meeting may do so by contacting MCB Director of Finance Sally Robinson at srobinson@meckbar.org.

All MCB members are invited to provide input at a meeting of the Finance Committee on June 7, 2024, and/or tender budget suggestions to Sally Robinson at srobinson@meckbar.org.

Nominations Sought for 26th Executive Board & MBA Class of 2027

Now is your chance to help create a lasting legacy in the legal community as we embark on our bifurcation journey by serving as a leader in one of our two new organizations. Nominations are currently being sought for eight positions on the newly formed 26th Judicial District (JD) Bar Executive Board as well as the Officers, Class of 2027 members and Chair of the Young Lawyers Division for the Mecklenburg Bar Association (MBA). The 2023-24 MCB Nominating Committee will prepare slates for both organizations this year and those slates will be presented for approval by the Bar at the Annual Meeting in May. Terms for both slates will be effective July 1, 2024.


The Nominating Committee will meet on March 19 via Zoom to consider all nominees. Nominations must be submitted using one of the two Nomination Forms on MeckBar.org/nominations no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, March 8, 2024. Please note, each organization will have its own Nomination Form, so please ensure you are completing the nomination for the desired organization prior to submitting.

The respective slates nominated by the Committee will be posted on MeckBar.org and printed in the May/June edition of the *Mecklenburg Bar News*. Erin Taylor, as immediate past president of the MCB, serves as chair of the Nominating Committee. MCB Executive Director Leah Campbell serves as an ex officio member of this committee.


In accordance with Article VIII, Section 3(c) of the Bylaws of the Mecklenburg County Bar (MCB), the Executive Committee approved the following persons to serve as members of the 2023-24 Nominating Committee:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Heather Culp ¹ | 6. Lambert Guinn | 11. Curtis Strubinger |
| 2. Chris Lam ¹ | 7. Sarah Hutchins | 12. Mandana Vidwan |
| 3. Stephen Guardipee ² | 8. Michael Ingersoll | |
| 4. Ashley Oldfield ² | 9. Christopher King | Past President ¹ |
| 5. Hon. Aretha Blake | 10. La-Deidre Matthews | Young Lawyers Division ² |


The Nominating Committee will create a slate for the 26th JD for the following positions:




2024-2025 Slate




Name
President
1-year term




Name
President-Elect
1-year term




Name
Secretary
1-year term




Name
Treasurer
1-year term







Name
Member-at-Large
2-year term



Name
Member-at-Large
2-year term



Name
Member-at-Large
2-year term



Name
Member-at-Large
2-year term

MEETING FREQUENCY:

Year 1 (2024-25)

The 26th Judicial District Bar Executive Board will meet every other month. Additionally, members of the 26th JD Executive Board may attend as guests at the bi-monthly meetings of the Mecklenburg Bar Association (MBA) Board of Directors.

After Year 1

Prior to the start of FY26, the Executive Board can modify the meeting schedule to quarterly or as needed.

CANDIDATES FOR NOMINATION:

Any Active Member of the 26th JD in good standing may submit their name to the Nominating Committee for consideration. Any member whose name is considered for nomination at any point during the process must have expressed willingness to serve if elected.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

The 26th JD Executive Board will have the primary responsibility of overseeing the regulatory functions prescribed by statute for a judicial district bar. These functions include State Bar Council elections, District Court judicial vacancy elections, public defender elections, the adoption of bylaws and the collection of dues. In addition to these regulatory functions, the 26th JD Executive Board also oversees the Grievance Committee, the Fall & Spring Swearing-In Ceremonies for the admission of new members to the NC Bar as well as the Annual Meeting, held jointly with the MBA. The 26th JD will serve as the tenant in the leased office space with the MBA and MBF serving as subtenants. The Executive Board will have the fiduciary responsibility of annually assessing the budget and setting a schedule for regular dues evaluations and increases. The Executive Board may, in its discretion, create and abolish committees under the 26th JD.

The Nominating Committee will create a slate for the MBA for the following positions:



MECKLENBURG BAR ASSOCIATION

Connect. Lead. Serve.

