



From the corner: Ethical Excellence



Ethics professor Stuart Brody spoke at the opening General Session of the 2014 County Management Institute. While he was speaking primarily to public officials, his advice is useful to all who strive to serve the public.

Here are excerpts from his speech that we, as public servants, would do well to consider:

“Public officials have a certain duty to act in the public’s interest — sometimes even against their own self-interest. That can be easier said than done, as self-interest can be difficult for a person to see.

But self-interest is a powerful thing, and sometimes people deny that one exists because they really can’t see it — it’s invisible to them, the gift hidden by the wrapping paper of another interest.

The ability to act morally and make decisions that might be against one’s own self-interest when there isn’t a clear-cut script or policy to follow isn’t something a person is born with, nor is it something a person just happens to possess all the time. Instead, it’s something that is demonstrated.

The best way to identify self-interest is to practice and to consider integrity a continuous journey.

Integrity is a strenuous path up a mountain. It’s a path that avoids the easy adulation from others and notoriety and egotism that’s so common. It’s this hard path of looking inward to ask these serious questions. It’s a path up a mountain that has no summit.”

[Click here for more on Professor Brody’s speech in the article in County Magazine.](#)

Ethical excellence is part of our mission and culture and is vital to our goal to be the best public law firm in the United States. — Vince.

Happy Anniversary!

Thank you for your service to the public:

Jennifer Fox	1 year	Michelle Moore	3 years
Tiffany McCullough	1 year	Marc Ritter	3 years
Toni Tyler	1 year	Jasmine Poullard	7 years
Cheryl Davis	2 years	Harrison Gregg	15 years

Tiffany Reedy interviewed on Majic 102.1



Assistant County Attorney Tiffany Reedy represented our Office on August 10 when she was interviewed by Dr. J. Thomas Smith for Sunday Morning Live on Majic 102.1.

Tiffany discussed our recent CLE on the rights of unaccompanied children crossing the Texas border as well as the various ways our Office works on behalf of all residents of Harris County. The conversation covered bandit signs and the ways nuisance laws can protect neighborhoods. Tiffany also discussed our Office’s role in representing the children of Harris County through Child Protective Services.

A battle for the ages ... or at least 8 weeks

An epic battle is raging between two forces for good in our Office. The Compliance and Public Law Practice Groups are going head to head in the [Live Healthy Harris County Activ8 Challenge](#), an eight-week test of true grit and determination intended to encourage employees to live healthy lives. The trash talk is intense and the stakes are high. The winners will not only be awarded a Live Healthy Harris County drawstring bag, but also credit toward their Healthy Actions Medical Plan.



She-Hulk is a lawyer and a mutant thanks to a radioactive blood transfusion she received from her cousin, the Incredible Hulk.

With their life-long dreams of owning a drawstring bag hanging in the balance, these competitors must endure multiple minutes of exercise each week. To keep their spirits up, these rivals have adopted super hero personas. For example, Guilly Puente is [She-Hulk](#) (or Hulkette, Guilly’s personal take on the heroine who is a lawyer and a beefy mutant), a fitting choice for a competitor torn between two worlds. By day, Guilly is a member of the Public Law group, but her allegiance in this competition remains with her former group, Compliance. With others training to be the next Ironman, Wonder Woman, and Storm, the competition is sure to be fierce to the finish.

But there’s a dark horse competitor out there who has already made his mark on the competition. Doug Ray won last week’s drawing for a [FitBit](#).

Appeals Court finds in favor of pocket park



The Fourteenth Court of Appeals upheld the right of the County to acquire tracts of property for use as a pocket park or trail head as part of a hike and bike project. The landowner had argued that the County failed to prove that all of the landowner’s property was necessary for the project and that the County’s decision to acquire

the entire 0.5779 acres was arbitrary and capricious. The Court held that the County need not expressly use the word “park” in declaring the property was needed for public use; the project name, “South Mayde Creek Pedestrian & Bicycle Facility Project” is sufficient. The Court found that the landowner had not met its burden to come forward with more than a scintilla of evidence as to the County’s alleged arbitrary and capricious action.

The case is *Farabi, Inc. v. Harris County*. No. 14-13-00443-CV. Senior Assistant County Attorney Bruce Powers handled the appeal. Assistant County Attorney Victoria Jimenez was the lead attorney at trial with assistance from Assistant County Attorney Susan Fillion.

Connect5 Five questions for Cheryl Davis



Cheryl Davis is an Administrative Assistant. She has been with our Office since 2012.

