

# TALLAHASSEE WOMEN LAWYERS



*A local chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers*



Megan Kachur is Deputy Director for the Division of Professions at the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. She can be contacted at: [president@mytwl.org](mailto:president@mytwl.org).

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Written by Megan Kachur*

Spring: a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be. - Unknown

There are so many exciting updates to share and recent events to fill you in on!! This Spring, TWL has successfully continued to carry out this year's theme: *Use Your Resources!* Each CLE Lunch & Learn, mentoring program event, book donation, monthly book club event, and sponsorship of a school program or special event this year has allowed our membership and community partners to gather and work together, broadening TWL's impact and social footprint in the legal community and community at large.

During our November Lunch & Learn, we gained insight into *End of Year Giving* with the Community Foundation of North Florida. We learned how its financial resources help serve over 10 counties to help build a stronger community by awarding grants and scholarships through philanthropy and endowments. During January's Lobby Days Luncheon, we learned about *The Art of Generativity* from State Representative for Florida's 40th House District LaVon Bracy Davis, as she delivered a moving presentation about how connections in society can help create a lasting impact simply by sharing resources of one's time through mentorship and volunteering.

During our March Lunch & Learn, we learned about *Making a Difference* with the Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office and gained a renewed understanding on how putting forth a little extra effort can truly create a positive and lifelong impact on the most vulnerable youth population. Each presentation awarded CLE credit and demonstrated how your resources can be utilized to create, improve, and maintain supportive networks between members in the legal profession through mutual cooperation, respect, and good friendship.

Thank you to our sponsors and loyal membership! Your support and commitment are essential and substantially contribute to TWL's ongoing success and its ability to continue carrying out its mission. No matter what is going on in our personal and professional lives, never forget others and do what you can to make a difference...even the smallest resource...is more than some ever receive.

Megan Kachur  
TWL President 2023-2024

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### WELCOME, NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS

Claudia Humphrey

Melissa Hedrick

Lakiera Bailey

Katryna Santa Cruz

Elina Valentine

Harriet Williams

Barbara Busharis

Jasmine Mattear

Kristin Matthews

Dana Brooks

Mallory Neumann

Adrienne Love

## UPCOMING EVENTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

### June

12th - CLE Lunch & Learn with presentation of TWL's Inaugural Bar Study Scholarship and TWL's Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Award  
First District Court of Appeal at 12:00pm

**Register  
HERE**

19th - FAWL's Blue & Gold Gala  
Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek

# INVESTITURE CEREMONY OF JUSTICE RENATHA FRANCIS



*Written by Christie Petruzzelli*

TWL President, Megan Kachur, was honored to speak at the Investiture for Justice Renatha Francis, the 92nd Florida Supreme Court Justice, appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis. The Investiture was held on October 18, 2023, at the Florida Supreme Court. Chief Justice Carlos Muniz gave opening remarks, followed by Governor DeSantis' presentation of the commission. The Honorable Scott Makar, Judge at the Fifth District Court of Appeal, the Honorable Edward Artau, Judge at the Fourth District Court of Appeal, President of the Palm Beach County Bar Association, Mr. Grasford W. Smith, President of the Florida Bar, Mr. F. Scott Westheimer, President of the Sheree D. Cunningham Black Women Lawyers Association, Ms. Rosalyn Destinie Baker Sutton, Past President of the Haitian Lawyers Association, Mr. Hans Ottinot, President of the Caribbean Bar Association, Ms. Anisha C. Atchanah, President-Elect of the Miami-Dade Florida Association of Women Lawyers, Ms. Angela Benjamin, and the Honorable Former Florida Supreme Court Justice, C. Alan Lawson, also shared sentiments.

*"TWL's ties with Justice Francis date back to the start of her legal career in Tallahassee as she was an active member and board member during that time. I was honored to represent TWL at the Investiture Ceremony for Justice Francis and grateful to have the opportunity to witness such a historic moment with the Florida Supreme Court."*

*-Megan Kachur, TWL President*





# 40TH ANNUAL JUDICIAL RECEPTION



*Written by Christie Petruzzelli*

The 40th Annual Judicial Reception was held October 25, 2023, at the Tallahassee Garden Club. This year's event was themed Autumn Harvest - a perfect name for the blissful night celebrating our judiciary at the historic and charming Rutgers House. Tallahassee Women Lawyers was delighted to be joined by judges, lawyers, students, and community members in TWL's yearly effort to show support and appreciation to the individuals who contribute so much to the administration of justice throughout the State.

This event is only made possible by the generous support of our sponsors, and Stearns Weaver Miller was the exclusive dessert table sponsor! We are grateful to our sponsors, vendors, and the amazing TWL Judicial Reception Committee for everything they did to make this evening one for the books.

More pictures can be found on our website [gallery](#).

*"TWL's 40th Annual Judicial Reception provided members with the opportunity to meet, mingle, and celebrate our distinguished members of the local judiciary the historic Rutger's House in downtown Tallahassee. Thank you to all of the TWL members who helped make this event a success!"*

*Elizabeth Stinson, Judicial Reception Chair*

## **JUDICIAL RECEPTION SPONSORS:**

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TI ADORO STUDIOS  
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NABORS, GIBLIN, & NICKERSON  
SNIFFEN & SPELLMAN  
GRAY LAW

# LASHAWN RIGGANS HONORED WITH ROSE DEEB KITCHEN AWARD

*Written by Carly Schrader*

Not all law careers are built on a straight and linear path. Instead, some of the most remarkable legal careers are built on the ability to rise to the challenges of life, and a willingness to adjust the path in pursuit of a larger purpose and calling. Rose Deeb Kitchen became an attorney despite many obstacles, including a culture that did not prioritize the education of women, a divorce, and raising three children as a single parent. This award recognizes women who have overcome obstacles and hardship to become attorneys.