2024-2025 Slate

 Name President-Elect <i>1-year term</i>	 Name Secretary <i>1-year term</i>	 Name Treasurer <i>1-year term</i>
 Name Class of 2027 <i>3-year term</i>	 Name Class of 2027 <i>3-year term</i>	 Name Class of 2027 <i>3-year term</i>
 Name Class of 2027 <i>3-year term</i>	 Name Class of 2027 <i>3-year term</i>	 Name Class of 2027 <i>3-year term</i>
 Name YLD Chair <i>1-year term</i>	<i>Two Class of 2027 Board Members must be in the YLD</i>	

*The current Board of the Mecklenburg County Bar will be asked to transition to the Board of the MBA starting July 1, 2024. As such, the 2023-24 MCB Nominating Committee will be asked to provide a slate for only the officers and Class of 2027 MBA Board members. Any current Board member that does not want to join the MBA may submit their resignation. Any vacancies created by resignation will be filled with members of the MBA after the new fiscal year begins on July 1, 2024.

MEETING FREQUENCY:

The MBA Executive Committee (EC) will meet monthly, and the MBA Board of Directors will meet every other month. The EC will retain its current schedule of meeting the third Thursday of the month and the Board will continue to meet the fourth Thursday of every other month.

CANDIDATES FOR NOMINATION:

All interested members of the Mecklenburg County Bar are encouraged to submit their names for consideration as nominees for various officer and Board of Directors' seats for the MBA fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024. Please note that if you are applying for an MBA officer or board position, you are confirming your intent to join the MBA.

Starting in 2024-25, all nominees to the MBA Executive Committee and Board must be MBA members in good standing with the MBA. Only current members of the MBA are eligible to vote on the MBA slate at the Annual Meeting. Nominees are not required to be

members of the 26th JD but are required to be attorneys licensed in any jurisdiction.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

The MBA Board will have the primary responsibility of overseeing the programs of the MBA, including the recruitment, retention, and engagement of its members. Programs include, but are not limited to, Continuing Legal Education, Sections, Divisions, events and networking, pro bono opportunities, diversity initiatives, community service, and the Annual Meeting, held jointly with the 26th JD. The MBA will serve as a subtenant of the 26th JD. The MBA Board will have the fiduciary responsibility of annually assessing the budget and setting a schedule for regular dues evaluations and increases. The Board may, in its discretion, create and abolish Committees, Sections and Divisions under the MBA.

The 26th JD, the MBA and MBF are designed to collaborate and support the others' efforts to the extent possible. However, each organization has its own Board with its own scope of authority and none of these bodies has authority over the others.





Council for Children's Rights

STANDING UP & SPEAKING OUT FOR YOUTH

Council for Children's Rights (CFCR), a local legal advocacy non-profit, has been a unique resource for youth in Mecklenburg County for over 43 years; standing up and speaking out against the injustices and violations of youths' human and legal rights. CFCR effectively implements a comprehensive strategy of services to benefit youth including individual legal representation, social work advocacy, statewide policy advocacy, data inquiry and analysis, community training and partnership, and local policy and practice reform. CFCR offers services in five core areas where children need help the most: mental health, education, family stability through custody, children's defense, and systems reform. The strategies to accomplish the work have always been two-fold: (1) to address the individualized needs of every client, and (2) to advocate for system change and reform to address the barriers and gaps existing in the primary systems that serve children. It is within the individual case representation that we bear witness to the multitude of system failures.

The need for our services has been increasing significantly in the past three years. Before the pandemic, CFCR handled an average of 1,200 cases with 19 advocates.

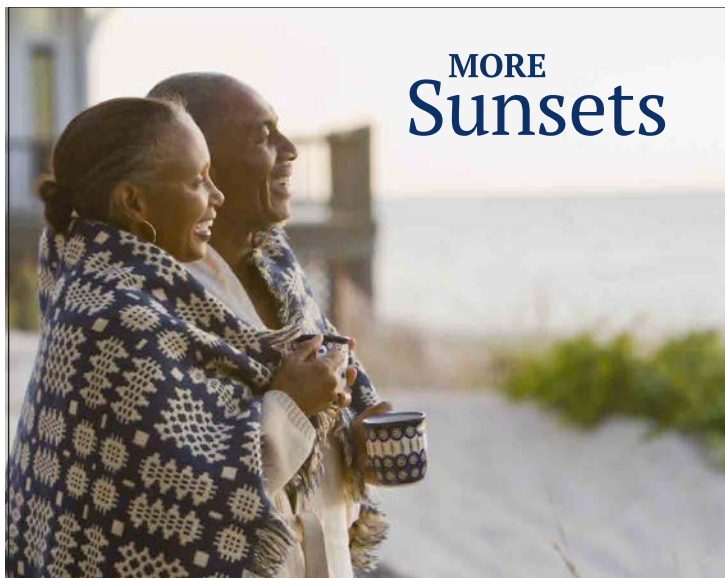
In fiscal year 2023, 14 advocates successfully handled 4,200 cases. CFCR has continued to meet this ever-increasing demand for our services during the most trying of times, demonstrating the critical need for our services. The data shown above only reflects the individual case representation. In the past four years, we have also seen the need to increase our advocacy to fight injustices within the system. Please continue reading to find ways you can help us meet the needs of our youth!

