



President's Column

By *Nicole Burlison Knepper*
Padberg Appelbaum Knepper

My year as President of the Lawyers Association is coming to an end. Our elections are in May and the incomparable Jenny Woulfe will be stepping in as your new leader. Despite my palpable anxiety before each LASL event, I have enjoyed my role as President. I had fun getting to know so many of you in the Gridiron cast. And I am grateful I got to help plan our much-loved social events. As I went through my photos, reflecting on the year, I thought I'd share some of my favorite memories.

Thank you all for an unforgettable year!



Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members

Thursday, May 15, 2025

McGurk's

5:30 p.m.—7:30 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, May 15

Election

5:30 p.m.—7:30 p.m.
McGurk's

Thursday, May 22

Memorial Service

Noon
Clyde S. Cahill Courts Building
(formerly the Civil Courts Building)

Thursday, June 12

Picnic & Softball

4:00 p.m.
Tilles Park in St. Louis County
Skow Shelter

Thursday, September 25

Judicial Appreciation Dinner

5:30 p.m.
Location TBD

Friday, November 21

Gridiron Dinner & Show

St. Louis Marriott Grand Hotel
6:30 p.m.

The Lawyers Association of St. Louis

Officers

Nicole Burlison Knepper, President
Jennifer Woulfe, President-Elect
Rebecca Cary, 1st Vice President
Chantal Mehill, 2nd Vice President
Graham Dobbs Secretary
Mandy Kamykowski, Treasurer

Executive Committee Members

Ashlyn Calhoun
James Eason
Andrew Eastman
Hayley Hughes
Nick Meriage
Mariel L. Taylor

Past Presidents

Teri Appelbaum
Jennine Adamek Moore
Dan Rousseau

Executive Director

Jim Susman

Sustaining Members

The Lawyers Association of St. Louis is grateful to the following Sustaining Members for their added support to the association.

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Patrick J. Boyle
Anne-Marie Brockland
Mark I. Bronson
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David Zevan

Gridiron Hall of Shame/Fame



Current Gridiron Cast Member, Director, Writer and Producer, [Peter Dunne](#), and former Cast Member and Writer, [Lee Anna Good](#), were inducted into the Gridiron Hall of Shame/Fame during the show.

Lee Anna began writing for the show in 2000 and joined the cast the next year, further enhancing a compelling ensemble of female performers.

The fact that there is still a Gridiron Show at all can only be credited to Peter, a Past President and Award of Honor recipient. Not only did Peter make his mark as a Gridiron Director for 10 years but he brought a more relatable quality to the writing and performances. He will forever be known for his recurring role in the “Courthouse Elevators” and with “The Three Amigos.”

Congratulations to Peter and Lee Anna.

Bowling Tournament Success

by Nicole Knepper

The Association’s annual bowling tournament was once again very successful. Eighteen teams showed up! Every team got to play at least one game. The idea was to play 2 games each but we lost a lane at one point, which slowed things down. Of the 18 teams, only 3 left without playing their second game. I’d call that a win!

The top 4 teams played for the championship: Judge Sweeney’s team, one of Pitzer’s teams, HelperBroom, and Brown & Crouppen. Judge Sweeney’s team played Pitzer for the championship. In the end, Pitzer’s team had a collective score of 617. [Judge Ransom](#) was the last to bowl for Sweeney’s team and needed to get 3 strikes in the last frame in order to win. And.....of course she did. Judge Sweeney’s team won by 2 points with 619. It was a very exciting game.

Brown & Crouppen took home the 3rd place trophy.

Milton F. Napier Award Winners

Each year at the Award of Honor Dinner the Lawyers Association honors a 3L student from the Washington University and Saint Louis University law schools with the Milton F. Napier Award for Excellence in Trial Advocacy. This year’s recipients are: MacKenzie Palmer from Washington University and Noah Marlar from Saint Louis University.



Member News

- ◆ [Stephanie Black](#) has joined Gray Ritter Graham.
- ◆ The late [Jim Holloran](#), the [Hon. Rex Burlison](#), [Mike Gunn](#) and the [Hon. Nannette Baker](#) were inducted into the Saint Louis University Law Order of the Fleur de Lis Hall of Fame in January.
- ◆ USA&M is now Miles Mediation & Arbitration.
- ◆ [Amy Gunn](#) and [Erica Slater](#) have formed the Gunn Slater law firm.
- ◆ [Matt Rossiter](#) has joined Lathrop GPM.
- ◆ The former Rossiter & Boock law firm has been renamed Roman & Boock, LLC with the addition of [Rachel Roman](#).