LaShawn Riggans has demonstrated through her career and service to the community what it means to be resilient. Ms. Riggans grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, living with her mother during the school year, and with her father in Chicago during the summers. Her family's financial resources growing up were sometimes limited, but her mother was a great example to her of making the best of challenging situations.

After graduating from high school and attending some junior college classes, she made a life altering-decision to forge a new path for herself by joining the U.S. Navy. In the Navy, she held a high security clearance and worked on intelligence collection. She was stationed in the Republic of Panama and Okinawa, Japan. The birth of her daughter while overseas led her to the difficult decision of leaving the military, putting her career on a new trajectory.

Ms. Riggans went on to pursue a Masters Degree in Public Administration at Kennesaw State

University. During this time, she worked as a victim advocate in the Cobb County Attorney's Office. This experience informed her decision to pursue a career in law. Though she connected with the individuals she assisted navigating the legal system, she knew she could be of greater service as a prosecuting attorney.

Despite challenges in her personal life at the time, including raising a child and going through a divorce, Ms. Riggans successfully pursued her Juris Doctor and was admitted to the Florida Bar.

Ms. Riggans has spent the majority of her legal career in public service, having worked first as an assistant state attorney for the Florida First Judicial Circuit, in Shalimar, Florida. During this time, Ms. Riggans also taught as an adjunct professor for the University of West Florida. Ms. Riggans then worked as an Assistant County Attorney in the Leon County Attorney's Office, before she was promoted to Deputy County Attorney, where she served until 2023. She is now of counsel with Nabors, Giblin, & Nickerson, P.A., and continues to dedicate her practice to local government issues.

Outside of work, Ms. Riggans focuses on service to the legal community and her community at large. This includes volunteer speaking engagements, mentoring FSU law students, involvement with various charitable organizations, and service to voluntary bar organizations. Ms. Riggans is currently appointed to the Florida Bar Professional Ethics Committee and has volunteered with Leon County

Teen Court, Leon County Classroom to Courtroom, Natural Disaster Animal Sheltering, and Nims Middle School Civics. Ms. Riggans is also an ordained pastor and stays involved with the community through outreach ministry through Heaven 2 Earth Ministries. She also works as a life coach. Ms. Riggans was recognized in 2019 by the Tallahassee Democrat as one of the "25 Women You Need to Know."

We were delighted to honor Ms. Riggans with this award, at the November Lunch and Learn.



*"Receiving the Rose Deeb Kitchen Award was truly an overwhelming honor! In this life we will all face some form of adversity or obstacles, but how we respond to it is what truly defines us. Receiving an award named in honor of a woman who is the epitome of strength, resilience, and perseverance was truly an emotional and humbling experience. I'm very thankful and grateful to be in the company of the amazing women who are past recipients of this prestigious award."*

*-LaShawn Riggans*

# NOVEMBER CLE LUNCH & LEARN: END OF YEAR GIVING

*Written by Christie Petruzzelli*

November, 9, 2023, TWL hosted a Lunch and Learn with attorneys Katrina Rolle, President and CEO of the Community Foundation of North Florida, Mary Lalley Wakeman, Partner at Heuler, Wakeman, Solomon Law Group, and Florida State University's College of Law student Jennifer Camisa. The event was centered around charitable giving and estate planning.

Katrina Rolle is the President and CEO of one of the region's leading philanthropic organizations. Community Foundation of North Florida's mission is to enhance the quality of life in North Florida community by connecting donors to charitable causes which they care most to support.

Mary Wakeman is partner at a Tallahassee Elder Law Firm, Hueler, Wakeman, Solomon Law Group, PLLC. Wakeman practices in Elder Law and Civil Appeals. Talking about estate planning, she reflected:

*"When most people hear the word 'estate planning' they think to themselves 'but I have no estate to leave anyone.' If you own a car, have a bank account and/or own property, then you have assets that will form the basis of your estate at your death. Estate planning through a will or a trust allows you to determine who or what entity you want those assets to go to when you are deceased. Many people also overlook the importance of Advance Directives like a Durable Power of Attorney, Living Will, Designation of Health Care Surrogate and Declaration of Preneed Guardian. These are all documents used during your lifetime that allow someone else to handle your finances and make health care decision for you if you become unable to make them yourself. Putting all these documents in place will ensure that whatever events may befall you during your lifetime, you are well prepared for them."*



TWL's student spotlight, Jennifer ("Jenny") Camisa, is a graduating 3L at Florida State University's College of Law. During law school, Jenny was involved with Law Review, Moot Court, and the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund.







## TWL/WLS SPRING MIXER

Each year, TWL's Mentoring Committee teams up with Florida State University College of Law's Women's Law Symposium ("WLS"), the law student chapter of Florida Association of Women Lawyers, to pair women lawyer mentors with law student mentees. The annual Spring Mixer provides the opportunity to mentors to meet their mentees, and vice versa, The remainder of the year, the pairings connect on their own schedules. This year's event was held January 25th in the law school's rotunda.