Most recently, we directly witnessed the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) engage in a practice and policy of holding children in detention centers in solitary confinement for nearly 24 hours a day. As our esteemed Bar knows, holding children awaiting adjudication in solitary confinement in an 8-by-10 foot cell for 23-24 hours a day for weeks, and sometimes months, at a time is unconstitutional. Further, the effects of solitary confinement on anyone, especially children, is devastating. The severe and harmful effects of solitary confinement on the health, mental well-being, physical, and emotional needs of developing children is clear and supported by decades of research studies and reports. The children subject to these deplorable conditions are among the

most vulnerable. The Children's Defense Team of CFCR raised these issues to NCDPS for over a year to no avail.

On January 8, 2024, CFCR and Nelson Mullins filed a class action lawsuit in the Middle District of North Carolina against NCDPS to address the unconstitutional practice of holding children in solitary confinement for nearly 24 hours a day as well as denying their constitutional right to an education. We alleged in the Complaint, "Despite the known dangers to the children in their care and their admission of the harm that solitary confinement causes children, defendants run the juvenile jails in North Carolina with inadequate staffing that predictably results in children being locked in their cells nearly 24 hours a day." The solitary confinement is lasting "for weeks or even months" and children are only being let out to shower, to fill their water bottle, for an hour of school, or to clean. Their cells are no larger than 8-by-10 feet, each holding one child, with only a toilet, sink and window. This lawsuit references studies that show the devastating and long-lasting effects of solitary confinement on children, including drastically increasing the risk of suicide, and leading to long-term trust issues and trauma from the isolation. The lawsuit seeks to take immediate action to end the injurious

continued on page 15



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Nominations Sought for the 2024-25 MBF Board of Directors



If you've ever considered serving as a leader with the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation and helping MBF increase its impact in the community, now is your chance! The MBF, the charitable arm and sister organization of the MCB, is currently seeking nominations for the 2024-25 Board of Directors. Serving in a leadership role with the MBF is a great opportunity to grow your network while also improving our legal community (not to mention that, like your service with the MCB, your volunteer hours with the MBF count toward your aspirational 50 hours of pro bono service outlined in Rule 6.1).

In accordance with Article II of the MBF bylaws, interested members of the Mecklenburg County Bar are encouraged to submit their names for consideration as nominees for various officer and board of directors' seats for the MBF fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024.

The MBF Nominating Committee will meet in April to consider all nominees. Nominations must be submitted using the MBF Nomination Form at MeckBar.org/mbf-board-nominations no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, April 5, 2024. Rob Heroy, as immediate past president of the MBF, serves as chair of the Nominating Committee. MCB & MBF Executive Director Leah Campbell serves as an ex officio member of this committee. The slate of recommended officers and the Class of 2027 will be presented to the MBF Board of Directors on May 22, 2024, for a vote.

The Committee shall approve nominations to serve in the following officer positions for the 2024-25 term, pursuant to

Officer Positions:

- President-Elect (one-year term)
- Secretary (one-year term)
- Treasurer (one-year term)

Board of Directors:

Class of 2027 (three-year term, six members)

A copy of the MBF bylaws and the MBF Board of Directors Description of Responsibilities is available at MeckBar.org.



New Beginnings

continued from page 1

Our new home may be small (about 1/7 of the size of the Bar & Foundation Center), but "right-sizing" was prudent from both a financial and a strategic standpoint. We realized in recent years that our space needs were changing. The CLE market moved increasingly online. We were hosting fewer and fewer large events and meetings. And then came the pandemic, which upended traditional notions of office space.

The MBA's mission is to "champion the local." That is our unique value proposition, the thing that sets us apart from other bar organizations that are statewide or national in scope. We exist to facilitate connections here in the local community, to foster a sense of belonging. One way we aim to do that is to "take the Bar to the Bar." Our limited space in the new location compels us to get out into the community, to meet you where you are. Section and committee meetings, events, CLEs, social gatherings – we'll be hosting those at law firms, event spaces, and other locations all across Mecklenburg County. In that sense, our physical footprint is actually growing, not shrinking.

I'll close with some words of gratitude. Moving is hard work, stressful and unsettling. Our Bar staff, led by Executive Director Leah Campbell, did an amazing job purging and packing up, upfitting and furnishing the new location, all while managing the challenging bifurcation process and otherwise keeping our Bar running on all cylinders. Thank you.