**Additional Bowling
Photos on Page 11**



30th Annual Lawyers Association Black history Month Dinner—Honoring Judge Theodore McMillian: A Legacy of Courage, Civility and Dedication

By Bill Thomas

The 30th Annual Black History Month Dinner, hosted by the Lawyers Association, was a night of inspiration, reflection and celebration. This year's keynote address was delivered by distinguished guest speaker, Missouri Court of Appeals, Eastern district Judge Renee Hardin-Tammons, who delivered a powerful address that honored the legacy of Judge Theodore McMillian, the event's namesake (and first guest speaker), and underscored the enduring importance of diversity, courage and dedication to purpose in the legal profession, particularly in times of great difficulty. Key to navigating difficult times, instructed Judge Hardin-Tammons, was to "remain faithful to your purpose and hopeful for the future."

Judge Hardin-Tammons reminded the audience that Judge McMillian's journey was not an easy one, but was marked with a purpose to "be somebody someday," as was quoted from the Herbert Brewster poem. Judge McMillian's story is not just one of professional excellence, it is a testament to resilience in face of adversity. Born in 1919 in St. Louis, the great-grandson of a slave, Judge McMillian grew up in humble circumstances as the eldest of ten siblings. Despite economic hardship, he excelled academically, earning degrees in mathematics and physics from Lincoln University before pivoting to law due to racial barriers that delayed his admission to medical school by five years.



Pictured from left: Nicole Knepper, President, Lawyers Association, the Hon. Renee Hardin-Tammons, Missouri Court of Appeals, Eastern District, and Justin Strayhorn, President, Mound City Bar Association.

After graduating first in his law school class from Saint Louis University, he faced the painful reality that downtown St. Louis law firms refused to hire him because of his race. Undeterred, he opened his own firm, later became the first African American assistant circuit attorney and eventually the first African American judge on the Missouri Court of Appeals. His rise through a number of other "firsts" culminated when President Jimmy Carter appointed him to the Eighth Circuit of Appeals, another historic accomplishment as its first African American justice. Judge Hardin-Tammons emphasized what history may obscure from a story like this, and that is that Judge McMillian "had to be courageous to reach the heights he did" in the time in which he lived.

Judge McMillian's impact extended far beyond his own success. He championed equal protections for children, advocated for juvenile justice reform, and worked tirelessly to improve community treatment programs and family courts. His judicial philosophy was rooted in fairness, as seen in his powerful dissenting opinions that pushed for justice beyond mere technicalities. His opinions shaped hostile work environment law under Title VII and advanced protections against racial discrimination in jury selection well before the landmark Baston v. Kentucky decision.

Judge Hardin-Tammons emphasized that Judge McMillian's legacy carries a profound lesson for today's lawyers who find themselves in a world much like the one faced by Judge McMillian. Her reminder to us all was to face today's struggles in the same way that Judge McMillian faced them, "with a dogged determination and drive,

Black History Month—continued from Page 4

dedicated to serving others.” In a world still fraught with division and challenges, his example reminds us that we must engage with our work not just with skill, but “with courage and civility.” She urged attendees to embody his tenacity, to advocate for justice with conviction and to foster diversity in the legal profession, not simply as an idea, but as an imperative for a just society.

She reminded us all of the song sang in the Baptist church, “trouble don’t last always!” She challenged us all to remember that “hope is the feeling of wanting something to happen and in thinking that could happen.” Her challenge? She summed it up as follows: “I challenge you. I encourage you. I admonish you, to keep hoping!”

The dinner was more than a commemoration to the example of Judge McMillian—it was a call to action to all of us. As Judge Hardin-Tammons concluded, she challenged every lawyer in attendance to continue the work Judge McMillian started to navigate contentious times with integrity, serve their communities with passion, and keep hope alive even in the face of unprecedented adversity and challenges to the rule of law.

The Lawyers Association of St. Louis and the Mound City Bar Association have, for three decades, upheld the spirit of this event, the brainchild of former president and Award of Honor winner, Mr. Leonard Cervantes, celebrating the trailblazers who have paved the way and inspiring the next generation to build upon that foundation. In honoring Judge McMillian, we honor not only his memory but also the ongoing mission of ensuring that justice is fair, fearless, and accessible to all.

Judge McMillian’s life is a testament to the power of perseverance. His story serves as a reminder that when we meet adversity with determination, when we champion justice with courage, and when we serve with purpose, we create a legacy that endures beyond our years.

At the end of her remarks, Judge Hardin-Tammons asked all in attendance who could to rise to their feet, a literal call to action. She asked all of us to join our hands and repeat after her the simple, powerful message: “Working together, we can make the world a better place.” Those in attendance left the evening feeling more connected to one another, and more importantly, empowered to carry out the message of the night, with courage and conviction.