## BLESSINGS IN BACKPACKS

TWL's Mentor Program and WLS teamed up for a service event on November 29, 2023. Forty plus reusable drawstring bags were packed with healthy snacks and non-perishable food items to create "Blessings in Backpacks" that went to a local school to replenish its food pantry resources for after school programming. The volunteers also wrote letters/holiday cards to go alongside meals being provided through Meals on Wheels.

We are so proud of the amazing young women of WLS who took a break from studying for their final exams to put a smile on a child's face.





## FACES OF LAW EVENT

*Written by Christie Petruzzelli and Alena Johnsen*

Ti Adoro Studios, TWL's Annual Gold Tier Sponsor, is a family-owned and family-run portrait photography business in Tallahassee, Florida. Ti Adoro Studios specializes in creating gorgeous wall art and printed keepsakes (albums, books and fine art prints) created by the best labs all over the world. They offer a wide variety of services, from studio branding and headshots to family and pet photography

Starting in 2022, Ti Adoro Studios started the Women Faces of Law campaign to inspire and empower women attorneys of Tallahassee, particularly the younger generation of the profession. The campaign uplifts and celebrates women, lawyers, and judges. This year, the photo session experience was hosted at Bannerman Crossings on November 3, 2023. The event featured an exhibit of the featured women along with their stories.



*Members on TWL Board of Directors (from left to right) Liz Desloge Ellis, JNC Monitoring Chair, Stephanie Morse, FAWL Representative, Barbara Walker, Mentoring Director, and Kandace Rudd, Awards Chair, were honored at the event.*



*"The Women Faces of Law 2023 event was a testament to the strength, resilience, and brilliance of women in law. Our honorees included women attorneys each with a unique story of dedication and achievement. These women have not only excelled in their careers but have also contributed significantly to their communities, advocating for justice and equality."*

*The Women Faces of Law 2023 event was more than just a photo session; it was a movement to recognize and celebrate the significant contributions of women in the legal profession. As we look forward to future events, we remain committed to highlighting the stories of women who are making a difference."*

*-Alena Johnsen, Ti Adoro Studios*





TWL is honored and humbled to have Ti Adoro Studios as our Annual Gold Sponsor. At Ti Adoro Studios, they believe in the power of visual storytelling and are dedicated to capturing the beauty and strength of every individual they photograph. Moreover, they are committed to highlighting the stories of women who are making a difference!

You can learn more about Ti Adoro Studios by visiting [their website](http://www.ti-adoro.com) or following them on Instagram @ti\_adoro\_studios\_tallahassee.

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## TWL BOOK CLUB

TWL's Book Club meets each month at Ology Midtown to discuss engaging and entertaining reads. October's book, *How to Not Drown in a Glass of Water* by Angie Cruz, tells the story of Cara Romero, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic in the midst of the Great Depression. April's book, *Kill Show* by Daniel Sweren Becker, is a social commentary on true crime within a crime novel itself. Are you an avid reader and can't wait until Book Club resumes this fall? Check out Kristen Dobson's recommended readings to tide you over this summer!



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## PACE GARDEN & TRANQUILITY SPACE



Through the Florida Association of Women Lawyers (FAWL) Public Service Grant, Tallahassee Women Lawyers was able to partner with the Pace Center for Girls (PACE) Leon to beautify their vegetable garden and create an outdoor garden and tranquility space. PACE is an organization dedicated to changing the lives of girls through the development of critical life, mental and physical health, and academic skills. The painted rocks will be scattered throughout the finished garden and raised flowerbeds.

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## YOUNG LAWYER SECTION ESSENTIAL CARE KITS

TWL partnered with Annual Silver Sponsor, Lexitas, to host its Young Lawyer Section event assembling Essential Care Kits. TWL produced 60+ essential hygiene/care kits for individuals experiencing homelessness or critical need throughout Leon County. Thank you to the attendees at the fall mentorship mixer, judicial reception, and November membership meeting who donated items and the Florida Bar for the #yldholidayallyearlong grant which was used to supplement resources. The supplies were placed in reusable mesh bags and distributed to community partners, including a local shelter specifically helping homeless youth and teens, service providers whose clients include the Public Defender's Office, and a local mental healthcare facility.





## A PRIMER ON PIXELS: THE LEGAL RISKS OF WEBSITE ANALYTICS

*Written by Doug Kilby and Hannah Murphy of Stearns Weaver Miller of Tallahassee, Florida (TWL's Executive Platinum Sponsor)*

We've all had that online experience where you've searched and browsed for a product, and then been steadily bombarded with ads for that product, or by the companies whose websites you visited. And while those ads might be helpful (or creepy) to consumers, companies using online tracking technologies may be exposing themselves to significant legal risk of violating state and federal privacy laws. The latest risk involves a "pixel," which sounds cute and non-threatening, but is the darling of the plaintiff class action bar, and the focus of state and federal privacy law enforcers.

So what is a pixel? A pixel is a piece of code that can be placed on websites to facilitate the tracking of user actions on those sites, helping companies to assess the effectiveness of their advertising campaigns and how visitors use the companies' websites. Meta Pixel (formerly known as Facebook Pixel) is a commonly used tool provided by Meta Platforms, Inc. (formerly Facebook), but many other companies provide similar tracking technologies, including Microsoft Clarity, Google Analytics, and Adobe Analytics, among others. For convenience, we will refer to the fictional company Acme Corporation ("Acme") as using the Meta Pixel on its website, and placing targeted ads on websites their audiences visit.