We also had wise counsel from excellent lawyers. LaToya Parker, a real estate partner at Parker Poe, expertly guided us through the lease negotiation process. LaToya also is representing the Foundation in the sale of the Bar & Foundation Center. Danny Merlin, a real estate partner at Alexander Ricks, has also provided significant advice in connection with the building sale. LaToya and Danny graciously provided their legal services on a pro bono basis. Please join me in thanking LaToya and Danny for their outstanding contributions to our Bar.



MCB CELEBRATES PRO BONO SERVICE

Do you know an outstanding individual attorney or a group of attorneys doing exceptional pro bono work in our community? Have they volunteered their time and expertise in service of those that would otherwise not be represented in our legal system? Do they go above and beyond their call to service for those in need?

Nominations are now being collected for the 2024 Mecklenburg County Bar Pro Bono Awards. Nominations may be submitted at MeckBar.org/ProBonoAwards before April 12, 2024, for consideration. The awards will be presented at the 2024 Annual Meeting on May 21, at Central Piedmont Community College.



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REGISTRATION OPENS
MARCH 15

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR Changes to CLE Rules Effective: March 1, 2024

1

ANNUAL ATTENDANCE FEE

The \$3.50/hr attendance fee is eliminated. Lawyers will now pay a \$25 annual CLE attendance fee during the membership renewal process.

~~\$3.50 x 12 =~~
~~\$42~~
\$25

2

2-YEAR REPORTING PERIOD...

Over 2 years, lawyers must complete 24 hours of CLE, including: 4 Ethics Hours, 1 Technology Training Hour, and 1 Professional Well-Being Hour (formerly Mental Health/Substance Abuse).

2 years
24 Hours

3

...EXCEPT FOR 2024

To create a stagger where the reporting period ends for half of lawyers each year, lawyers with an odd year of admittance (e.g., 2023) will have a one-time, 1yr/12hr requirement. Even year lawyers will go directly to 2yrs/24hrs.



4

NO ANNUAL REPORT REQUIREMENT

Beginning at the end of the 2024 reporting period, lawyers will not be required to file an annual report. No more late fees for failing to click a few buttons!



5

CARRY OVER UP TO 12 HOURS

Lawyers may carryover up to 12 hours of CLE from one reporting period to the next. Hours will carryover as total hours only. **Ethics, Technology, and PWB hours must be taken every reporting period.**



6

12-MONTH CLE YEAR (NO GRACE PERIOD)

The 12-month CLE year begins March 1. Reporting periods end at the end of February. Hours must be completed by the end of the lawyer's reporting period in order to avoid a late fee.

March to February

7

STREAMLINED ENFORCEMENT

Lawyers who fail to complete their hours requirements will be subject to non-compliance fees and a more streamlined suspension process.



8

EXEMPTIONS CLAIMED AT RENEWAL

Lawyers eligible for an exemption from CLE requirements will claim exemptions during the membership renewal process and will not be charged the annual attendance fee. In 2024 only, this fee will be paid during the Annual Report process.



9

ONLINE COURSE APPLICATION & FEE

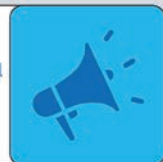
Sponsors of CLE programs will be apply online and pay a course application fee (\$50 for live programs). Programs offered for free will not be charged. The full fee schedule will be released in October 2023.



10


MORE INFORMATION ON THE WAY

Additional information for lawyers and sponsors will be provided throughout the remainder of 2023.



Announcing the Select Employers for the CLDC Class of 2024

The Charlotte Legal Diversity Clerkship (CLDC) program attracts and invites high-performing first-year law students with diverse backgrounds to Charlotte for a 10-week corporate and law firm summer clerkship as part of Mecklenburg County Bar's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee pipeline efforts to improve diversity in the Bar. Every year, Charlotte-based CLDC alumni - either returning for 2L summer employment or as full-time attorneys - participate in the program through mentorship and networking opportunities.

Since 2006, the CLDC program has hosted 164 students at over 30 different Charlotte employers. For the 18th year, MCB is excited to announce the employers who will select and welcome the CLDC Class of 2024! 