- What’s the worst movie you’ve ever seen? [Piranha](#)
- What’s on your bucket list? Lay on the beaches of [Bora Bora](#).
- If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be? [John F. Kennedy](#)
- What’s your favorite song? [Purple Rain by Prince](#), of course.
- If you were stranded on a desert island, what 3 items would you want with you? Fishing pole, lighter, & ice chest.



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.

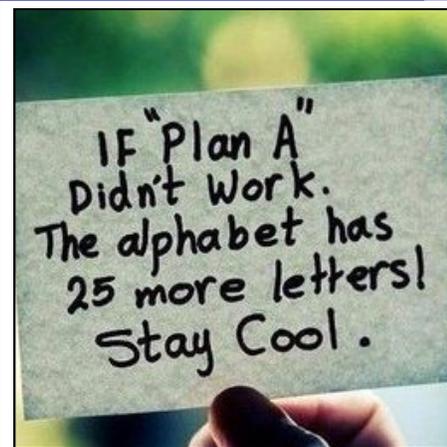
Useful Links

County Attorney [SharePoint](#) | County Attorney [Website](#)
 County Attorney [Policy Manual](#) | Payroll Reports & Benefits [Online](#)
 County Personnel [Regulations](#) | County Attorney [Directory](#)

Coming Attractions

CLE: An Overview of Intellectual Property Law for the Government Legal Professional

Speaker: J. Goodwille Pierre
Date: August 28 **Time:** 2 - 3:30 p.m.
Location: Driscoll Courtroom, 1019 Congress Ave.
Credit: 1.25 hours; .25 ethics



HCAO reaches out to youth at Bright Futures Fair



On August 8, our Office attended the Bright Futures Fair, which is part of the Street Olympics event hosted by Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee. The event gave kids the opportunity to learn about the bright futures they will have through education, hard work, and healthy living. Pictured is Clyde Leuchtag, Cheryl Thornton, Vince Ryan, Curtrina Majors, and Debbie Dillard.

Community Outreach: Speaking Engagements

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Dori Wind, Aug. 6
Gathering of Eagles
Veterans Organization
"Veterans Court" | Scott Hilsher, Aug. 12
AARP Chapter 50
"Wills & Probate" | Scott Hilsher, Aug. 14
Northeast Positive
Interaction Program
(HPD)
"Deed Restrictions" |
|--|---|--|

Masi named to lead Harris Health

The Harris County Hospital District has named George Masi, a veteran administrator with a military background, to lead it into the era of health-care reform.



George Masi

The Harris Health System's board of managers voted unanimously to hire Masi, chief operating officer since 2005, to succeed David Lopez as president and CEO. Lopez's contract expired in July, after the board in June opted not to renew it, citing the need for a change in leadership and direction.

Masi had held the job on an interim basis since July 9. He becomes the second consecutive system head to go from chief operating officer to interim CEO to CEO.

Toll Road Authority gets new Executive Director



Gary K. Trietsch

Gary K. Trietsch, P.E., former District Engineer of TxDOT's Houston District has been appointed to serve as Executive Director of the Harris County Toll Road section of the County's Public Infrastructure Department. Trietsch succeeds Peter Key who has been director for the past six years. Peter will continue to serve as HCTRA's Chief Financial Officer.

Trietsch has more than 45 years of service to Texas communities in the field of transportation engineering, planning, design and construction. He spent 40 years with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), serving the last 13 years as the highest ranking official of the TxDOT Houston District.

In the Spotlight

Introducing the HCAO's summer interns



Emily Mott

Emily Mott is a rising 2L at the University of Houston Law Center, where she is a member of the Moot Court Competition Team and serves as Publications Editor at the Institute for Intellectual

Property & Information Law. She is also on the Houston Journal of International Law.

Emily graduated with honors from Baylor University and holds a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature.

Prior to joining our Office as an intern in the Litigation Practice Group, Emily served as a judicial intern for the Honorable Mike Engelhart. It was through that internship and her previous experience as a legal assistant in

the Offices of Dan Krohn that Emily developed an interest in litigation. She hopes to pursue a career in litigation upon graduation from law school.

Claudia is a rising 2L at the University of Houston Law Center and an intern in our Litigation Practice Group. In addition to serving as a 1L Student Mentor and Law Center Ambassador, Claudia is on the Houston Journal of Health Law and Policy and attends the Law Center on academic scholarship.

Claudia holds a bachelor of science



Claudia Lapis

degree in Psychology from the University of Houston, where she graduated with honors.

Prior to joining our Office, Claudia worked for the Office of the Attorney General of Texas in their Child Support Division. She actively volunteers at the Hungarian Reformed Church of Houston and is fluent in Hungarian. In the fall, Claudia will intern with U.S. District Court Judge Lynn Hughes.