Welcome to the Treasure Coast!
I learned as a young lawyer that my legal community is so much more than a walk to and from the courthouse. My involvement with local voluntary bars allowed me to get involved in something greater than myself, to meet lawyers and judges from all facets of the law, and to make a real difference in the profession and my community. I love voluntary bar work and the positive influence lawyers can have on society and that is why I am so excited to welcome you to the 2018 Voluntary Bar Leaders Conference.

Long before I became President of The Florida Bar, I served as president of both the Palm Beach County Bar Association and the Florida Association for Women Lawyers – Palm Beach Chapter. I know that I would not be where I am today without the leadership skills and relationships I developed during this service.

One of the greatest values of any bar is fostering relationships between their members. Local bar associations are a lawyer’s professional community and if you invest in your community, your community will invest in you.

Since you have chosen to come to this conference, you are just as passionate about your voluntary bar work as I am. You are truly motivated to take your volunteer role and your bar to a new level. If so, then you have definitely come to the right place. The stage is set this weekend for a lot of surprising and exciting programs about bar service. To get the most out of this conference’s experience, I encourage you to:

**Learn Something New.** The breakout sessions are designed to give you a unique perspective on becoming a better bar leader. No matter what stage of your career you are in, there will be waves of useful information to help you rise with the changing legal tide.

**Interact and engage.** You will have the opportunity at this conference to speak with lawyers you may never otherwise meet. Take advantage of this! Participate in the discussions and engage with others to find out what’s going on in their bar! I challenge you to take home at least one new idea and implement it in the coming year.

**Have fun.** Time away from our law practice refreshes and rejuvenates us. So does time making new friends. Recharge by drawing from the energy and excitement of your fellow conference attendees and the conference events. The value of just networking cannot be discounted.

**Ask me.** We already have a lot in common because of my passion for voluntary bar service. One of the most rewarding aspects of being president is the opportunity to travel to local and specialty bar associations and meet with members, like you. That’s why I’m here. I want to hear from you. I’m looking forward to our conversation on Saturday morning.

We are all in this together. I encourage us all to leave here with a fresh perspective on how we can use our connections to strengthen our profession throughout the state. There is no better way to achieve this than through local and specialty bar groups. I am delighted to be a part of your conference and this community.

Cordially,

Michelle R. Suskauer
A SURGE OF PEOPLE AND POSSIBILITIES!

Welcome to the Voluntary Bar Leaders Conference and the Treasure Coast. We are delighted that you are with us to explore timely topics, special networking events, and dialogue with more than 100 voluntary bar leaders.

Our focus this year is to equip you with tools that will help you ride the wave of leading an association at a whole new level. When you leave on Saturday with a new spin on possibilities, then the conference was successful.

Networking and talking to people is one of the best ways to generate new ideas. Be sure to participate in the networking game and attend the Grande Reception on Friday night! Don your favorite tropical attire and meet us at Ocean View Deck for a special evening of great food, chilled beverages, and genuine colleague camaraderie that is off the charts!

GOOD VIBRATIONS.

Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee members are your hosts for this conference. They will be wearing royal blue, if you need anything during the conference or have a question.

Also, a special thanks to the local voluntary bars for their support. The networking game prize is generously provided by the Martin County Bar Association.

SCORE BIG ON CLE.

This year’s conference has several tools you’ll want to have handy to chart your course for success as an officer or director of your bar association. Not only have we brought together the best resources and professionals on timely topics, the conference is also good for 6.0 hours Continuing Legal Education general credit and 1.0 technology credit from The Florida Bar Reference #1707705N.
LEADING BY LISTENING.

2018-19 Florida Bar President Michelle Suskauer is one of us. Having served as the past president of the Palm Beach County Bar Association and the Florida Association for Women Lawyers - Palm Beach County Chapter, she knows the ever-changing challenges of leading a voluntary bar. She also recognizes how important voluntary bars are to the success of the legal profession in local communities and to The Florida Bar.

Suskauer believes that the most powerful mode of communication is still a face-to-face conversation. A great listener, she wants to use her speaking time to hear from you. She encourages conference participants to think about what fresh things The Florida Bar can do to enhance your association. Jot down an innovative idea or question and get ready for an up-close conversation with the new Bar president. The talk gets underway at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 14.

Making a Legacy Splash!

Meagan Hooper, founder & CEO of bSmartGuide.com, leveraged an arts degree and professional theatre and film experience into a decade long career on Wall Street. Self-taught in the world of finance, her prowess and expertise were quickly recognized and she aspired to hold top positions in global wealth management companies.

Through her journey, Meagan discovered a need for advising, supporting, and connecting aspirational millennial women. This motivated her to launch bSmartGuide.com to serve as a platform for women to learn, connect and promote their brands in order to achieve success and obtain their goals.

Hooper will share tips on how leaders can leave powerful legacies that will make positive impacts for years to come. Experience the ripple effect of effective leadership at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, July 13.
Friday, July 13

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  Registration and Sponsor Tables – Sea Turtle Foyer

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  Dawn Patrol: Early Bird Roundtable Discussions for Voluntary Bar Leaders – Cobia/Tarpon

In this session, attendees have an open forum to idea share and discuss current issues facing local bar associations.

Discussion Leader:
• E. Ashley Hardee, Chair, Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  Lunch on Your Own

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.  OPENING SESSION – Leatherback

Welcome and Introductory Remarks
• E. Ashley Hardee, 2017-18 Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee Chair
• Lillian B. Ewen and Vivian Cortes Hodz, 2018 Voluntary Bar Conference Co-Chairs

Welcome from The Florida Bar President, Michelle Suskauer

Keynote Speaker:  2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Making a Splash: Leadership that Leaves a Legacy
• Meagan Hooper, Founder & CEO, bSmartGuide.com

2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  Break

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  VBLC BREAKOUT SESSIONS

3:00 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.  VBLC BREAKOUT SESSION 1

Session A – Loggerhead A

When It Makes Sense to Hire a Big Kahuna (Executive Director and Other Paid Staff)

Learn how to plan, budget, hire, and make paid staff a reality for your bar association.