What does Meta Pixel actually do, and how does it help companies that use it? As visitors click around and interact with various pages on Acme's website,

those actions will be recorded and transmitted to Meta, which collects the data and then provides reports to Acme of all the user activity on the Acme website where the pixel code has been embedded. Key functionalities and features of Meta Pixel include:

- **Conversion Tracking:** tracks user actions after they click on Acme's ad on Facebook, such as purchases or form submissions.
- **Custom Audiences:** Enables the creation of tailored audience groups based on user actions for more personalized advertising such as targeting people aged 25-45, who liked "hiking," "kayaking," or "golden retrievers" on Facebook with Acme SUV ads.
- **Remarketing:** Facilitates targeted ad displays to users who visited the Acme website but did not complete desired actions (for example, the user put an item in a shopping cart but did not complete the transaction).
- **Insights and Analytics:** Provides valuable data on website user behavior for optimizing ad campaigns and enhancing website performance.
- **Dynamic Ads:** Allows advertisers to create automated, dynamic ads based on user interactions with the website.

That data, and those reports, can help companies like Acme send targeted ads to those who browsed their websites, and may also be sold by Meta to third parties to use for marketing or other purposes.



That sharing and use of browsing activities is why you may see digital ads for Acme products after browsing Acme.com, or clicking on some Acme page or ad on Facebook.

The feeling of being watched or surveilled can be upsetting to some, particularly if the information collected is of a sensitive nature.

Companies that use pixel technology must be aware of the various laws that might apply to their collection of data, and equally important, the sharing of that data with third parties such as Meta. Determining what laws apply will depend on a variety of factors, including the kind of data collected, in what jurisdictions the company operates, and whether the company's advertisements target people in certain states or countries. For example, healthcare providers subject to HIPAA or state healthcare privacy laws must ensure that protected health information (PHI) of website users is not collected by pixels and transmitted to third parties unless those third parties are subject to a business associate agreement under HIPAA. In case you were wondering, Meta/Facebook does not enter into business associate agreements with companies using the Meta Pixel.

Accordingly, the use of tracking tools like Meta Pixel comes with legal risks, as evidenced by a variety of recent class action lawsuits and government enforcement actions:

- *BK v. Tenet Healthcare Corp.*, where plaintiffs brought class action claims in both California and Florida alleging the company violated various privacy laws, by, among other things, subjecting users to "wiretaps without their knowledge, authorization, or "consent" through the use of Meta Pixel.
- *R.S. v. Costco*, where plaintiffs brought a class action alleging Costco Pharmacy engaged in deceptive and unfair trade practices by claiming it would protect consumers' privacy but then sharing personal health information in violation of HIPAA, the Washington Privacy Act, the Washington Cybercrime Act, and the Washington Uniform Health Care Information Act.
- *Price v. Carnival Corp.*, where plaintiffs brought class action alleging cruise line violated the Federal Wiretap Act and the California Invasion of Privacy Act by effectively "eavesdropping" on

them — by using Microsoft's Clarity tool to track mouse clicks, keystrokes and text entry on its website—without their consent.

- *Waller v. Tampa Bay Times*, where the plaintiff alleged use of Meta Pixel to track personally identifiable information and video watching history on the newspaper's website violated the Video Privacy Protection Act—a 1980s era federal law enacted to protect movie watching privacy of renters of videos from brick and mortar companies like Blockbuster. (VPPA claims are regularly brought alongside other consumer protection claims such).
- *United States v. GoodRx*, where the Federal Trade Commission sued the digital health platform for failing to notify consumers of unauthorized disclosure of health information. One infraction included sharing data with Meta to target GoodRx's own users with personalized health- and medication-specific advertisements on Facebook and Instagram.

Violations of these laws can result in severe consequences, including class action lawsuits and regulatory enforcement actions, civil penalties, statutory damages, and punitive damages. In evaluating whether the use of pixels is appropriate for your company or client, consider the following:

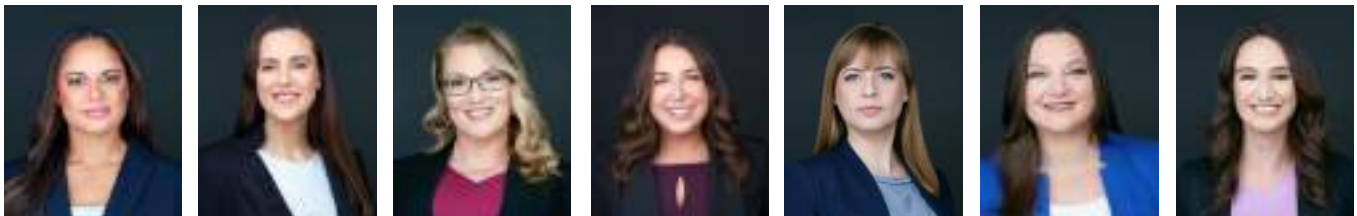
1. What third party analytics tools are we using to track website use?
2. Where are the pixels located, and what data are they collecting?
3. How are we storing and/or sharing data with third parties?
4. What industry-specific laws apply to us? (such as HIPAA, FERPA, GLBA, and law governing advertising to children)?
5. What state laws apply to us? (like the Florida Digital Bill of Rights and the California Privacy Rights Act)?
6. Are we living up to the promises and standards set out in our website privacy policy and terms of use?
7. Are we getting proper consent from our website visitors and customers to collect and use their data, and do those consents match up to what we are doing?
8. Do we need to consult with an attorney to understand our legal obligations and to draft privacy disclosures, obtain proper consents, or otherwise avoid risky practices that are fueling litigation and government enforcement actions?