MECKLENBURG
COUNTY BAR
CHARLOTTE LEGAL DIVERSITY CLERKSHIP

EMPLOYER PAIRS

Charlotte Legal Diversity Clerkship Program 2024

ALSTON & BIRD HONEYWELL	BRADLEY BANK OF AMERICA	ROBINSON BRADSHAW ATRIUM HEALTH
MOORE & VAN ALLEN BRIGHOUSE	MAYER BROWN EQUITABLE	KATTEN NUVEEN
MOORE & VAN ALLEN LOWE'S	PARKER POE DUKE ENERGY	MCGUIREWOODS WELLS FARGO
WOMBLE BOND SPX CORPORATION	POYNER SPRUILL NOVANT HEALTH	LITTLER RXO
	MAYER BROWN WELLS FARGO	

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- Co-author of *Federal Civil Practice in the Fourth Circuit* and author of *Fourth Circuit Criminal Handbook*
- Experience handling the full gamut of federal civil litigation, including Title VII, ADEA, ADA, FMLA, Sexual Harassment, ERISA, Fair Labor Standards Act, Intellectual Property, Civil Rights, Construction, Education, Insurance and Antitrust Claims, as well as a variety of personal and commercial claims under the Court's diversity jurisdiction
- Certified State Superior Court Mediator
- Named a 2011 through 2023 *NC Super Lawyer* and to the 2012 through 2023 American Registries' list of "Top Attorneys in NC"

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www.carlhornlaw.com

2023-24 Bar Foundation Fund Campaign

Join the firms, legal departments, corporations and individuals contributing to the Caring for Our Community Fund, the annual Law & Society Event, the Bar Leadership Institute and the 2024 McMillan Fellowship Fund Event. The Mecklenburg Bar Foundation believes that the legal community has the power to better our community as a whole by giving back. Don't miss your chance to join your friends and colleagues in supporting the 2023-24 Bar Foundation Fund. You can make your pledge by donating online at MeckBar.org or by emailing Director of Development & Pro Bono Shelby Benson at sbenson@meckbar.org. Thank you for supporting your BFF!

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Do you want your firm to receive special recognition on the BFF Honor Roll? Contact Development Committee Chair Ashley Oldfield at aoldfield@rcdlaw.net or Director of Development & Pro Bono Shelby Benson sbenson@meckbar.org for more information. 

UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2024
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

17th Annual Increasing Diversity in the Legal Profession Conference

The Mecklenburg County Bar will host its 17th annual Increasing Diversity in the Legal Profession Conference at the CPCC Harris Conference Center. This free in-person conference invites diverse students to participate in activities and discussions exploring career opportunities in the legal field.

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024
8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

2024 Legal Eagle Charity Golf Tournament

Olde Sycamore, 7500 Olde Sycamore Dr.
 Charlotte, NC 28227

Join your fellow Bar members on the green for fun and fellowship in support of the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation.

Proceeds from this charitable tournament will help the Foundation fulfill its mission to advance public understanding and respect for the rule of law and the role

of the legal profession; to promote the highest ideals of professionalism, public service, and access to the legal system; and to support the charitable and educational goals of the Mecklenburg County Bar.

Registration/Breakfast begins at 8:30 a.m.
 Shotgun starts at 9:30 a.m.
 The price is \$120/player or sponsor a team of four for \$575.

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.

2023-24 Lunch with a Lawyer End of Year Luncheon & Courthouse Tour

Charles R. Jonas Federal Building, 401 W. Trade St., Charlotte, NC 28202

In collaboration with Chief Judge Albert Diaz and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, please join us for the Lunch with A Lawyer End of Year Luncheon & Courthouse Tour. For more information, contact Kaila Johnson-Belton, kbelton@meckbar.org.



THURSDAY MAY 15 – FRIDAY MAY 16, 2024
ZOOM
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Professionalism for New Attorneys Spring 2024

12 Total Credit Hours (11.0 ethics, 1.0 Substance Abuse/Mental Health). This program fulfills the technology and the trust accounting requirements. For more information, contact Michelle Lee, mlee@meckbar.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

2024 MCB Annual Meeting

Parr Center Theater at Central Piedmont Community College

Boxed lunch begins at 11 a.m. in the 1st floor dining area

Members will vote on the new officers and Board members for both the 26th Judicial District Bar Executive Board and Mecklenburg Bar Association Board of Directors and to witness the swearing-in of 2024-25 MBA President Courtney Ballard.

With so many Google marketing options to choose from - SEO, LSA, Google Ads, content marketing - it can be overwhelming to figure out where to invest your marketing dollars. But what is still working in 2024? What is cost effective? What will generate the most leads? What works quickly? What needs to be a part of a law firm's long-term strategy?

Let's start with the basics: what options are there to market on Google?