Panelists:
• John Howe, Past President, Palm Beach County Bar Association
• Michelle Katzman, Executive Director, Martin County Bar Association
• Preethi Sekharan, Past President, Martin County Bar Association

Session B – Leatherback

Sharks in the Water: The Latest in How Technology is Changing the Landscape of the Practice of Law

Learn the latest updates on lawyer referral services, as well as member benefits available through The Florida Bar that can help members of your association.
Panelists:
- John Stewart, President-elect, The Florida Bar
- Scott Westheimer, Chair, The Florida Bar Communications Committee

Session C – Loggerhead BC
Diversity and Inclusion: Everybody in the Pool!

Gain access to a database of resources and funds to assist your voluntary bar association with preparing your members for applying to become a member of the judiciary. Also, learn about the grant development program and how your bar can both receive funds for great programming and pay it forward too!

Panelists:
- Brittany Maxey-Fisher, Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Committee of The Florida Bar
- Anthony Visone, Past President, Port St. Lucie Bar Association

3:50 p.m. – 4:10 p.m. Break & Beverage Station – Sea Turtle Foyer
Make Your Own Trail Mix Bar and a variety of beverages

4:10 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. VBLC/LA BREAKOUT SESSION 2

Session A – Loggerhead A
Casting a Wider Net: Using CLEs to Expand Participation

Gain all the information, lists, and tips, so you can leave ready with a handy checklist to implement a successful CLE program that will help drive membership and event attendance.

Panelists:
- The Honorable Alan Forst, Appellate Judge, Fourth District Court of Appeal
- George Bush, Past President, Martin County Bar Association
- Amelia Hallenberg Beard, President, Walton County Bar Association

Session B – Loggerhead BC
Shoot the Curl: Sealing the Deal with Sponsors

Learn practical techniques on how to successfully secure financial sponsors for your bar association. You will also discover how to connect with the business world and make your association and its members valuable to the business community.

Panelists:
- Gregory Weiss, The Florida Bar Board of Governors, Nineteenth Circuit Representative
- Karen Fast, Strategic Marketing and Membership Manager, Orange County Bar Association

Session C – Leatherback

How to not get caught on the back foot when a disaster or emergency occurs in your area by having plans already in place, effectively managing media throughout, and helping your community after the event.

Panelists:
- Brian Sparks, Esq., EMT, and SAR Technician
- Braulio Rosa, Executive Director, Broward County Bar Association

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. The Grande Reception – Ocean View Deck
This special networking event will feature a buffet of island-inspired cuisine and chilled summer beverages.
Saturday, July 14

7:45 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.  Breakfast and VBLC Optional Roundtables – Hawksbill

In this informal and unstructured session, participants are invited over breakfast to idea share and discuss at their round tables current issues facing local bar associations that are of interest to participants in attendance.

- Optional round table – Staffed bars with 1,000+ members
  - Table Host: Kim Homer, Executive Director, Orange County Bar Association
- Optional round table – Staffed bars with less than 1,000 members
  - Table Host: Joann Gore, Executive Director, Tallahassee Bar Association
- Optional round table – Non-staffed bars North of Orlando
  - Table Host: Mandi Clay, Vice President, Hillsborough Assn. for Women Lawyers
- Optional round table – Non-staffed bars South of Orlando
  - Table Host: Kimberly Lopez, Past President, Hispanic Bar Association of Central Florida

8:10 a.m.  GIFT BASKET DOOR PRIZE DRAWINGS – YOU MUST BE PRESENT IN THE ROOM TO BE ELIGIBLE TO WIN A BASKET!

8:50 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.  Break

9:00 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.  Hang Ten: A Conversation with the Florida Bar President - Leatherback

During this interactive session, The 2018-19 Florida Bar President will address live questions posed by local voluntary bar leaders in an informal discussion style setting.

Be sure to have your questions ready for her!

- Michelle Suskauer – President, The Florida Bar

9:50 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  Break

10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.  VBLC BREAKOUT SESSION 3

Session A – Leatherback
Cowabunga! Making Association Social Media Communications Relevant & Meaningful

Learn how to make your voluntary bar association more social—without draining your time! Come see why Twitter is a great social media step for getting members involved, and how having a small budget for Facebook could change your game. Don’t forget Instagram—learn tips and tricks for effective use.

Panelists:
- Danny Aller, Social Media Manager, The Florida Bar

Session B – Loggerhead BC
Riding the Big Waves: Navigating the Media During a Crisis

Learn practical techniques on how to successfully interact with the media during a time of crisis on behalf of your association. Also, learn tips and tricks for drafting a quick, effective and meaningful press release to convey your message to your membership and/or the public.

Panelists:
- Francine Walker, Director, Public Information and Bar Services, The Florida Bar
- Kim Homer, Executive Director, Orange County Bar Association
**Session C – Loggerhead A**

**Keeping Volunteers in Your Association Stoked**

Volunteer leaders are the lifeblood of your bar association, from chairing a committee to planning an event. Keep motivation high by these practical and simple techniques to encourage, motivate, and reward your volunteers!

Panelists:
- Donna Marino-Kirtland, The Florida Bar Foundation, Director of Development
- The Hon. Angela Cowden, 10th Circuit Judge, Chair of Florida Conference of Circuit Judges

10:50 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Break with Beverage Station

11:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. **VBLC BREAKOUT SESSION 4**

**Session A – Leatherback**


How to not get caught on the back foot when a disaster or emergency occurs in your area by having plans already in place, effectively managing media throughout, and helping your community after the event.