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Douglas Kilby** is a Shareholder in Stearns Weaver Miller's Tallahassee office. Doug earned his ANSI-accredited Certified Information Privacy Professional/United States (CIPP/US) credential through the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP) and regularly advises companies on a variety of privacy law matters, including digital marketing, website privacy compliance, and biometric data collection. He also has over 30 years of litigation experience focusing his practice on class action, antitrust, consumer protection, business litigation, and government investigations, particularly matters involving the Attorney General's office.

**Hannah Murphy** is an Attorney in Stearns Weaver Miller's Tallahassee office. Hannah is a litigator who focuses her practice on trusts and estates, election law, and consumer protection. She also has leadership roles with Tallahassee Women Lawyers and the Tallahassee Bar Association.

# STEARNS WEAVER MILLER



(First row): Patricia A. Conners, Susan L. Stephens, Bridget Smitha, Past TWL President Kelly O'Keefe, Denay Brown, and Melanie Leitman.

(Second row): Fatou Calixte, Adrienne C. Love, TWL Secretary Felicia Kitzmiller, TWL JNC Monitoring Chair Liz Desloge Ellis, TWL Meetings Coordinator Co-Chair Hannah Murphy, Amelia Savage, and Erin Tilton.

## Stearns Weaver Miller is TWL's Exclusive Platinum Sponsor this year!

**ALL** of the Tallahassee Office women lawyers at Stearns Weaver Miller are recognized as valued members of TWL and are an integral part of our organization.

For more information about Stearns Weaver, visit [stearnsweaver.com](http://stearnsweaver.com).

## BREHON FAMILY SERVICES BOOTS FOR BABIES EVENT

TWL was proud to have sponsored Brehon Family Services' Boots for Babies event November 2, 2023. Brehon Family Services is a local organization which improves the lives of families and children by providing services that promote healthy families and babies and nurturing parent-child relationships. Brehon House's annual fundraiser, Boots for Babies, raises funds to help the organization further its mission. The event was held at Shiloh Farms and included happy hour, a silent auction, and food.



## LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES: PART II



Little Free Library is a non-profit organization founded to remove barriers to book access through book-exchange boxes. TWL members have continued its donation efforts, both at night and in broad daylight, to donate over 80+ books all around town. Fun Fact: Little Free Library Week was May 12-18, 2024!

Check out a local Little Free Library near you, by using the World Map: <https://littlefreelibrary.org/map/> or by downloading its Mobile App, which accessible via the same link!



## TWL MEMBERS SHINE ON THE DANCE FLOOR

*Written by Christie Petruzzelli, with help from Renée Gordon and Kelly Kibbey Smith*

Legal Services of North Florida (LSNF) provides legal representation to low-income and vulnerable individuals in civil matters in the Florida panhandle, from Escambia to Jefferson County. Each year, LSNF hosts one of its most beloved fundraising events - and it just so happens to be on the dance floor! That's right, Dancing with the Stars, *Tallahassee Edition*. Local celebrities team up with professional dancers and compete to win the hearts of the people and judges, and raise funds for LSNF while doing it.

TWL is a proud sponsor of this event each year. This year, two TWL members were Dancers, Renée Gordon and Kelly Kibbey Smith. Gordon has devoted her career as an attorney to public service, working at the Florida Supreme Court, Florida Senate, Office of the Attorney General, and the Florida Department of Financial Services. She has also contributed her time and talents to multiple community organizations and bar associations and spent time volunteering with and leading LSNF. Kibbey Smith is also very active in the legal community and the community at large. She has served as President of the Florida Government Bar Association, Governor on the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division 2nd Cir. Board of Governors, and Vice Chair of the Florida Bar's Governmental and Public Policy Advocacy Committee. Smith is Board Certified in Health Law and currently works at the Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration.



*"Dancing with the Stars was a success! The event raised over \$76,000 for Legal Services of North Florida. This money will change lives by enabling those in need to access our courts. It was an honor to have the support of Tallahassee Women Lawyers, President Kachur, and TWL members as I competed and bachata danced to one of my favorite Bruno Mars songs."*

*Kelly Kibbey Smith, 2023 Dancer*



*"I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to support Legal Services of North Florida through its Dancing with the Stars Fundraiser. Legal Services is such an important organization because it regularly provides much-needed civil legal services to those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. As attorneys, we all know how important it is to have competent counsel by our side if faced with a legal dispute. Legal Services provides that service and more. It's attorneys and staff are compassionate, skilled, and determined. Without their help, hundreds of people would be without critical assistance in matters concerning guardianship, housing, special education, property, contract, and employment, to name a few. I hope to continue to support LSNF's important work as time goes on and hope Tallahassee Women Lawyers will do the same."*

*Renée Gordon, 2023 Dancer and Judge's Choice Award Winner*

## LOBBY DAYS LUNCHEON

*Written by Christie Petruzzelli*

This year's Florida Association for Women Lawyers' (FAWL) Lobby Days Luncheon was hosted by TWL at the Florida State University College of Law on January 17, 2024. The luncheon included a CLE presentation on *The Art of Generativity*, highlighting its positive effects, and how one's platform, such as supporting the arts community, can help reach personal fulfillment, featuring State Representative for Florida's 40th House District, Representative LaVon Bracy Davis. Prior to election to the Florida House of Representatives in 2022, Representative Davis worked as an attorney, arts administrator and advocate, and cultural programmer.

