



### From the Corner: Connected Communication



Great communication is a key to great teamwork and we here at the Office of the Harris County Attorney value great teamwork. A recent article in the Houston Chronicle warns that smart phones, social media and other technology may keep us in constant contact but that we may not be communicating as well as we could. The article, based on a conversation with MIT professor Sherry Turkle, author of the book "Reclaiming Conversation," warns that we may have forgotten how to communicate with the thoughtfulness, empathy and innovation that come about when we have in-person, two-way conversations.

Texting and email may deliver factual information but they fail to provide the visual cues and spontaneous feedback that help us understand one another and lead to creative solutions.

We should consider these suggestions on how we can enhance our communication skills:

- Walk down the hallway to talk to a colleague instead of sending a text message or email.
- Drop in and say hello to a co-worker we've not seen in a while.
- Turn off phones during meetings.
- Set aside moments to disconnect from technology, to be alone and listen to our own thoughts.

Better communication that encourages thoughtfulness, empathy and innovation will help us continue to be of Service to All, According to Law.

Read more on this subject [here](#).

### Young students visit Law Library



The Harris County Law Library was happy to welcome some very special guests, a delightful group of young students from the Michelle White Speech, Language, and Academic Services program on April 8. During their visit, Assistant Law Librarian Heather Holmes led the stu-

dents on a tour, pointing out the many resources available at the Library and explaining how legal research is conducted.

Before leaving, the students selected books from the collection of the Harris County Public Library titles maintained at the Law Library..

### 2016 Recognition Ceremony Postponed

Because of the uncertainty of Wednesday's weather the Recognition Ceremony originally scheduled for Wednesday, April 20th has been postponed. Stay tuned for the new date and times.



### Sticking out our tongues to child abuse



HCAO Staffers wore blue and stuck out their tongues to child abuse on April 8 joining our colleagues across the nation who participated in Child Abuse prevention month activities. Over one-third of our Office handles child protection cases.

### HCAO co-sponsors land seminar



Harris County's Right of Way department and the Harris County Attorney hosted a workshop for project management staff, engineers, right-of-way agents, and appraisers to discuss the acquisition of property for County Projects on April 9. Over one hundred attended. Assistant County Attorney Don Stricklin taught attendees about our Office's role in the condemnation process, about the legal requirements for the County to exercise its powers of eminent domain, and about attorney-client communication.



Jamie Buchanan is an Administrative Assistant within the CAO.

1. I love genealogy. I've traced my family back to the 1600s.

2. I can do a pretty impressive imitation of a turkey gobble.

3. I'm currently working towards completing my first 5K.

4. I was visiting New York City when the Northeast Blackout of 2003 occurred. I was able to see the stars from the street.

5. I have two children, ages 7 and 3.



WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE HARRIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, BOTH LAWYERS AND NON-LAWYERS, ADHERE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ETHICS AS WE SERVE THE PEOPLE OF HARRIS COUNTY AND STRIVE TO BE THE BEST PUBLIC LAW FIRM IN THE UNITED STATES.



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COMING ATTRACTIONS:

**TDCAA Civil Law Seminar**  
Wednesday, May 11, 2016 to Friday, May 13, 2016  
Omni South Park Hotel, Austin  
[Click here for more information.](#)

Rome wasn't built in a day ...



... but we are building Rome!  
—David Maister

HCAO Speakers Program proves popular



Guns, consumer rights, the environment, bad businesses: If you name a topic, there is a good chance that our Office has an Assistant County Attorney who can speak on the subject. As the largest County Attorney's Office in Texas representing the third largest county in the United States, our Office deals with virtually every aspect of civil law.

In 2015, the Office made almost 100 presentations to organizations across Harris County. "That has been our busiest year," Debbie Dillard, Community Outreach Director says, "Our speakers enjoy sharing their knowledge and connecting with the community."

Many attorneys within the office have already given presentations in 2016 including: Scott Hilsher – Property Exemptions/Protests ; Jorey Herrscher – Human Trafficking; Dori Wind – Texas Constitution; Susan Fillion – Elder Financial Exploitation; Melissa Spinks – Human Trafficking; Bethany Dwyer – Bandit Signs; Tiffany Reedy – Child & Adult Protective Services; Doug Ray – Open Carry; Clinton Gambill – Wills & Probate; Garland "Mack" McInnis – Animal Cruelty/Dangerous Animals; Julie Countiss – Getting Rid of Businesses That Attract Crime; Cecilia Longoria – Adult Guardianships; Rosemarie Donnelly – Getting Rid of Businesses That Attract Crime; Pegi Block – Living Wills & Advanced Directives; Chan Buckner – Dangerous Animals/Animal Cruelty.

HCAO learns about court reporting

Kim Tindall of Kim Tindall and Associates presented a class on April 5 entitled "Court Reporting 101" to HCAO lawyers and paralegals. The presentation provided practical tips for taking better, faster depositions along with new trends in court reporting including remote depositions through video conferencing; real time transcription, and video synchronization

HCAO visits HSPCA groundbreaking



Assistant County Attorneys Chan Buckner and Garland McInnis work with the [Houston SPCA](#) and other non profits on cases involving abused and neglected animals. Chan, Garland, and Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan attended groundbreaking ceremonies for the society's \$25 million expansion project on March 29.

The wildlife center will hold big cats plus other exotic animals. There will also be an arena for adoptable horses to be in competitive horse shows, along with space for goats, pigs, and more.



HCAO facilitates NRG road contracts

Our Office played an integral role in recent efforts to upgrade roads around NRG Park in anticipation of the 2017 Super Bowl. As reported by the Houston Chronicle, Harris County commissioners on Tuesday, March 29th, approved more than \$550,000 worth of contracts for the design and engineering of roads around NRG Park, part of an expedited process spearheaded by Precinct 1 Commissioner Gene Locke to make upgrades ahead of the 2017 Super Bowl.

The contracts are part of a project for the Commissioner who has emphasized greater investment of county funds within City of Houston limits. Assistant County Attorney Jim Lemond reports that Public Law Practice Group lawyers and staff that worked non-stop to assure that these contracts were prepared and ready for presentation to Commissioners Court. Attorneys and paralegals working on this project include Jim Lemond, Kristin Barry, Jack Walker, and Sarah Ibrahim. [Click here](#) to read the Chronicle article.

Gloria Cruz retires

Gloria Cruz has retired from the Office of the Harris County Attorney after 34 years of service. Attorney and staff from our Office joined with Harris County Guardianship employees to wish Gloria a fond farewell at a retirement breakfast on March 31st. Gloria began her career at the Office in tax collections, working with Scott Bresk and Steve Smith. She spent the last decade working in the Disability and Elder Law group. Gloria reports that she will miss seeing her friends at the Office every day but that she will be able to spend more time with her husband.