Panelists:
- Brian Sparks, Esq., EMT, and SAR Technician
- Braulio Rosa, Executive Director, Broward County Bar Association

**Session B – Loggerhead BC**

**How to Be a Bar Leader 101—A Gnarlly Introductory Session for New Board Members**

So you were just elected as an officer of your bar association and need help? This one’s for you! Leave with a take-away checklist for each officer role on the board.

Panelists:
- Ashley Hardee, Past President, Brevard County Bar Association
- Wendy Fisher, Past President, Brevard County Women Lawyers’ Association
- Michelle Studstill, Past President, Brevard County Bar Association

**Session C – Loggerhead A**

**Paddle Out: Effectively Utilizing Past Presidents**

Don’t let the waves carry them off into the sunset! Learn how to tap into the talents of your past presidents to help both you and your association.

Panelists:
- Sarah Cortvriend, Past President, Florida Association for Women Lawyers – Palm Beach County Chapter
- Meshon Rawls, Immediate Past President, Eighth Judicial Circuit Bar Association

**Session D – COBIA**

**Making Waves: Engaging Young Lawyers in Your Bar Association Young Lawyers Division**

Learn strategies to attract young lawyers to join and participate in your bar association. Find out the latest information about what YLD’s are accomplishing on both the local and state level.

Panelists:
- Christian George, President, The Florida Bar-Young Lawyers Division
- Santo DiGangi, President-elect, The Florida Bar-Young Lawyers Division
11:50 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  Break

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.  **VBLC BREAKOUT SESSION 5**

**Session A – Leatherback**
**Sail Away with a CLE: Ready-made Health and Wellness Session**

Learn a specific health and wellness themed CLE that has already been approved for CLE credit. After this session, you will be ready to take it back to your bar association and deliver it yourself to your members!

- Dori Foster-Morales, The Florida Bar Board of Governors, 11th Cir. Representative

**Session B – Loggerhead BC**
**Avoid Drowning in Finances: 101 Budgeting for a Successful Year**

Learn how to make a yearly budget, allot your resources, and plan ahead for a successful and productive year.

Panelists:
- Andres Oliveros, Past President, Highlands County Bar Association
- Kevin D’Espies, Treasurer, Highlands County Bar Association
- Bart Valdes, Treasurer, Tampa Hispanic Bar Association

**Session C – Loggerhead A**
**Wouldn’t It Be Nice? County Bars Working Together with Other Bars**

How county bar associations can work with ethnic, gender, specialty and metropolitan bar associations to have a diverse and productive year filled with creative events.

Panelists:
- Vivian Cortes Hodz, Past President, Tampa Hispanic Bar Association
- Barry Segal, Past President, Indian River County Bar Association
- Joann Gore, Executive Director, Tallahassee Bar Association
MEET THE 2018 VOLUNTARY BAR LEADERS CONFERENCE DISCUSSION LEADERS, SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS

DANNY ALLER holds a degree in English from Florida State University and is the Social Media Manager at The Florida Bar. In this position he manages the daily process to expand the reach of The Florida Bar’s immensely popular social media pages. Prior to coming to The Bar, Aller worked in journalism as a sports reporter for 10 years at a variety of newspapers in Florida and Georgia. During this tenure, he interacted with the sports information staffs and athletic offices at different levels — from high school to college to the pros. Since coming to The Bar, Aller has helped various sections, groups and members learn and utilize social media platforms to connect and reach their audiences. He has introduced new platforms and been at the forefront of helping Bar members adapt to new technology to strengthen communication and outreach through social media. During his four-year tenure, the number of Florida Bar Twitter followers has grown from 800 to 13,000, and the number of The Florida Bar Facebook followers has grown from 1,200 to more than 23,000.

AMELIA HALLENBERG BEARD is serving her second term as President of the Walton County Bar Association and is a member of the Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee of The Florida Bar. Beard is licensed to practice in Florida and Georgia with the firm of McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC. Her practice is focused in real estate transactions, litigation and estate planning. Beard has over 12 years of experience in the real estate and mortgage banking industry, having worked for a large banking institution and a metro housing authority prior to becoming an attorney.

GEORGE BUSH completed his B.S. at Georgetown University and his J.D. at Cornell Law School, where he concentrated in business law and regulation and served as president of the Law Students Association. Bush is a civil litigation attorney with a focus on insurance defense, commercial litigation, labor and employment law and Condominium and Homeowners’ Association representation. He is Board Certified in Business Litigation, and currently brings his expertise to the Law Firm of Fox, Wackeen, Dunegy, Beard, Bush, Goldman, Waters, Robison, van Vorno & McCluskey, L.L.P. (“Fox Wackeen”). Bush stays heavily involved in his community in organizations such as the Florida Oceanographic Committee, the Center for Children in Crisis, the Kravis Performing Arts Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Palm Beach and Martin Counties, and others. Bush has received Special Commendation for work with the Florida Pro Bono Coordinators Association and Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County.

MANDI CLAY is a commercial litigator, Certified Circuit Court Mediator, and U.S. District Court Mediator with Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick in Tampa. She has served on the board of the Hillsborough Association for Women Lawyers (HAWL) for 5 years, managing its website and social media as well as serving as Secretary, Treasurer, and now First Vice President - Programs. Clay is also a member of The Florida Bar Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee, The Florida Bar Standing Committee on Mental Health and Wellness of Florida Lawyers, the Hillsborough County Bar Association, the George Edgecomb Bar Association and the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers (PFAWL).