When someone searches Google for a Personal Injury Lawyer or an Accident Attorney, Google presents the user with a results page, also known as a "search engine results page" (SERP). The SERP, from top to bottom, varies based on the keyword, but in general, users will usually see:

- Google Ads
- LSAs (Local Service Ads)
- The Local Pack (where the map is)
- Organic results (websites)

Showing up in these areas creates leads. We'll cover these below.

Google Ads (PPC) and Local Services Ads (LSA)

Google Ads and Local Service Ads are both directly controlled by Google's ad platform. They are fairly straightforward in theory. You pay money to show up there.

Google Ads is Google's PPC (pay per click) advertising platform. PPC has very high cost per acquisition. A Google Ads campaign is rarely cost effective unless you have a long-term plan in place to market to past clients.

LSA is a pay per call platform, meaning you only pay when someone calls you. You are only charged if the call lasts for at least 30 seconds. You can even dispute the call if it is unrelated to your legal services. In North Carolina, most LSA personal injury calls cost around \$250 per call, and in general, 1 out of 4 calls is a good call which is likely to become a case. The downside is the LSA rarely works, regardless of your budget. Hopefully Google fixes this soon.

The Local Pack

The local pack (or 3 pack, or map thingy) results at the top of Google which display firms, their pictures, and review ratings are the local pack.

To perform well in the local pack, you need good organic rankings and recent reviews. User proximity is an important factor few people understand - the local pack changes based on user location. A potential client 15 miles from your location will not see you in the local pack; however, there are ways to extend your "reach" in the local pack. In addition to the variables which determine where you rank in the local pack, firms with the most reviews convert the best.

Firms displaying in the local pack, with good, recent reviews, often get 10 - 30 calls per week just from this one section. In cities such as Charlotte, some attorneys receive 50+ calls per week from the local pack.

Organic Results

Personal Injury Attorneys who display in the organic results see few calls for the big, generic terms, such as "Charlotte Personal Injury Lawyer." Most Google users aren't using that search term so much as they are using terms more closely aligned with their specific issue.

That said, ranking there is important for Local Pack rankings. Any firm who ranks on page one or two for these types of terms likely has a site powerful enough to rank for a wide variety of other terms. If you rank here, it is very important to build out content which covers an array of accident and injury types. For example, you could also show up for CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) injuries.

Firms with high-ranking sites who have built out hundreds or thousands of good pages about injury types in their area can receive more leads from their site than they can from the Local Pack.

How North Carolina Attorneys Actually "do" SEO in 2024:

A handful of NC's larger firms have in-house marketing teams and natural press coverage. Some small firms try to do it themselves to save money. For everyone else, they need to hire a marketing agency. Choose these agencies carefully by doing your research and asking for references.

In a nutshell, you will want:

- On-site SEO. Your firm needs a fast, secure, mobile friendly site which converts. We recommend using WordPress. And a good SEO agency will want to manage all the content going on your website and will handle the maintenance issues.
- Backlinks. If you have no natural press you will need to build backlinks to your website for it to perform in Google search. A backlink is when another website mentions and links to yours. This is perhaps the most difficult part of online marketing. There are companies that sell backlinks in bulk - but these links are often to really iffy sites and can hurt your website rankings in the long run. It is important to work with an SEO agency who individually sources links that are relevant to your practice.
- Content. High quality, human written content, written for people, has a strong impact on rankings, the Google Local Pack, and of course, conversions.

Stay on top of the latest marketing tips and see other personal injury attorney's success stories on our website: **OptimizeMyFirm.com**.





BLI Alumni in attendance and the BLI Class of 2024

Bar Leadership Institute Class of 2024 Begins Their Journey at Annual Dinner

Over 130 Bar members, BLI alumni and guests came together to celebrate the new Bar Leadership Institute class at the annual Bar Leadership Dinner on January 25 at The Terrace at Cedar Hill. The evening featured a keynote address by the Hon. Aretha V. Blake, BLI Class of 2008.

The evening was made possible under the leadership of BLI Committee Chair Lawrence Wooden, Vice Chair Meredith Hamilton, the BLI Committee and the generous support of the following sponsors:

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For more information about the BLI program, please visit MeckBar.org/BLI. To learn more about the individuals in the Class of 2024, visit MCB's social media channels.



SWING INTO SUMMER: Softball League Returns for another Season of Fun

Join the Mecklenburg County Bar Lawyers & Friends Co-Ed Softball League!

Games are on Mondays and Tuesdays from June to August at Veterans Park. Secure your spot now - register at MeckBar.org/Softball by May 3.

Team fees are \$550/season; ensure payment by May 17, 2024, to guarantee your place on the field. Get ready to play ball and we'll see you in the dugout!

