

Certification Link

Your ABA Specialization Connection

The 2008 Roundtable - New Orleans

The 2008 Roundtable dove into the deep south this year visiting the resilient city of New Orleans! The host hotel, The Royal Sonesta, which is located in the heart of the historic French Quarter and nestled between quaint antique shops and famous New Orleans restaurants, was the perfect spot for our meeting.

The content of the program was educational and informative and included programs that addressed such topics as the application process, peer review and the future of speciality certification.

"Excellent program and excellent coverage of issues by very knowledgeable participants," "Great convivial exchange of important information," "It would be good to hear from smaller states and states that are just coming on board," are just a few of the written comments we received. Hearing these comments, which we always try to address at future meetings, are very helpful and a great value to the planning committee and staff. Thank you to all those who turned in evaluations!

This year, a new addition was added to the program - a community service project. Knowing that New Orleans is well on its way to recovery, there are still areas in need of some tender loving care. Through a nonprofit organization call the **Beacon of Hope**, a service project was organized and offered, on a volunteer basis, to all Roundtable attendees and guests. The project assigned to us was painting the home an elderly couple who lived near the 17th St. Levee break - one of the main breaks. For four hours, 16 Roundtable volunteers applied a coat of white primer to a brick house (no easy task, I assure you!). By the end of the day, not only was the house painted, but the 10-foot-high water stain lines were no longer visible - bad memories painted over with new hope! The owner of the home was appreciative beyond words, and everyone involved went home with a bigger hop in their step - knowing that one more person has been helped. Thanks again to the volunteers who helped -- your time and effort goes beyond words!

So, for those who couldn't make it this year, see you in 2009 in Savannah, GA - March 19th-21st.



Roundtable service project group after a hard day's work.

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Florida's Legal Board Certification Program Celebrates 25 years!

The Florida Bar this year marks the 25th year of its board certification program by spotlighting inaugural classes of lawyers in two first-in-the-nation specialties: Intellectual Property Law and State and Federal Government and Administrative Practice. These additions give Florida 22 certification areas – the greatest number of state-approved specialties in the U.S. – and the program continues to grow.

According to American Bar Association Standing Committee on Specialization Chair Timothy Bouch of Leath, Bouch and Crawford LLP in Charleston, S.C., Florida was one of the first states to recognize the importance of specialty certification to the bar, courts and consumers of legal services.

"The ABA's Standing Committee on Specialization congratulates the Florida certification program on twenty-five years of service to the legal profession," said Bouch. "The committee is proud to have worked with the Florida Bar Board of Legal Specialization & Education and looks forward to a continued partnership."

Twenty-five years ago, the Florida Supreme Court recognized the need for a program to acknowledge lawyers with special competence, and to help the public make informed decisions when selecting lawyers.

Inaugural classes of lawyers in 1983 achieved certification in civil trial and tax law. Marital and family law followed in 1985. The Florida Bar since has developed and refined a high quality certification program that often is recognized as a national leader. Specialties in adoption law and education law currently are pending approval.

Florida's certification program conducts an ongoing communications campaign to raise awareness among lawyers and consumers about the merits of board certification. We are proud that online listings for Florida Trend magazine's Legal Elite and Florida Super Lawyers now identify certified lawyers.

Supporting Arguments for Certification. Florida's incoming BLSE Chair Joni Armstrong-Coffey has said that any certification program seeking greater participation should communicate to prospects and to the public the message that certification establishes an independent measure of competence, professionalism and peer acknowledgment. Armstrong-Coffey offers the following examples:

- Certification helps clients and fellow lawyers set expectations for professional abilities.
- Certification serves both prospective clients and counsel seeking to refer legal matters to an expert. Certification can therefore help lawyers grow their practices with matters in which they best can utilize their expertise. The Florida Bar supports this valuable service by providing a direct URL to its directory of board certified lawyers: FloridaBar.org/certification.
- Certification provides an objective measure that a corporate executive, hiring partner, government official or other leader may justifiably rely upon when selecting a lawyer and explaining the choice to stockholders, clients, citizens or others to whom the leader is accountable.
- Certification enhances the stature of a law firm or office, as tangibly demonstrated by lower malpractice insurance rates for certified lawyers. Certified lawyers therefore foster their firms' well-being and serve as role models.
- Certification demonstrates commitment for practitioners who vary their work styles from the traditional mode. For example, certification helps validate the commitment of a lawyer who chooses to work alternative hours or from home to accommodate health, family or other personal demands.
- Certification is not just a personally satisfying professional milestone. Rather, it is an impetus toward investing energy and thought necessary for future growth and professional contribution. Because continued certification demands minimum practice requirements and peer acknowledgment, others can be assured that the certified lawyer remains committed to excellence.

As in other states, certified attorneys are the only Florida lawyers allowed to identify or advertise themselves as "specialists" or "experts." Certification is the highest level of evaluation by The Florida Bar of the competency and experience of attorneys in areas of law approved for certification by the Supreme Court of Florida. Florida Bar board certification measures attorneys' professionalism and ethics in practice in addition to special knowledge, skills and proficiency in various areas of law. About 4,100 of The Florida Bar's 80,000 members are board certified.