SARAH CORTVRIEND focuses her practice on complex commercial litigation, with an emphasis on real property litigation including commercial foreclosures and title insurance litigation. Cortvriend, who joined the Carlton Fields firm in 2004, has represented clients of all types in an array of complex matters. Her clients include national lending institutions and title insurance underwriters, as well as homeowners’ associations, small businesses and individuals. Cortvriend’s representation includes both the prosecution and defense of a wide variety of legal disputes in areas including breach of contract, injunctions, fraud, mortgage fraud, equitable subrogation, lien priority, low income tax credits,
commercial foreclosures of hotels, partially developed land and strip malls, equine, non-competition, uniform commercial code, Florida’s Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act and non-competition claims in state and federal courts throughout Florida. Cortvriend is AV rated by Martindale-Hubbell. She was recognized as a Flori- da Super Lawyer from 2013-2017, as a Rising Star from 2010-2014 by Florida Super Lawyers and is listed in Florida Trend’s Florida Legal Elite. Cortvriend’s professional in- volvement includes membership to The Florida Bar’s Real Property Probate and Trust section, and service as the immediate past chair of The Florida Bar’s Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee. She is also a past chair of a Florida Bar Grievance Committee, a past president of the Palm Beach County chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers, and a Leadership Palm Beach County alumnus (class of 2010). Cortvriend serves as a director on the board of the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County and is a member of the Executive Committee of the board of the Hanley Foundation. Cortvriend also serves as a pro bono guardian.

THE HONORABLE ANGELA COWDEN graduated from Florida Southern College with a bachelor’s degree in Chemistry in 1986 and a master’s degree in Business Administration in 1989. Cowden attended Stetson University College of Law, where she graduated in 1993. State At- torney Jerry Hill hired her in 1994 as a prosecutor, and she practiced in Polk County for nine years. Cowden was appointed to the Polk County Bench in 2003 by Gov. Jeb Bush. She had been on the county bench for five years when Gov. Charlie Crist appointed her to the circuit bench in 2008. Cowden had her very first circuit assignment in the family division in Highlands County where she was assigned for a one-year term. Cowden was then summoned back to Polk County. She loved Highlands County so much that she asked to return when the next bench rotation came around. She returned to Highlands County on July 1, 2010 and has been there ever since. Cowden has worked in all circuit court divisions, circuit criminal, juve- nile dependency, juvenile delinquency, family, probate, guardianship, mental health (both in-house and at the mental health institutions) and circuit civil.

KEVIN D’ESPIES has actively been practicing law for over 35 years. He previously maintained his general practice office in Fort Lauderdale for 25 years. D’Espies now practices primarily family law and handles general litigation and corporate matters in Sebring. He has participated in many jury and non-jury trials over the years. He has been involved with several SEC matters for clients, successfully wrote and argued several appeals before the 4th DCA of Florida and 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. D’Espies has au- thored appellate briefs and argued before the 2nd DCA of Florida. He has been a lead attorney for cases in the states of: Nevada, Alabama, Georgia, and Mas- sachusetts. D’Espies currently serves as the treasurer for the Highlands County Bar Association and has done so since 2014. He graduated from the University of Miami with a B.A. in accounting in 1979 and received his J.D. from Nova University Center for the Study of Law (Nova Southeastern University) in 1982.

SANTO DiGANGI is an attorney at Critton, Luttier & Coleman in West Palm Beach. His practice focuses on complex commercial and business litigation as well as personal injury and he has been recognized as a Rising Star in 2017 and 2018 by Super Lawyers. DiGangi is on the Board of Directors for the Palm Beach County Bar Association’s Young Lawyers Section, is a member and former Board of Directors member of the Craig S. Barnard Inns of Court, a member of The Florida Bar Judicial Nominating Procedures Committee, President of the Kiwanis Club of West Palm Beach, and President-Elect of the Young Lawyers Division of The Florida Bar. DiGangi graduated from the University of Florida Levin College of Law in 2009 and earned his B.A. from the University of Florida in 2006 with a double major in political science and criminology.

LILLIAN B. EWEN holds a B.A. in Communications from Wake Forest Uni- versity and a J.D. and M.S.M. from the University of Florida. She is the Senior Appellate Staff Attorney for the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, over- seeing all appeals from county court and code enforcement as well as petitions for writ of certiorari for local administrative cases on behalf of the judiciary. Ewen was a fellow in the inaugural class of The Florida Bar Leadership Academy and currently serves as chair of the Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee and co-chair of this conference. As president of the St. Lucie County Bar Association, Ewen oversaw a rapid expan- sion of the membership and the events calendar, including the planning and execution of several judicial investitures. She is a founding member of the executive committee of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Professional- ism Panel (currently serving as chair) and is active in the Justice Major B. Harding American Inn of Court. Ewen is an adjunct professor at Indian River State College in the Criminal Justice Department and currently serves on the board of directors as the vice chair for the Humane Soci- ety of St. Lucie County.
**KAREN FAST** started at the Orange County Bar Association as Membership Manager in 2010. She was promoted to Strategic Marketing Manager in 2012 and has assisted in the development of the Orange County Bar’s educational programs Leadership Law, New Lawyer Training Program, Paralegal Boot Camp, Transform Your Law Practice and Bench Bar Conferences. Fast oversees Sponsorship and Advertising, Membership and the Events Department. Fast came to her position at the Orange County Bar Association with over 25 years of sales and marketing experience within the hospitality industry. She worked for Morton’s Steakhouse for 15 years and assisted with the growth of the concept from 7 to 61 restaurants within her tenure. Fast was a key figure in developing a marketing strategy which brought the New York restaurant private dining sales more than 1.5 million dollars per year.

Fast earned a B.A. in Graphic Design from The American University in Washington, DC, which gave her a background that has enhanced advertising and promotional pieces used to assist sales growth. In 2008, Fast attended the Notter School of Pastry Arts in Orlando, Florida.