Upcoming Section Events

Friday March 1	Business Law Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. The Blue Taj (Ballantyne) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Thursday March 7	Labor & Employment Section Breakfast 9:00 a.m. Rhino Market Deli <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Thursday March 7	Criminal Justice Section Spring Social 5:30 p.m. Town Brewing <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Wednesday March 13	Tax Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. Kid Cashew (Dilworth) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Thursday March 14	Immigration & Nationality Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. Legion Brewing (South Park) <i>Self-Pay</i>
Wednesday March 20	Corporate Counsel Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. Essex Bar & Bistro (Uptown) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Thursday March 21	Sole Practitioner/Small Firm Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. Cabo Fish Taco (Ballantyne) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Thursday April 4	Labor & Employment Section Breakfast 9:00 a.m. Location TBA <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Friday April 5	Business Law Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. 1900 Mexican Grill (Elizabeth) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Wednesday April 10	Tax Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. The Waterman (South End) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Thursday April 11	Immigration & Nationality Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. Legion Brewing (South Park) <i>Self-Pay</i>
Wednesday April 17	Corporate Counsel Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. Tony's Pizza (Ballantyne) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>
Thursday April 18	Sole Practitioner/Small Firm Section Lunch 12:00 p.m. Noble Smoke (West Charlotte) <i>Complimentary for Section Members</i>



MECKLENBURG BAR FOUNDATION
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LEGAL EAGLE

Charity Golf Tournament

Join us for a day of fun and friendly competition on the greens as we raise funds to support the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation's mission.

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024

OLDE SYCAMORE GOLF PLANTATION
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Tickets and Sponsorship Packages

HELP LEAD YOUR BAR TOWARD NEW HORIZONS IN 2024-25

Are you seeking a way to connect with fellow Bar members and grow your network? Are you interested in strengthening your resume while providing service to your Bar and your legal community? The upcoming Mecklenburg Bar Association, the 26th Judicial District Bar and the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation are looking for volunteers just like you who wish to rise into leadership roles within the Bar, the new Association, and the Foundation.

The Bar and Foundation offer more than 20 committees with a variety of service and networking opportunities. Time spent volunteering on a Bar or Foundation board, committee or section counts toward your responsibilities under Rule 6.1 of the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct.

Committee volunteers serve up to three-year terms, which typically begin on July 1. If you are interested in serving on the 26th, MBA or MBF committee please contact GetInvolved@MeckBar.org before May 31.

Please visit MeckBar.org/Committees to view descriptions of all Bar & Foundation Committees. 

Help Set the Course for Our Future at the 2023-24 Annual Meeting!

Notice of Annual Meeting and Board Nominations

Join fellow Mecklenburg County Bar members at our Annual Meeting to elect the new officers and Board members for both the 26th Judicial District Bar Executive Board and Mecklenburg Bar Association Board of Directors and to witness the swearing-in of 2024-25 MBA President Courtney Ballard. We'll also be approving bylaws for our new organizations as well as providing the most up-to-date information on all things bifurcation, effective July 1, 2024.

When: Tuesday, May 21, 2024


Details: 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Parr Center Theater at Central Piedmont Community College

Boxed lunch begins at 11 a.m. in the 1st floor dining area

For more information and to register, please visit MeckBar.org.

Questions? Contact events@meckbar.org or 704/375-8624


Board of Directors Nominations

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 3(e) of the bylaws of the Mecklenburg County Bar, 26th Judicial District, the 2023-24 Nominating Committee will meet in March 2024 to consider a slate of nominees for both the 26th Judicial District Bar and the Mecklenburg Bar Association. For full details on this year's nominations process or to learn more about the available positions, please see Page 4-5. 

Increasing Diversity in the Legal Profession Conference Returns In Person This Year

The Mecklenburg County Bar's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee's Pipeline Programming Subcommittee is hosting the 17th annual Increasing Diversity in the Legal Profession Conference on March 9, 2024, from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the CPCC Harris Conference Center (3216 Harris Campus Drive).

This free conference is designed to encourage students with diverse backgrounds (8th grade & up) to explore a career in the legal field. All who attend will have an opportunity to interact with judges, attorneys, law students, and law school representatives during panel discussions and special activities that will explore how you can make an impact on society with a career in the legal profession. Speakers will share helpful tips and details about everything from taking the LSAT exam to the variety of opportunities available with a legal career.

Visit MeckBar.org/DiversityConference to learn more about the conference. 

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If you have a suggestion for an article and/or would be willing to author the article, please contact
MCB Associate Executive Director
Meghan Tinkham
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or
MCB Communications Chair
Kristle Lee
(kristle.lee@duke-energy.com). 