TWL was also excited to welcome Florida's 92nd Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, Justice Renatha Francis, as this year's Lobby Days Luncheon special guest.



*"Lobby Days Luncheon was the reminder of the lasting impact our work as lawyers and TWL members has on society, not just in the development of the law or jurisprudence conceptually, but the impact on the individuals who make up the next generation. TWL's work is a great example because TWL does so much work to help future generations (re: PACE and FSU Law Students). So, Representative Bracy Davis' remarks on generativity really fit well with TWL's mission and the work our organization actually achieves in the community each year. The event is also important each year as a way for TWL members to connect with other FAWL members from around the state, legislators, advocates, and all the people who converge in Tallahassee during the legislative session. It was a great opportunity for me to see friends from FAWL I met at other meetings around the state and to return the hospitality that other FAWL members show us when we travel to their cities."*

*-Stephanie Morse, FAWL Representative*

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## BENCH AND BAR HOLIDAY PARTY

Tallahassee Bar Association, Florida Government Bar Association, Tallahassee Women Lawyers, and the William H. Stafford American Inn of Court joined forces to put on a festive evening at the Parkview at Cascades on December 13, 2023. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and beverages to celebrate the holiday season. TWL Gold Annual Tier Sponsor, Ti Adoro Studios, photographed the event.



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## FSU LAW'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FAIR

Each Spring, the Florida State University's College of Law hosts a Civic Engagement Fair in the law school's rotunda. The event provides law students the chance to get to know their local legal community. TWL was excited to meet prospective new members. Pictured from left to right, TWL Website Chair, Saray Ravelo, President-Elect, Carly Schrader, and President, Megan Kachur, tabled the event.



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## FSU LAW'S WLS SILENT AUCTION

The Florida State University College of Law's Women's Law Symposium (WLS) annually hosts a silent auction benefitting the Legal Aid Foundation (LAF) of Tallahassee. Local businesses and individuals donate items or experiences for bidding. TWL was proud to sponsor the event by donating a Totally Tallahassee themed gift basket as an auction item. WLS raised over \$9,000 for LAF!





# MARCH CLE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES WITH GAL



*Written by Christie Petruzzelli*

The Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office (“GAL”) represents Florida’s children involved in the foster care system. GAL focuses on the legal and social interests of the child. GAL’s best practices multi-disciplinary teams consist of a Guardian ad Litem attorney, a child welfare professional, and ideally, a trained volunteer or *pro bono* attorney from the child’s community. This team provides the judge with the information needed and what the child wants for the court to decide what is in the child’s best interests.

Not only does GAL help children in legal proceedings, but the team provides support outside of court, such as family visitations, educational support, and the child’s medical and mental health needs.

Sara Urban is the Statewide Director of Recruitment for GAL. She presented a free CLE at the First District Court of Appeal, educating attendees on the ways GAL represents children in court and in the community on March 28, 2024.

There are multiple ways to make a difference in a child’s life through GAL. “Volunteer Advocates” represent children in various types of proceedings. “Independent Living Attorneys”

represent older dependent youth as co-counsel in dependency proceedings. The FAWL in love with GAL program is a partnership with Florida Association of Women Lawyers which pairs *pro bono* attorneys as mentors to youths as they transition to independence. Finally, *pro bono* attorneys can work alongside the GAL appellate team as part of the “Defending Best Interests” program by helping write appellate briefs. GAL offers training and continuing legal education (CLE).

If you are interested in using your time and talents to give a voice to children, contact Sara Urban at [sara.urban@gal.fl.gov](mailto:sara.urban@gal.fl.gov) or head to their [website](#) for more information.



## FAWL'S BLUE & GOLD GALA



# YOU'RE INVITED!

*Hosted by Florida Association for Women Lawyers*

FAWL's Blue & Gold Gala will be hosted at the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek on Wednesday, June 19, 2024. The event will include a presentation of awards and the installation of new officers. The theme is "Hollywood Glam" with the specific colors of blue and gold.

If you are interested in sponsoring or attending the event, check out more information [here](#).

## THE FLORIDA BAR YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION'S AFFILIATE OUTREACH CONFERENCE

TWL Young Lawyer Section Chair, Rachel Maxwell, presented at the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division's (YLD) Affiliate Outreach Conference (AOC) on TWL's Outdoor Garden and Tranquility Space Project at PACE Center for Girls - Leon. TWL is excited and grateful to be a recipient of the Florida Bar YLD AOC grant and to put the funds towards a successful service project that will create a lasting resource at PACE for years to come!





# BRIDGET SMITHA HONORED WITH THE CATHERINE CHAPMAN *PRO BONO* SERVICE AWARD

*Written by Felicia Kitzmiller*



*“Pro bono service means a lot to me because having a bar license is a privilege that shouldn’t be hoarded. Of all the people in our community deserving of help, children—particularly children that have been removed from their parents—tend to be the most vulnerable. Making their lives a little better, when they’re going through so much, is more important than billable hours.”*

*-Bridget Smitha*

The Catherine Chapman *Pro Bono* Service Award recognizes a member of the Florida Bar who embodies the enduring commitment to *pro bono* legal services and community involvement Ms. Chapman (TWL President 2015-2016) demonstrated during her lifetime.