**WENDY FISHER** received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Central Florida in 2011 and graduated from Stetson University College of Law in 2014. She is Managing Attorney of her law firm, Fisher Law, PLLC, which practices in the areas of city, county and local government law. Fisher graduated from Bayside High School in Brevard County and is proud to build her firm in the Space Coast area. Fisher is the Immediate Past President of the Brevard County Association for Women Lawyers, a fellow of The Florida Bar, Wm. Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Academy, appointed to the Brevard County Domestic Violence Task Force, the chair of the Preeclampsia Foundation 2017 and 2018 Space Coast Promise Walk, and a member of the Vassar B. Carlton Inn of Court. She has also been involved with the Brevard Take Back the Night fundraising event, the Volunteer Victim Advocate Program for the Palm Bay Police Department and was a previous volunteer on the fundraiser event planning committee for Serene Harbor.

**DORI FOSTER-MORALES** is double graduate of University of Florida (BA in Economics in 1986 and J.D. in 1989) and a board certified marital and family law attorney at Foster-Morales Sockel-Stone. Foster-Morales has served on the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar since 2009 in various capacities and currently chairs the Bar’s Special Committee on Mental Health and Wellness of Florida Lawyers. In addition to her work with The Florida Bar, she is a Fellow of both the American and International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, Board Certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy in Family Trial Law and AV rated by Martindale Hubbell. She is designated in US News & World Report/Best Lawyers; Florida’s Legal Elite, Super Lawyers and South Florida Legal Guide Top Lawyers. Foster-Morales has a diverse legal background, having begun her practice at the United States Environmental Protection Agency (first in the District of Columbia and then in New York City), after which she returned to Florida where she was an Assistant State Attorney.

**CHRISTIAN GEORGE** serves as managing partner of Akerman’s Jacksonville office. Christian has a statewide practice focusing on both commercial and bankruptcy litigation. He is very active in both the local and state Bar Associations, as well as the community at large. He is the President of the Young Lawyers’ Division of The Florida Bar and is a member of the Jacksonville Bar Association Board of Governors. His work is often recognized by various publications including Benchmark Litigation, the Jacksonville Business Journal, Florida Super Lawyers and Florida Trend. Christian graduated from the University of Florida Levin College of Law in 2007. He earned his B.A. from the University of Florida in 2004 with a degree in political science.

**JUDGE ALAN O. FORST** is a graduate of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and earned his J.D. at the Columbus School of Law of the Catholic University of America. Forst served as president of the Martin County Bar Association (2007-2008) and the chair of the Florida Bar’s Labor and Employment Law Section a year later. Forst was appointed to the Fourth District Court of Appeal in early 2013. Prior to this appointment, Forst served as Chairman of the Florida Reemployment Assistance (Unemployment) Appeals Commission, as a law firm associate and partner, and at several Federal government departments and agencies in Washington, D.C.

**JOANN GORE** graduated with a master’s degree in Communication from Florida State University in 1989. She began her career in the communication/public information arena as director of communications for a statewide credit union. Gore has served as public information officer for the Florida Prepaid College
Program, marketing director for Killearn Properties and a consultant for several law firms. Gore joined the Tallahassee Bar Association in 2003 as part-time assistant executive director and served in that role until 2012, when she was promoted to executive director.

E. ASHLEY HARDEE is a Senior Trial Court Staff Attorney in the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit and has taught several legal courses as an adjunct professor for the University of Central Florida. Hardee graduated from the University of South Florida with a B.A. in Political Science and earned her Juris Doctorate degree from The Florida State University College of Law. She was elected as president of three different Florida voluntary bar associations: the Florida Council of Past Bar Presidents (2015 and 2014), the Florida Trial Court Staff Attorneys Association (2014 and 2001) and the Brevard County Bar Association (2009-2010). In those voluntary bar associations, Hardee earned awards for BCBA’s Board Member of the Year (2004-2005; 2005-2006), BCBA’s Government Lawyer Professionalism Award (2005), FTCSSA’s Lifetime Achievement Award (2015), Vassar B. Carlton Inn of Court Outstanding Mentor of the Year (2010) and Kathy Pugh Outstanding Leadership Award (2011, 2013, 2015). Ashley was appointed in 2008, and to date serves on the Supreme Court of Florida’s Florida Court Personnel Committee, whose mission is to develop and maintain educational programs for Florida court personnel. Hardee is a Certified Court Executive and Certified Case Manager through the Institute for Court Management at the National Center for State Courts. She has most recently served as chair of The Florida Bar Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee.

VIVIAN CORTES HODZ received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology in 1999 from Florida State University and her Juris Doctor in 2002 from Florida State University College of Law. Hodz practices exclusively marital and family law in Tampa with the law firm of Cortes Hodz Family Law and Mediation, P.A. She is a Supreme Court Certified Family Law mediator. Hodz is the Immediate Past President of the Tampa Hispanic Bar Association, a board member of Bay Area Legal Services, a graduate of Class II of The Florida Bar Leadership Academy, Vice Chair of the Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee of The Florida Bar and is a member of The Florida Bar Diversity and Inclusion Committee and of the 13th Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee “B”.

KIM HOMER has a J.D. from Cumberland Law School in Birmingham, Alabama, and has been admitted to practice law in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Montana.

