

The Louisiana Judicial Council of the National Bar Association held its 16th Annual Meeting and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Seminar March 6 – 9, 2014 in Lafayette. The theme for the conference was “*Access to Justice*.” Chair Judge Edwin Lombard presided over the conference. Judge Alonzo Harris served as conference chair. Highlights of the Annual Meeting included: The Judicial *Community Outreach Program* at Northside High School. Students in the Law Program at Northside presented a mock trial to eight judges. The students won at regionals and will be competing at the state competition. Judge Ed Rubin presided over the case while Judges Edwin A. Lombard, Piper D. Griffin, June Berry Darensburg, James E. Stewart, Sr., Luke A. LaVergne, Alonzo Harris, & Trudy M. White served as witnesses. The students were eager to receive real-world feedback and suggestions. Next, the group visited the newly built Lafayette Parish Sheriff’s Office, where they received one CLE for the presentation on *Advancement in Court Security and Law Enforcement Supervision*. The first day of the conference ended with an elegant welcome reception sponsored by Iberia Bank. Senior Vice-President for Private Banking, Jerry Prejean was our host. City Councilman Kenneth Boudreaux brought greetings on behalf of the Mayor and City of Lafayette. Judge Lombard provided comments on behalf of the LJC/NBA. Over 60 people attended the reception consisting of judges, attorneys, and sponsors.

Judge Harris chaired the seminar component of the conference, which qualified for nine hours of CLE for the judges and lawyers in attendance. While there were separate seminar tracts for judges and lawyers, several of the seminars were combined. Seminar topics included: *Ethics, Professionalism, Recent Developments in Family and Juvenile Law, Sentencing Reform Conditions of Bond, Probation, House Arrest, Sentencing, and Work Release, Jury Education on Implicit Biases, LASERS update, and Office Management*. The presenters included private and governmental attorneys, legislators, and judges from across the state.

On Friday evening, Judge Harris and his wife Rena, hosted the President’s Reception at their beautiful home or farm as it is effectual known as. This affair provided an opportunity for over 80 judges, lawyers, politicians, and sponsors to socialize in a relaxed atmosphere. Typical Cajun food such as boiled crawfish, boudin, cracklin, catfish, and soul food along with libations were plentiful. Guests dined inside and outside alongside the pool and fireplace. A “DJ” provided the hottest dance music and the party was on. Everyone had a great time and the dancing never stopped, especially for Judge Harris, until the event was over at 11 PM.

The Saturday luncheon was emceed by the ever humorous Pat Magee, Assistant District Attorney for the 15th Judicial Council. The luncheon sponsor, Attorney Glenn Armentor provided a video regarding his highly successful Pay-It-Forward scholarship for at-risk high school students who have the academics, but need the finances to go to college. Mr. Armentor asked the judges and attorneys to spread the word about the scholarship and to provide his office with names of high school juniors and seniors who might qualify. He also asked that those in the audience consider starting their own scholarship. After lunch, the keynote speaker, Stephanie A. Finley, United States Attorney Western District of Louisiana, provided disturbing statistics regarding the judicial system. She stressed the importance of education as a means of preventing individuals from entering the correctional system. US Attorney Finley concluded her remarks on a very upbeat note. She dispelled the notion that she is unapproachable and/or mean. On the contrary, she indicated her willingness to speak, collaborate, and do what it takes to represent the mission of the office; “which is to enforce the law and defend the interests of

the United States, provide federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime, seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior, and to administer and enforce the Nation's laws to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans. Further, the office seeks to build a legacy of excellence and represent the people of the United States in a manner that will instill confidence in the fairness and integrity of the office and the judicial system and to conduct the work with the highest integrity." The luncheon concluded with the President's and the Chair's Awards.

The LJC/NBA's Foundation hosted a reception on Saturday evening, March 8th at the Lafayette Bar Association (LBA), courtesy of Attorney Trisha Pierre, President of LBA. The event was a great way to spend a casual evening mingling with old and new friends. Guests enjoyed food, drink, and once again, took to the dance floor. As usual, it was extremely difficult to get Judge Harris off the dance floor and to stop encouraging a soul train line. The party concluded at 10:30 PM.

The culminating event of the 16th Annual Meeting was the Sunday Worship Service held at the Good Hope Baptist Church in Lafayette. Conference chair, Judge Harris led a procession of 17 judges into the sanctuary where they received a standing ovation from Dr. Rickey Carter, Pastor and the members of Good Hope Church. Chair-elect, Judge Stewart brought greetings on behalf of the organization followed by greetings from each judge present. Judge Stewart also presented a monetary offering on behalf of the LJC/NBA. Pastor Carter then provided a sermon fitting the occasion *Luke 18: 1-8*. The parable of the woman who demanded justice from the judge. The service concluded with numerous members of the Good Hope congregation taking pictures of and with the judges, followed by that a hearty brunch. After brunch, a brief business meeting was held and it was announced that the 17th Annual Conference will be held in Shreveport, LA. Judge Stewart graciously agreed to organize the 2015 session that will be held February 19th, the weekend following Mardi Gras. There being no further business the 16th Annual Meeting was concluded.