Bridget Smitha is a Shareholder in the Tallahassee office of Stearns Weaver Miller. Her around-the-clock practice focuses on corporate defense, complex commercial litigation, and election law. She is ranked in The Best Lawyers in America, but it is not her professional excellence that makes Bridget deserving of the Catherine Chapman *Pro Bono* Service Award, rather it is her unwavering commitment to her community and ideals that make her the ideal recipient of this honor. Her many contributions have meaningfully touched the lives of many.

For more than 13 years, Bridget has been a member of the Florida Guardian ad Litem (“GAL”) program which represents abused, neglected and abandoned children in court and the community. She has provided *pro bono* legal services for more than 10 children during these critical, often traumatic, times in their lives. Bridget’s experience in family law – which she continues to practice *pro bono* on the basis of referrals to people in need – showed her the tremendous toll family conflict places on the children involved. She wanted the children to have, and to know they had, an unbiased champion advocating for their best interests. When she joined the program, she had two

young sons and understood the impact a caring and consistent adult can make in a child’s life. While many shy away from the potential emotional struggles of working with the GAL program, Bridget said it was the challenge and the heartbreak that fueled her commitment. “I thought to myself, ‘You know, these are issues that the children are dealing with on a daily basis. They’re having to live with it every day of their life, so why can’t I give up an hour or two of my time to help these children and hopefully maybe make their lives a little bit better?’” she said in an interview promoting GAL.

In addition to her work with GAL, Bridget has assisted dozens of indigent individuals in *pro bono* matters relating to divorce, child custody, elder care, legal name change, employment termination, criminal, and garnishment challenges. Bridget is also active in the Tallahassee community. She served on Tallahassee Women Lawyers’ Board of Directors from 2020-2021 and remains a member of the organization. She is a member of the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Tallahassee Class XXXIII. Bridget is committed to giving our community’s most vulnerable members a voice, and in helping them find their own. Her skills and passion for serving inspires positive change in our community and in those who have the pleasure of knowing her.





# TWL'S SECOND ANNUAL LEGACY OF LEADERS DINNER



*Written by Christie Petruzzelli*

Tallahassee Women Lawyers was founded in the summer of 1980. The founders prescribed that the organization's purpose was twofold: (1) to promote the status of women in the legal community, and (2) to create, improve, and maintain supportive networks among women in the legal profession through mutual cooperation, respect, and good friendship. Beginning in 2023, TWL has honored the TWL Founders and Past Presidents who have led the mission to fulfill these goals with the Legacy of Leaders Dinner.

This year, the event was hosted in the Florida State University College of Law on April 10, 2024. TWL was humbled to host some incredible past presidents, including, the Honorable Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson, Hannah Monroe, Magie Ozarowski, Winifred Acosta, Wendy Loquasto, Martha Edenfield, Jennifer Sullivan, Gigi Rollini, Twyla Sketchley, C. Sha'Ron James, and Administrative Law Judge June McKinney, as well as TWL founder, Lesley Fellows Mendelson.

Bridget Smitha was honored with the Catherine Chapman *Pro Bono* Service Award at the event!



*"It reminded me of an extended family reunion. It was an opportunity for the past to engage with the present and to inspire the future endeavors of TWL!"*  
-Winifred Acosta,  
Immediate Past President



## MENTOR PROGRAM: TABLE FOR 8

Table for 8 is a yearly event for women at different stages in their legal careers to gather for a night of connection, mentorship, and delicious food. Thank you to Christi Gray of Gray Law: Marital and Family Law for being our wonderful host. The event provided an opportunity for law students and young attorneys to enjoy thought-provoking and engaging discussion with seasoned attorneys and Administrative Law Judge Jessica Varn. Special thank you as well to the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division Grant Support which helped make the event possible.



## LSNF CELEBRATES LAW DAY



In celebration of Law Week, on May 1, 2024, Legal Services of North Florida (“LSNF”) hosted a Law Day Celebration with the Legal Aid Foundation and the Florida State University College of Law. This year, TWL was proud to be a sponsor of the event. The event included the presentation of awards to local attorneys and judges within the Second Judicial Circuit who have made outstanding contributions to the legal community.

## SARAY RAVELO WELCOMES FLORIDA BAR INDUCTEES

TWL Website Chair, Saray Ravelo, was invited to speak at the First District Court of Appeal Ceremony for the Induction of Candidates for Admission to the Florida Bar on May 7, 2024. She was invited to speak in her capacity as a Second Circuit Governor for the Young Lawyers Division of the Florida Bar.

*“It was an honor to welcome new lawyers on behalf of the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division. I also felt honored to be a part of the ceremony before the court. In preparing for my remarks, it was nice to reflect on my journey as a young lawyer and everything that I’ve learned along the way. I hope our new lawyers felt welcomed and enjoy every moment of this era in their lives.”*

*-Saray Ravelo, Website Chair*



## PRO BONO SPOTLIGHT: CAMERON BERTRON

*Written by Christie Petruzzelli with help from Deborah Moore, and Sara Goldfarb*

Cameron Bertron serves as Deputy General Counsel at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Outside of this role, Bertron dedicates much of her time and talents to the Florida Statewide Guardian ad Litem Office (“GAL”). GAL represents the legal interests of abused, abandoned and neglected children in the dependency system, advocating for their best interest. As part of the multidisciplinary team, Bertron has gone above and beyond to assist Florida’s most vulnerable children, striving to help them have better outcomes and a safe, permanent home. Bertron brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of the child welfare system from a previous position as a Children’s Legal Services Attorney at the Florida Department of Children and Families.