She serves as the Executive Director of the Orange County Bar Association in Orlando. Previously, Homer served as the Director of the OCBA’s Foreclosure Mediation Program and has served as the OCBA’s Assistant Executive Director. She began working for the Orange County Bar in 2010 and became the Executive Director in 2014. Homer’s legal career and love of pro bono service began with her experience working at Stewart, Melvin and Frost, LLP, in Gainesville, Georgia. She later worked as a Georgia Legal Services Program attorney; as an Assistant District Attorney in the Northern District of Georgia; and as a sole practitioner in Georgia, Alabama, and Montana. Homer is a member of the National Association of Bar Executives and serves on the Metro Bar Caucus Committee of the National Conference of Bar Presidents. She has served as a volunteer Guardian ad Litem for the Legal Aid Society of the OCBA, Inc. on multiple cases and currently provides pro bono legal services for the Legal Aid Society of the OCBA through the AIDS Wills Project.

MEAGAN HOOPER leveraged an arts degree and professional theatre and film experience into a decade long career on Wall Street, working her way up from Administrative Assistant for the founder of a premier hedge fund to the firm’s Chief Operating Officer. Self-taught in the world of finance, Hooper’s prowess and expertise was quickly recognized, as she then became Director of Operations for a global wealth management firm, overseeing $4 billion in assets across multiple asset classes. Through her journey, Hooper discovered a need for advising, supporting, and connecting aspirational millennial women. This motivated her to launch bSmartGuide.com to serve as a platform for women to learn, connect and promote their brands in order to achieve success and obtain their goals. Today bSmart is a mentorship and networking platform for young women featuring curated content to help women live their best life and provide the expert advice they wish someone had given them. It is designed to find and spotlight women who are doing extraordinary things and connect them with women who aspire to do the same.

JOHN HOWE is an experienced trial attorney with 20 years of experience. He pursues justice for individuals and families devastated by serious or fatal injuries caused by negligence, enforces the Constitution’s presumption of innocence for the accused in criminal matters and protects the interests of individuals and corporations involved in civil disputes. Howe
MICHELLE KATZMAN received an MBA degree from Widener University in 1985 before starting her consulting career working as the Director of Project Management for an independent Market Research firm in Philadelphia, PA. Along with extensive project design and statistical analysis experience in healthcare and business-to-business industries, Katzman specializes in Time Management and Productivity workshops for Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies. In 1997, Katzman relocated to Palm City, where she continued to provide organization/business management services for professional and residential clients. Katzman has been a member of the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals since 2001 and is a founding member and Past President of the South Florida Chapter. She is one of only 11 Certified Professional Organizers in Florida. Katzman has served as the Executive Director of the Martin County Bar Association since 2007.

KIMBERLY LOPEZ is a partner in Akerman LLP’s Orlando office, focusing her practice in commercial litigation. Since becoming licensed in 2008, Lopez has been involved with various bar organizations, including the Hispanic Bar Association of Central Florida (HBACF), Orange County Bar Association and the Federal Bar Association. She has held several leadership roles, including president of the HBACF in 2013 and chairing the joint voluntary bar efforts then known as Holidays in January. In 2016, Lopez was appointed to serve as a member on the Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee, where she continues to serve today. Lopez also serves as deputy regional president (Orlando) for the Hispanic National Bar Association. She has attended the VBL conference several times and is a frequent attendee of the HNBA conventions and conferences. Lopez credits her bar involvement to active recruitment efforts by senior bar leaders. As such, during her term as HBACF president she encouraged her board to constantly recruit, retain and promote members into the leadership ranks. She continues to promote this mentality when speaking to bar leaders today.

DONNA MARINO-KIRTLAND has a bachelor’s degree in Business Management from the University of Central Florida and a master’s degree in Business Administration from Belhaven University. She is statewide development director for The Florida Bar Foundation, responsible for leading the strategic planning and implementation of all the Foundation’s giving programs. Marino-Kirtland’s enthusiastic, inspired and creative approach contributes to the success of the Foundation’s philanthropic objectives. She is experienced in advisory board management, capital campaigns, annual campaigns, major gift solicitation and planned giving and volunteer management. Marino-Kirtland serves on the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) International Foundation Board, was President of Central Florida AFP and staffed the funding subcommittee for Florida’s Commission on Access to Civil Justice. In September 2009, Marino-Kirtland was awarded the Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) designation and later obtained her certificate in proposal writing from Rollins College’s Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership. She is currently a member of the Southeastern Council of Foundations. Donna’s passion for philanthropy in all forms – time, talent, treasure – is joyful and infectious!

BRITTANY MAXEY-FISHER manages Maxey-Fisher, PLLC’s intellectual property practice. In addition to managing the day-to-day aspects of the firm, she has gained extensive experience in counseling clients in a wide range of Intellectual property issues. Her practice includes representing clients in patent, trademark, trade dress and copyright matters, including domestic and international trademark protection, intellectual property licensing and agreements, and technology transactions. Maxey-Fisher has state and federal litigation experience in connection with patents, trademarks and copyrights. She also has an extensive practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the Patent Trial Appeal Board and the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board. Maxey-Fisher is a past President, Florida Association for Women Lawyers (FAWL); Pinellas County Chapter of FAWL Board of Trustees; CASA St. Petersburg Secretary; Tampa Bay Rebel Ole Miss Alumni Chapter Executive Board; Barney Masterson Inn of Court Executive Committee; and St. Petersburg Bar Association Steering Committee. She is past chair of The Florida Bar Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
ANDRES OLIVEROS is a graduate of Duke University and earned a J.D. at George Washington University’s School of Law. Oliveros is a two-time president of the Highlands County Bar Association and the current president of the Tampa Hispanic Bar Association. When he is not doing work on behalf of voluntary bars, Oliveros runs a personal injury law practice with offices in Tampa and Sebring. Oliveros joined the U.S. Marine Corps as a judge advocate immediately after law school and served as trial counsel overseas in Japan and as an operational lawyer in Iraq soon after the 2003 invasion. Upon being honorably discharged, he returned to his hometown of Sebring and later opened his law practice in 2008 after settling in Tampa. Oliveros’ practice is focused exclusively on motor vehicle negligence and premises liability cases.