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The Mecklenburg County Bar (MCB) accepts editorial material of general legal interest to the practicing Bar of the 26th Judicial District for inclusion in the Mecklenburg Bar News, MeckBar.org, Bar Blasts and related methods of communication. The implicit purposes of the *Mecklenburg Bar News*, MeckBar.org, Bar Blasts and related methods of communication are to educate members of the MCB and to create and maintain shared communication with its members. The Communications Committee, MCB Executive Director and/or MCB Executive Committee reserve the right to accept, reject or edit all material. The MCB Executive Director is the editor of all MCB communications.

DISCLAIMER: Efforts will be made to provide information of interest that is timely, accurate and relevant to the legal community. The MCB is not responsible for misprints, typographical errors or misinformation in the Mecklenburg Bar News, MeckBar.org, Bar Blasts and related methods of communication. The views and opinions are not necessarily those of the 26th Judicial District Bar. Communications Committee: Kristle Lee, *Chair*, Luke Thomas, *Vice Chair*, Meredith Barnette, Lydia Butts, Asya Bynum, Jennifer Errington, Natalie Kutcher, Jasmine R. Little, Adrienne Satchell, Jesse Sharp, Edward Woodall, and Meghan Tinkham, *Staff Liaison*.



Financial Literacy

continued from page 2

- Retirement planning - how to optimize retirement savings, benefits of IRAs and 401(k) plans, estate and wealth planning, understanding Medicare, and retirement income strategies
- Becoming more financially prepared for the future by investing through exploring 529s, Certificates of Deposit, savings, as well as mindful and sustainable investing
- Learning about the responsibilities of caring for another person's finances
- Understanding the financial basics of managing a small business
- Growing a small business

There's even the ability to personalize a "playlist" of modules based on answers to your questions regarding your financial goals and current financial habits.


WHO CAN USE THE TOOL?

Anyone can use the online tool, but trafficking victims are most often referred by non-government organizations helping survivors with wrap-around services. The goal of the tool is to not only provide financial literacy and wellness, but to help

trafficking survivors avoid re-exploitation. It's an easy resource to help build knowledge and confidence.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD MCB MEMBERS KNOW?

Anyone and everyone can help in the fight against trafficking and re-exploitation, whether it's representing survivors with their legal needs or assisting with credit repair and financial wellness. One easy and meaningful way lawyers can get involved is to assist with blocking any bad financial information that was the result of trafficking from consumer credit reports, through the federal Debt Bondage Repair Act and implementing regulation. Minimal documentation is needed when filing for relief with the credit reporting agencies, which are required to block requested information within a matter of days, so survivors and their pro bono attorneys see swift relief. Getting involved in pro bono work doesn't have to be difficult and every little bit makes a difference.

See how the tool works at bit.ly/tools4financiallife or by scanning the QR Code. 




Standing up for Youth

continued from page 6

While CFCR's work is extensive and complex, at the end of the day- CFCR stands up for kids and amplifies their voices when people are failing to listen. We let them know that their voice and experiences have value and work hard to ensure systems do not interfere with their chance for success. As a


non-profit, individual donations are critical to continue to meet the increasing demands for our services and we need to grow our teams this year. There are thousands of children similarly situated to those we serve who need us.

One hour can make this difference, can you commit to donating an amount equal to your billable hourly rate? That one hour can and WILL change lives! Please consider donating today at cfcrights.org. 

MEMBERSHIP FEE DUES NOTICE

The delinquency date for MCB members invoiced on July 1, 2023, was October 1, 2023.* The MCB is required to report to the North Carolina State Bar a member's failure to pay the annual membership fee within three to six months after the delinquency date. See 27 N.C.A.C. 1A .0902. Such conduct may result in the suspension of the member's license to practice law. Thus, for those invoiced on July 1, 2023, the MCB must report the names of those members who have failed to pay the fee by April 1, 2024.*

If you have not done so already, please log into your account at MeckBar.org and locate the link titled, "Pay Dues." (If you do not know your log-in information, click "I forgot my username or password"). If you do not see your dues payment option in "Pay Dues", please go to "My MCB" and scroll down to see any outstanding invoices. You may either complete your payment online or print the invoice and mail it in with your check to Mecklenburg County Bar Attn: Membership, P.O. Box 30008, Charlotte, NC 28230. If you have any questions, email Member Records Coordinator Jill Wiggins at jwiggins@meckbar.org.

*The delinquency date and the reporting date will differ for those invoiced after July 1, 2023. 

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