Deborah Moore, Second Circuit Director at GAL, and Sara Goldfarb, Director of Appeals and Pro Bono Services at GAL, wrote:

*“Cameron is a strong, passionate voice for Florida’s dependent children, and her unwavering commitment to pro bono service and the improvement of the legal profession has positively affected so many lives. Cameron epitomizes the role and responsibility of a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer, serving as the member of the team providing the consistency, commitment, and support our children deserve.”*

Want to recognize someone committed to pro bono service? Email TWL’s Newsletter Director, Christie Petruzzelli, at [Newsletter@mytwl.org](mailto:Newsletter@mytwl.org) with the details!

## TWL MEMBER NEWS

**Administrative Law Judge Hetai Desai and Winifred Acosta** – Both named in this year’s 25 *Women You Need to Know* in the Tallahassee Democrat

**Kandace Rudd and Erin Tilton** – Both received the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division, 36 *Under 36 Professionalism Award*

**Honorable Judge Stephen S. Everett** – Received the 2023 ABOTA Trial Jurist of the Year Award

**Colleen Mullen** – Joined Guilday Law

**Kristen Bond Dobson** – Named 2023 *Super Lawyer Rising Star* in Health Care

**Laura Dennis** – Joined FSU College of Law as a Professor

*Know of someone who has exciting news or making moves? Email TWL’s Newsletter Director, Christie Petruzzelli, at [Newsletter@mytwl.org](mailto:Newsletter@mytwl.org) with the details!*



# BAKING 101: PART II

Written by Skyy Mewbron



Congratulations to TWL's Student Liaison, Skyy Mewbron, who graduated on May 12, 2024, from FSU College of Law! Best wishes on Florida Bar exam prep!

## SUGAR COOKIES

### Ingredients

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 2 cup flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda

### Directions:

- Cream butter and sugar.
- Add vanilla, salt, and egg, then mix.
- Add flour and baking soda mixture and mix well.
- Roll dough into small balls in palm of hands.
- Flatten with the bottom of a glass.
- Bake on cookie sheet for 10-12 minutes at 350F.



## SNICKERDOODLE BARS

### Ingredients

- 2 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

### Cinnamon Filling:

- 1 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp. cinnamon

### Glaze:

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1-2 tbsp. milk
- 1/4 tsp. vanilla extract

### Directions:

- Heat oven to 350F. Spray or grease bottom only of a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. In a small bowl, combine flour, baking powder, and salt; set aside.
- In large bowl, beat butter with electric mixer on high speed until creamy. Beat in sugars.
- Gradually beat in eggs and vanilla into sugar mixture until combined. On low speed, beat in dry ingredients until combined.
- Spoon half of the batter into a pan; spread evenly. Sprinkle cinnamon-sugar mixture evenly over batter.
- Dollop teaspoon size amounts of remaining batter evenly over cinnamon sugar mixture
- Bakes 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool completely, about 1 hour.
- In a small bowl, stir glaze until smooth and thin enough to drizzle. Drizzle over bars

## SUMMER READING LIST

*Bad Summer People* by Emma Rosenblum – Perfect for those looking for a fun beach read with a cast of highly chaotic, but endlessly entertaining, characters.

*The Husbands* by Holly Gramazio – Another great beach read that will make you think about life and the choices you make along the way.

*Trust* by Hernan Diaz – This Pulitzer-Prize winner is perfect for those rainy summer days when you want to lose yourself in a propulsive, mysterious tale that will make you reconsider what truth is and how, often, it belongs to those who get to tell the story.



# FAWL 2023-2024 OUTSTANDING CHAPTER AWARD



*Written by Christie Petruzzelli*

The Florida Association for Women Lawyers (FAWL) annually presents the Outstanding Chapter Award to the chapter that most effectively created or expanded programs and events, provided programs devoted to building leadership, sought and gained exposure in the legal community and community as a whole, successfully recruited and retained members, actively participated in FAWL, had an active chapter representative, encouraged volunteer participation, worked well with other local chapters, and assisted with FAWL projects. TWL is honored and humbled to announce that it is the recipient of the 2023-2024 FAWL Outstanding Chapter Award!

Congratulations to the entire 2023-2024 Board of Directors, and all who dedicated their time, talents, and contributions to making this a remarkable year for TWL! Special congratulations to TWL President Megan Kachur for her unwavering support and true leadership and FAWL Representative Stephanie Morse for representing TWL so well.

## ***\*MEMBERSHIP DUES UPDATE\****

During the 2023-2024 year, total TWL membership dues are \$95 for lawyer members (\$45 going to FAWL and \$50 going to TWL) and has not changed in over eight years. The Florida Association for Women Lawyers (FAWL) sought chapter comments and input throughout the year, and as a result, FAWL voted to increase its dues an additional \$15 starting July 1, 2024. In addition, TWL dues will also increase its annual dues by \$15. Accordingly, beginning July 1, 2024, annual dues for TWL lawyer members will be \$125 (\$60 going to FAWL and \$65 going to TWL). TWL has also recently adopted a tiered structure for dues in its By Laws, which provides a discount to members of the judiciary and attorneys of governmental or non-profit organizations. Such members' dues will be discounted to \$110.

The increased membership dues **take effect on July 1, 2024**, so current members are encouraged to renew now at the current membership dues price!

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