Black History Month Sponsors listed on Page 11

Ken Vuylsteke Receives 2025 Award of Honor

By Bill Thomas

April 4, 2025. Officially “Kenneth K. Vuylsteke Day” in the City of St. Louis. Unofficially, despite a downpour outside, there was an outpouring of effusive praise for Ken, his support for this organization and his career as a lawyer and a citizen, inside the MAC Downtown. Each year since 1946, the Lawyer Association of St. Louis has presented its most prestigious accolade, the Award of Honor, to a member of the trial bar whose career exemplifies the highest ideas of the legal profession. This year, The Lawyers Association was proud to recognize Ken as its recipient.

As a practicing plaintiff’s attorney for more than four decades, Ken has built an extraordinary career marked by service, advocacy, professionalism, and generosity. From his early days as a young trial lawyer, as his remarks revealed, taking a lot of hard knocks with many difficult losses, to his ongoing unwavering ethics, and a steadfast commitment to uplifting the profession and its practitioners.



Ken was “roasted” by a few of his friends. Matt Padberg, (Award of Honor Recipient—2017), served as the master of ceremonies, and Sara Schuett, Executive Director of MATA, Peter Dunne (Award of Honor Recipient—2023), and William Thomas also spoke. The “Dogtown Tenors” performed a tribute song, “Toasted Ravioli,” in honor of Ken’s departed friend, Charlie Gitto, whom he would join for lunch in his downtown restaurant. A few laughs were had, mostly at Ken’s expense, and his remarks recognized past recipients, and the many special people in the audience who helped him along the way.

Perhaps most touching were the remarks Ken reserved for his wife, Teri, and his family, including his brothers and son, who joined him at his table. Ken dedicated the award to the man who he said “deserved it,” his long-time partner, Jim Fox.

Ken’s history as a lawyer is immutably intertwined with the Lawyers Association. To know Ken is to know someone who deeply believes in mentoring and investing in others. From the moment he joined the Lawyers Association as a young attorney, Ken has been a visible and vocal supporter of new lawyers. His legacy as a mentor is etched into the careers of countless attorneys, on both sides of the courtroom, who benefited from his encouragement, counsel, and example, and who he recognized that night from Dave Zevon to Ted Pashos.

Ken’s leadership has been equally impactful. He served as President of the Association in 2016-17, during which he presided over the 60th Annual Gridiron Show. Ken, of course, has been a contributor to the show, and also a subject of many jokes and jabs at the event. Under his leadership, the Association introduced the now-customary “Silver Platter” sponsorship for the Gridiron, a legacy initiative that continues to support Gridiron rehearsals and cast meals by seeking sponsors of all past presidents. Each year, Ken and his firm have contributed as Highstepper-level sponsors, ensuring that the quality and tradition of the Gridiron endures.

Ken’s contributions to the Association extend far beyond formal titles. He has served on the Award of Honor Selection Committee an unprecedented thirteen times, hosted and spoken at CLE programs (including a memorable event held in the City Courts Building’s jury assembly room), and sponsored nearly every event the Association has held. Whether addressing the bench and bar at Judicial Appreciation or remembering our departed colleagues at the Memorial Service, Ken has remained a steady and respected voice in the Association’s mission.

Ken’s service is not confined to this Association. As a longtime member and past President of the Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys (MATA), Ken has fought tirelessly to defend Missouri’s civil justice system. He has worked to preserve the Missouri Plan for judicial selection, oppose harmful “tort reform,” and protect the constitutional right to a trial by jury. He has frequently advised lawmakers on issues affecting injured parties and their access to justice, helping

Award of Honor—continued from Page 6

ensure that the legal system remains open to those most in need.

This deep sense of justice also animates his legal work. Ken is known as one of the Missouri's most respected plaintiff's trial lawyers, recognized early in his career with the Lon O. Hocker Award. Practicing in a small firm, often against much larger adversaries, Ken has achieved remarkable results for his clients, results won not by flashy tactics, but through tireless



preparation, compassion, and advocacy. His reputation is one of integrity: a handshake is all you need.

Ken's achievements also extend into academia and public service. He has taught at both St. Louis University and Washington University law schools, as well as in the medical school on the subject of medical ethics. His work has been published in leading medical and legal journals, and he served as Commissioner on the Missouri Commission on Patient Safety.

Equally important are the contributions few ever see. Ken has intervened to help individuals denied urgent medical care by insurance companies. He has guided grieving families through unimaginable hardship. He has offered time, money, and comfort to people with no means to repay him. And he has done all of this quietly, without any desire

for recognition or thanks.