MESHON RAWLS received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Florida and a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Florida College of Law. Most of her legal career has been devoted to advocating for the rights of children. Rawls is a Master Legal Skills Professor and the Director of the Gator TeamChild Juvenile Law Clinic at the University of Florida Levin College of Law. As the director of Gator TeamChild she supervises law students who provide representation to children primarily in delinquency, dependency and educational proceedings. Under Rawls leadership, law students learn how to advocate for the rights of children and the importance of providing holistic representation. Prior to this work, Rawls worked at the Eighth Judicial Circuit Public Defender’s Office for seven years, where she represented indigent clients in the juvenile, misdemeanor and felony divisions. She has also been certified by the Florida Supreme Court as a County Court Mediator and is Board Certified in Juvenile Law. Most recently, Rawls served as the President of the Eighth Judicial Circuit Bar Association and continues to serve on the Board of Directors. She is the Past President of the Josiah T. Walls Bar Association, a member of the James Adkins Inn of Court, a graduate of The Florida Bar Leadership Academy Class II, a fellow of The Florida Bar Foundation, and the coordinator for the Alachua County Restoration of Civil Rights project. Rawls was appointed to two Florida Bar committees - the Juvenile Law Board Certification Committee and Voluntary Bar Liaison Committee.

BRAULIO ROSA received his undergraduate degree from Florida Atlantic University and went on to earn two master’s degrees there: one in Education and the other in Public Administration. Rosa is the executive director of the Broward County Bar Association (BCBA), which has 3,300 members and a budget of over $1 million. Rosa’s prior experience includes 18 years of working at high levels in local government and education overseeing various programs including marketing, advertising, community relations, special event management and strategic planning, as well many administrative programs. Rosa is a member of The Florida Bar Voluntary Liaison Committee, Executive Committee of the 17th Judicial Pro Bono Committee, and the Broward College Paralegal Advisory Committee.

BARRY SEGAL is Board Certified as a real estate attorney. Since 1999, he has practiced in Vero Beach, representing buyers and sellers, developers, mobile home parks and lending institutions in real estate matters in both jury and bench trials in state and federal court. In addition to representing the individual needs of his clients as they purchase and sell real property, Segal also handles Landlord/Tenant matters, Mortgage Foreclosures (both for lenders and borrowers), mortgage modification agreements, construction contracting and construction defect litigation, subdivision development, land use planning and governmental regulation and business formations. Segal is a past-president of the Indian River County Bar Association, is the immediate past chairman of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court Professionalism Panel and is a director of the Real Property Council for Indian River County.

PREETHI SEKHARAN is an attorney with the Gunster firm who focuses her practice on intellectual property and trade secret disputes. She is also involved in complex business litigation and the resolution of corporate and shareholder disputes, including those involving contract and restrictive covenant issues. In addition, Sekharan has handled a wide variety of fiduciary and trust related litigation. She has represented clients in state and federal courts both inside and outside of the state of Florida. Sekharan is an active member of the Treasure Coast legal community. In addition to serving as a past president of the Martin County Bar Association, Sekharan was also past chair of its Judicial Relations Committee, as well as past president of the Martin County Chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers. Currently, Sekharan serves as an officer and active board member of the Justice Major B. Harding American Inn of Court and was recently appointed by the Governor to serve a second term on the The Florida Bar’s Federal Practice Committee. Sekharan works out of Gunster’s Stuart and West Palm Beach offices.
BRIAN C. SPARKS is a lawyer and shareholder with the Hill Ward Henderson law firm in Tampa and co-leader of its Trusts & Estates Practice group. His legal practice primarily is devoted to estate and asset protection planning and federal tax controversy matters. Sparks is Florida Bar Board Certified in both tax law and in wills, trusts and estates law and is a Fellow in the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel. Before law school, he practiced as a certified public accountant.

For many years, a significant portion of Sparks’ community service was as a volunteer, instructor, and board member for local and regional chapters of the American Red Cross and the regional council of the Boy Scouts of America. Over the last decade, he has concentrated his community service on disaster and emergency preparedness education and disaster and emergency response. Sparks has taken and taught courses in those areas with the Wilderness Medicine Institute of the National Outdoor Leadership School, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Columbia University National Center for Disaster Preparedness, American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America, National Association for Search and Rescue, Tampa Fire Rescue, Greater Tampa Community Emergency Response Team, and Volunteer Florida. Sparks is a Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness First Responder, Search and Rescue Technician, Community Emergency Response Team member, and Medical Reserve Corps member. He has participated in preparedness and response efforts involving a wide range of disasters and emergencies, including earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, floods, lightning, motor vehicle accidents, tornadoes, and urban and wilderness medical emergencies.

BART VALDES is the Managing Partner of the Tampa office of DSK Law. He is a board-certified specialist in Business Litigation by The Florida Bar and represents a variety of clients in complex trial matters in state and federal court. Valdes is the current Treasurer of the Tampa Hispanic Bar Association and serves on the Executive Council of the Business Law Section of The Florida Bar. Additionally, he is the former President of the Tampa Interbay Rotary Club and past-secretary of the Tampa Interbay Rotary Foundation.

