



President's Column

By *Jennifer L. Woulfe*
Galloway Johnson Tompkins
Burr & Smith, PC

There is really only one way to begin my first column as Lawyers Association President, and that is to acknowledge the accomplishments of those who have come before me. I would especially like to give a shoutout to immediate Past-President, [Nicole Knepper](#). Nicki did an amazing job over the past year promoting our events, attracting new members, and encouraging that sense of camaraderie that defines the Lawyers Association. Thank you, Nicki, for making us look good. I can only hope to “keep up” this year.

Current events have made the professional relationships we form in organizations like the Lawyers Association and the strength we derive from them more important ever. On the national stage, the past few months have seen an unprecedented level of attacks against the judiciary and the legal profession at large. Threats of violence against judges have risen exponentially, and in June, a gunman shot and killed Minnesota lawmaker and attorney, Melissa Hortman. On a local level, the May 16th tornado that tore through Forest Park, the Central West End, and North City left a trail of destruction and loss in its wake. But it is not all bad news. Together we are strong, and local attorneys have donated time and resources to help with the tornado recovery. Read more about these efforts in [Stephanie Black's](#) article “St. Louis Attorneys Step Up After May Tornado.” As [Andrew Eastman](#) recounts in his piece about this year's Memorial Service, we are a community, and together we celebrate the achievements of our fellow bench and bar members while also remembering those who have passed. And we still know how to have fun, as [Dan Rousseau](#) describes in his article about the Annual Softball Game and Picnic, “City Sluggers Prevail Over the County Crushers” (only one judge was hurt during the hosting of that event).

Here's to an exciting year as your Lawyers Association President!

St. Louis Attorneys Step Up After May Tornado

by *Stephanie Black, Gray Ritter Graham*

When a powerful EF-3 tornado swept through St. Louis on May 16, 2025, it left behind a trail of destruction from Forest Park and the Central West End to North St. Louis. The storm damaged thousands of homes and buildings, claimed five lives, and left entire communities without power or basic shelter. In the days that followed, as emergency crews worked to restore services and clear debris, attorneys across St. Louis began organizing to help residents navigate the aftermath.

Matt Devoti, fellow LASL member and alderman, was among the first to act. After seeing the damage in his ward, Devoti recognized that legal issues were already piling up. Tenants were unsure whether they owed rent on uninhabitable apartments. Homeowners were overwhelmed with insurance paperwork. Some residents had already been approached by contractors offering fast repairs with unclear or one-sided terms. Others were confused or panicked by red condemnation notices posted on their homes, wrongly stating they had just 10 days to vacate.



Devoti presenting Dr. Kelvin Adams of the St. Louis Community Foundation with a \$12,000 check from Missouri Trial Lawyers Care (Mo-TLC)

Upcoming Events

Thursday, September 25

Judicial Appreciation Dinner

5:30 p.m.

Husch Blackwell

8001 Forsyth Blvd.

Friday, November 21

Gridiron Dinner & Show

6:30 p.m.

St. Louis Marriott Grand Hotel



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In response, Devoti mobilized an ongoing volunteer effort that brought together trial attorneys from across the St. Louis area, setting up at community sites like the Urban League in Fountain Park and the O'Fallon Park YMCA within days of the tornado. Lawyers also knocked on more than 350 doors in the neighborhoods surrounding O'Fallon Park, offering guidance and answering questions directly for residents in the hard-hit area.

The conversations were wide-ranging but focused on immediate needs: potential evacuation, lease obligations, property access, insurance claims, and contractor disputes. Many residents had never worked with a lawyer before and were navigating unfamiliar policies and procedures during a crisis. Having an attorney available to explain next steps provided both clarity and peace of mind.

“Even in the middle of so much chaos, people were grateful just to have someone show up and talk them through what they were facing,” said LASL member **Shannon Dawson**, who helped canvas neighborhoods off West Florissant. “It felt good to be able to provide clarity and calm in a moment that felt anything but,” she added.

That same spirit of practical support drove volunteers across the city.

“It was not about doing something extraordinary,” recalled Past President **Nicole Knepper**, who joined the volunteer efforts. “It was about doing what we could, where we were, with the skills we had.”

Devoti described the legal community's response as “amazing.”

He emphasized the appreciation from local officials and residents alike. “Northside alders have been unbelievably thankful. A huge void existed in the tornado's aftermath. Trial lawyers stepped up, educated themselves about the issues, and provided help that only lawyers could provide. The pay-back was huge: smiles, expressions of relief, and hugs.”

The work has not stopped. Volunteer lawyers continue to return to affected neighborhoods and assist at resource centers, helping residents navigate delayed insurance payments, housing issues, and rebuilding challenges. In June, lawyers like LASL member **Jill Bollwerk** staffed the regional Disaster Assistance Center at Chaifetz Arena, where they provided guidance on ongoing issues. What began as a rapid response effort has evolved into a sustained community support network, and the legal community's commitment to seeing it through remains strong.