As the Association celebrated this year's Award of Honor recipient, it was in recognition of a career defined not just by courtroom victories, but by character, service, and heart. Ken Vuylsteke represents everything this Award was created to honor. He is not only a gifted trial lawyer and tireless advocate for the civil justice system, but also a man whose daily actions elevate those around him.

Please join us in congratulating Kenneth K. Vuylsteke, recipient of the 2025 Award of Honor, and in thanking him for his enduring contributions to the law, this Association, and our community. As I said that night, "here's to Kenny!" ("HeHe!").



Memorial Service

Please join us as we remember those whom we have
lost in the past year at the
Memorial Service
Wednesday, May 21, 2025
Noon
Clyde S. Cahill Courts Building
(formerly the Civil Courts Building)
Ceremonial courtroom

In Memoriam

Catalina M. Alvarez	Albert Henry Hamel
Ronald L. Aylward	D. Keith Henson
Thomas J. Barklage	Stephen M. Hereford
Eric V. Barnhart	Darryl L. Hicks
Cheryl Denise Beebe-Snell	James P. Holloran
Laura C. Berlin	Thomas C. Hullverson
William J. Billeaud, Sr.	Michael H. Izsak
James Virgil Bliss	James Ryan Kelly
Stephen M. Boyd	Timothy A. "Skip" Kohlenhoefer
Donald Lloyd Bryant, Jr.	Thomas M. Lang
Srikant "Sai" Chigurupati	Mary C. McDonnell
Elizabeth Ann Chopin	Louis R. Mills, Sr.
Joan Z. Cohen	Gerard A. Nieters
Hon. William Crandall, Jr.	Robert L. Nussbaumer
Mary Francis Daniels	John C. O'Brien
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Margaret Wallace Fox	Edward William Rataj
Steven N. Frank	Bernard A. Ruthmeyer, Jr.
John Lewis Gianoulakis	Evan Irl Schenberg
Diane Marie Gray	Robert Dale Swihart
	Hon. Melvyn Wiesman

*Please feel free to invite family members and colleagues
of those who will be honored at the Memorial Service.*



Additional Black History Month Photos



Gridiron 2024 Pre-Show Cocktails



Gridiron Highsteppers

Executive Producers

Blitz, Bardgett & Deutsch, LLC
Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, LLP
Casey Devoti Brockland
Galloway Johnson Tompkins Burr & Smith
Gray Ritter Graham
Holloran, Schwartz & Gaertner
Jim Holloran
Kamykowski & Taylor, PC
The Kolker Law Firm
Onder Law / Fox & Vuylsteke
Rosenblum Schwartz Fry & Johnson

Writers Roundtable

The Bar Plan
Brown & Crouppen, PC
Franke Schultz & Mullen, PC
Gausnell, O'Keefe & Thomas, LLC
Husch Blackwell, LLP
Lexitas
Miles Mediation & Arbitration
Neill Schwerin Boxerman, PC
O'Brien Law Firm, PC
Pitzer Snodgrass, PC
Sandberg Phoenix
The Simon Law Firm
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Zevan Murphy

Chorus Line

Bartosiak Markepeace
Donald Schlappizzi, PC

Gridiron Show 2024



Silver Platter Sponsors

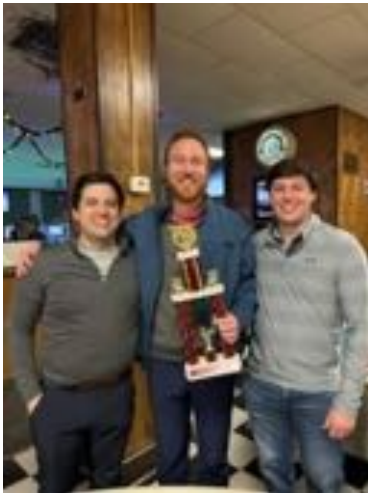
Teri Applebaum
Jared Byrne
Jim Cantalin
Matt Casey
Matt Devoti
Peter Dunne
Ray Fournie
Justin Guerra
John Gunn

Mike Gunn
Linda Hahn
Jim Holloran
Scott Kolker
Mark Levinson
Steve Meyerkord
Nancy Mogab
Jennine Adamek Moore
Hon. Maggie Neill

Matt Padberg
Dan Rousseau
Dan Ryan
Tom Schwartz
Bob Susman
Bill Thomas
Bob Tucker
Bharat Varadachari
Ken Vuylsteke



Additional Bowling Tournament Photos



Black History Month Sponsors

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