JOHN STEWART is a partner at Rossway Swan and a third generation Florida lawyer. He was elected to the Young Lawyers Division Board of Governors of The Florida Bar in 1999 and was elected its President for the 2006-2007 Bar Year. Stewart has served since 2007 as the 19th Circuit’s Representative on The Florida Bar’s Board of Governors and was sworn in as President-Elect in June 2018. In 2013, Stewart received The Florida Bar’s President’s Award of Merit from then Florida Bar President Gwynne Young. Stewart was selected as Chair of the Technology Subcommittee for The Florida Bar’s 3-year study on the future of the practice of law. On July 1, 2014, Stewart was appointed by Chief Justice Jorge Labarga to serve on the Supreme Court of Florida’s Florida Courts Technology Commission and was reappointed to serve an additional 3-year term by the Chief Justice on June 29, 2017. Currently, Stewart serves on The Florida Bar’s Executive Committee, Technology Committee, Communications Committee, Program Evaluation Committee and on The Florida Bar’s Special Commission on Gender Bias and Diversity in the Profession. In 2016, Stewart was selected to the Fastcase 50 honoring the law’s “smartest, most courageous innovators, techies, visionaries and leaders.” Stewart speaks regularly on technology and the law including multiple sessions at the 2016 & 2017 ABA TECHSHOW.

MICHELLE SUSKAUER, a top-rated criminal defense attorney and the 2018-2019 President of The Florida Bar, is a partner with Dimond Kaplan & Rothstein P.A. Suskauer began her legal career as an assistant public defender in West Palm Beach. She has been practicing in Palm Beach County since 1991 with a focus on criminal law in both state and federal courts. She has handled thousands of criminal cases and is highly regarded by judges, prosecutors, law enforcement and her peers. Suskauer is actively involved in the leadership of numerous local and state legal organizations. She has served on The Florida Bar Board of Governors for the 15th Judicial Circuit since 2010. Suskauer is past chair of the Board’s Disciplinary Review Committee, the Communications Committee and the 2013 Annual Convention of The Florida Bar. She is Past-President of the Palm Beach County Bar Association, Past-President of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers – Palm Beach County Chapter and currently President of the Board of Directors of the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County. Suskauer is an AV-rated attorney by Martindale-Hubbell and she has been recognized in the annual Florida Super Lawyers Magazine as one of Florida’s top criminal defense attorneys and by Florida Trend Magazine as one of Florida’s “Legal Elite” in its annual statewide poll of attorneys.

ANTHONY VISONE graduated from New York University with a B.S. in Marketing. He received his J.D. Degree from St. John’s University School of Law. While in law school, Visone, worked as a law clerk for a plaintiff’s personal injury solo practitioner and then went on to intern for the New York State Power Authority where he was involved...
in complex environmental law litigation. After graduating from law school, Visone returned to personal injury law and began his career as a defense attorney working for in-house counsel at AIG Insurance. He later returned to plaintiff’s personal injury practice working for the same solo practitioner that gave him his start as a law clerk, and he continued to do so for the next 11 years. Visone subsequently joined the law firm of Steinger, Iscoe & Greene in February of 2006 after relocating to Port St. Lucie, Florida from New York City, continuing to practice plaintiff’s personal injury litigation. He is currently admitted to practice law in the states of Florida, New York and Utah. Visone is a graduate of Class II of the William Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Academy of The Florida Bar. He was recently appointed as Co-Chair of The Leadership Academy Committee for 2018-19 by Florida Bar President-Elect Michelle Suskauer. He also serves on The Florida Bar’s Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusion as well as The Florida Bar Annual Convention Committee.

FRANCINE ANDIA WALKER, APR, CPRC, is Director of Public Information and Bar Services for The Florida Bar in Tallahassee, a position she has held since 2000. Walker works closely with Florida Bar leaders on strategic communications and is responsible for media relations, public awareness programs, the voluntary bar liaison program, law-related education and the website www.floridabar.org. Walker worked in hospital and association public relations in Jacksonville before relocating to Tallahassee with the Florida Medical Association in 1996 as Vice President of Communications, Education and Meeting Services. Nationally accredited in public relations, Walker is also a Certified Public Relations Counselor. She has held leadership roles in Public Relations Society of America and Florida Public Relations Association and served as Chair of the Communications Section of the National Association of Bar Executives. A fourth-generation Floridian, she graduated from Jacksonville Episcopal High School in 1977 and received a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from the University of Florida in 1981.

GREGORY WEISS is a shareholder in Mrachek Fitzgerald, Rose, Konopka, Thomas & Weiss, P.A., focused on commercial, business and intellectual property litigation. He is a 1995 graduate of the University of Florida, and a 1998 graduate of the University of Florida College of Law. After graduating law school, Weiss served in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General’s Corps, including at the 82nd Airborne Division, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. Weiss is Board Certified in Business Litigation by The Florida Bar and currently serves on The Florida Bar Business Litigation Board Certification Committee. He previously served as President of the Martin County Bar Association and President of the UF Law Alumni Council and is currently a member of the University of Florida College of Law Board of Trustees.

F. SCOTT WESTHEIMER is the managing partner of Syrett Meshad, in Sarasota, where his practice involves primarily the representation of plaintiffs for wrongful death and other complex personal injury matters and various aspects of commercial litigation. Scott received his Juris Doctorate, with high honors, from the University Of Florida Levin College Of Law. He currently serves on the University of Florida Levin College of Law Alumni Council Board of Directors, and was recently elected to the UF College of Law Board of Trustees.

Westheimer is a Past President of the Sarasota County Bar Association (2010-2011), a Past President of the Sarasota County Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, a member (and former chair) of the Sarasota County Bar Association Diversity Committee and served on the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division Board of Governors from 2004 to 2013. Since 2013, he has served as the Twelfth Circuit Representative on the Florida Bar Board of Governors, representing the attorneys in Sarasota, DeSoto and Manatee counties. Scott currently serves as the Chairman of the Communications Committee (for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019) and is the Chair-Elect for the Program Evaluation Committee. He also serves on the Executive Committee, Disciplinary Review Committee, the Special Committee on Technologies Affecting the Practice of Law, and the Strategic Planning Committee.
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