MLM to offer 5% credit for lawyers certified through agencies accredited by the Minnesota Board of Legal Certification.

Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company (MLM), with the approval and support of the Minnesota Board of Legal Certification, has created the Specialty Certification Credit program. Launching on April 1, 2008, for Minnesota attorneys only, MLM will offer a 5% credit on professional liability insurance to attorneys that are certified in the following specialties by the following certifying agencies:

The Minnesota State Bar Association

- Civil Trial Practice
- Real Property

The National Board of Legal Specialty Certification

- Civil Trial Practice
- Criminal Law
- Family Law

The American Board of Certification

- Business Bankruptcy
- Consumer Bankruptcy
- Creditors' Rights

The National Elder Law Foundation

- Elder Law

To take advantage of this credit an attorney must notify MLM of their certification prior to obtaining a quote for coverage. The credit will only be applied to policies in Minnesota with effective dates of April 1, 2008 or later.

James Sherburne, Chair of the Board of Legal Certification, said that "the 5% credit will certainly enhance the value of certification." The Board is an entity of the Minnesota Supreme Court and has been accrediting agencies that certify lawyers as specialists since 1986. As of December 31, 2007, there are 847 lawyers certified as specialists in Minnesota.

For more information attorneys are advised to call 1.800.422.4369 ext. 9664 to talk with Tom Konkell the Regional Sales Director for Minnesota, or email info@mlmins.com and put "Certification Credit" in the subject line.

ABC Launches New Website

By John F. Young

The American Board of Certification is pleased to announce the launch of our newly designed website. For the past 16 months or more a special committee of the ABC has been working closely with a website development company to update and improve the ABC's website. The primary goal of this special committee was to make the website more user friendly to its members and potential applicants. Also, of primary importance to the ABC and its board members was making the ABC website an effective and useful tool for consumers of legal services to find and locate the ABC and its certified attorneys.

The new and improved ABC website will allow the staff of the ABC to complete changes and additions to the website immediately, as they are received. The new ABC website will allow ABC members to make changes, corrections or add photo submissions to their listings on the ABC website by sending an email to webupdate@abcworld.org. Throughout the year new features will be added to allow applicants and recertification applicants to complete their applications online. A CLE calculator and online payment options will also be available.

One of the biggest benefits to consumers of legal resources searching our website, will be the ability to easily and efficiently search for certified attorneys in the areas of consumer bankruptcy, business bankruptcy and creditors rights. A simple search by zip code will return not only the names and contact information for the nearest ABC certified attorney, but will also show a map of their respective locations. The ABC Board hopes that these additions will make the website more beneficial to consumers of legal services and will help these users of the website easily find certified members of the ABC to assist them with their legal needs. The ABC's web address will remain the same: www.abcworld.org. We will advise our members of new features added to the website throughout the year. Please contact our executive director, Dian Gilmore, director@abcworld.org, with any questions or comments you may have.



North Carolina State Bar Specialization Award Recipients

The awards were presented on March 14, 2008 at the Washington Duke Inn at the annual luncheon for certified specialists. The Board of Legal Specialization holds the luncheon, which recognizes new certified specialists along with the award winners, in celebration of the certification program and our specialists throughout the state.

The 2008 Howard L. Gum Service Award was presented to Jaye Meyer - Jaye is the Chair of the Family Law Specialty Committee.

The 2008 Sara H. Davis Excellence Award was presented to J. Kirk Osborn which was given posthumously, and presented to his family on his behalf. - Tania Osborn, wife; Michela and Jenna Osborn, daughters.





UPDATE!

Child Welfare Attorney Specialization is a program of the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) whereby the NACC certifies qualified attorneys as Child Welfare Law Specialists (CWLS).

The NACC Child Welfare Law Certification Program recently opened in four new jurisdictions: North Carolina, Iowa, Connecticut, and the District of Columbia. This means that the NACC is currently accepting applications in 8 states: California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The NACC plans to have a Certification presence in all 51 jurisdictions by December 2009. Please click on the following link to the NACC Certification website where you can find the State Status Chart: <http://www.naccchildlaw.org/training/certification.html>.

As we all know, some states are "certification friendly" meaning that the states have well-developed state programs or readily welcome private programs accredited by the ABA – like the NACC. The NACC has learned that other states are either reluctant to embrace specialty certification for a variety of reasons, or simply haven't considered the issue for so long and therefore must develop or rediscover a procedure for authorizing a new private Certification program.

In expanding the NACC Child Welfare Law Certification Program, the NACC wants to reach as many attorneys as quickly as practical, in the most efficient way. When prioritizing states, the NACC looks for: a critical mass of interested child welfare attorneys; a culture of improving practice; support from the Bench; the specialty certification regulations in a state (whether a state is "certification friendly"); the availability of funding to pay for or supplement attorney application fees.

In other news, the NACC administered the Child Welfare Law Certification exam in three jurisdictions in Spring 2008: Tennessee, California, and New Mexico. Thirteen Californians, forty-three Tennesseans, and three New Mexicans took the exam. The NACC will announce the new Child Welfare Law Specialists (CWLS) in June 2008.

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