The legal issues created by this storm will not disappear quickly. But thanks to the work of these attorneys, many St. Louis residents have been able to take the first steps forward with support and a better understanding of their options.

To all who have volunteered: *Thank You. Your time, presence, and compassion continue to make a real difference.*

Work remains, and tornado victims continue to face ongoing challenges. Attorneys interested in volunteering can contact Legal Services of Eastern Missouri or reach out directly to Matt Devoti at MDevoti@caseydevoti.com to get connected with opportunities. Those wishing to contribute financially can donate to the Tornado Relief Fund at [this link](#) or visit stlgives.org for more information.



More photos
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St. Louis Lawyers Help in Aftermath of Tornado



Local Attorneys Remembered at Annual Memorial Service

By [Andrew Eastman](#), [Husch Blackwell](#)

The Lawyers Association of St. Louis held its annual Memorial Service at noon on May 21 in the ceremonial courtroom of the Clyde S. Cahill Courts Building to honor those members of the bar who passed away during the prior year.

The [Honorable Christopher McGraugh](#), presiding judge of the 22nd Judicial Circuit Court, called the courtroom to order and the [Honorable Michael David](#) delivered the keynote address, emphasizing his personal connection to many of those being remembered and describing how each lawyer or judge had contributed to the vibrancy and camaraderie of the St. Louis legal community.

[Jennifer Woulfe](#), the Association's president, read the names of those being honored. [Diane Hanisch](#), [Sarah Jane Hunt](#), [Nicole Matlock](#), and [Stephanie Black](#) performed alongside [Peter Dune](#) and [Bob Will](#), who sang Danny Boy and The Parting Glass, songs traditionally performed at past memorial services. Friends, colleagues, and family members of the deceased were in attendance.

Those dry facts aside, the annual Memorial Service reminds our community of its essential element: the warmth and conviviality of its members, which transform a staid, old-fashioned profession into something that's a pleasure and a reward to be part of. Those remembered this year included Jim Holloran and Tom Hullverson, stones in the foundation of our world, known as much for their freely-given friendship as for their considerable success; Gary Paul, a prominent appellate attorney whose outward stoicism contained a wonderful sense of humor; James Kelly, an exceptional athlete who died too young of a stroke; Paul Dobberstein, a colleague of Morris Shenker who witnessed the making of the St. Louis criminal defense bar; Catalina Alvarez, a Cuban immigrant who championed equal employment opportunities; leaders of corporate legal departments like Donald Bryant, James Dixon, Robert Duesenberg, Steven Frank, and Ronald Aylward; teachers like Betty Chopin, John O'Brien, Michael O'Keefe, Robert Swihart, and Red Mills; politicians like Thomas Barklage, Richard Funsch, Ivan Schenberg, and Michael Daniels; and veterans like William Billeaud, Hap Hamel, Skip Kohlenhoefer, and the Honorable William Crandall.

Without the names and faces that make up our community, practicing law would simply be a job – but the people make it more, and the Association's Memorial Service is a dignified means of remembering those people and thanking them for making our lot better.

Of all the money that e'er I had, I spent it in good company.

And all the harm I've ever done, alas it was to none but me.

And all I've done for want of wit, to mem'ry now I can't recall.

So, fill to me the parting glass... good night and joy be to you all

Judicial Appreciation Program Moves to Clayton

Thursday, Sept. 25

5:30 p.m.

Husch Blackwell

8001 Forsyth Blvd.

[Details to Come!](#)

City Sluggers Prevail Over the County Crushers

By [Dan Rousseau](#), MG+M Law Firm

The annual Softball Game and Picnic was a rousing success at Tilles Park, especially for the lawyers and judges for the City squad. Bucking the recent history of near 100° temperatures for the softball game, this year’s affair brought seasonally comfortable weather, and with it, plenty of lawyers and judges ready to relive past athletic glory on the field.

The game was a close battle, but the depth and experience of the City squad prevailed in the end. Sporting a lineup of veterans and spry newcomers, the City squad managed by [Judges Timothy Boyer](#) and [Madeline Connolly](#) proved too much for the County squad with a final score of 7-3. The City was carried by some big blasts and a never-ending stream of hits from [Judge Heather Hays](#) and [Chantal Mehill](#). The County team battled valiantly in light of injuries that depleted their depth. But in a sign of the strength and fortitude of the County, [Judge Justin Ruth](#) was spotted back at the picnic following his visit to the urgent care room for a dislocated shoulder. Although don’t let this tense competitive nature scare anyone off as injuries on the field only occur every other year on average.

The County looks forward to a year of recovery and practice and the chance at ending this 1-year slide next year.

Following the tense game, both sides gathered in camaraderie for keg beer and barbeque. [Peter Dunne](#) took center stage raffling off numerous wonderful prizes and gift cards with the assistance of President [Jenny Woulfe](#). No one left empty-handed, with even those coming up short in the raffle receiving stress balls and mini bottles of Fireball. No matter your team, whether you even played softball, or won a fabulous gift card in the raffle, all who attended walked away winners at a great event.



Softball Photos on Page 7

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