

Four Attorneys, Two Bar Associations Receive 2009 Louisiana State Bar Association Young Lawyers Section Awards

NEW ORLEANS—Four Louisiana attorneys and two local bar associations are the recipients of 2009 Louisiana State Bar Association Young Lawyers Section (LSBA YLS) awards. The awards were presented by 2008-09 YLS Chair Valerie Briggs Bargas during a June 11 awards reception, held in conjunction with the LSBA Annual Meeting in Florida.

Blake R. David of Lafayette received the Outstanding Young Lawyer Award.

Francesca L. Hamilton-Acker of Lafayette received the Bat P. Sullivan, Jr. Chair's Award.

Alona R. Croteau of Metairie received the Hon. Michaelle Pitard Wynne Professionalism Award.

Olita Magee Domingue of Lafayette received the Pro Bono Award.

The **New Orleans Bar Association** received the Service to the Public Award for its Charity Poker Tournament.

The **Baton Rouge Bar Association** received the Service to the Bar Award for its handbook "The New (and not-so-new) Lawyers' Survival Guide."

Award recipients' profiles follow.

- **Outstanding Young Lawyer Award**

Blake R. David is a founding partner in the firm of Broussard & David, L.L.C., in Lafayette, where he focuses in personal injury and wrongful death litigation, with an emphasis on offshore/maritime, aviation, products liability, industrial accident claims, and automobile and trucking accident claims. In 2007, he was lead counsel in a successful wrongful death jury trial that was recognized nationwide as one of the Top 100 Verdicts of 2007 (*VerdictSearch*). He has contributed hundreds of pro bono hours through his law practice.

Prior to litigating, David was a registered lobbyist with Haynie & Associates in Baton Rouge. He earned bachelor's degrees in both political science and English from Louisiana State University in 1997. He earned his law degree from LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center in 2001 (licensed in Louisiana since 2001).

David's professional associations include the Lafayette Bar Association (board member), the American Inn of Court of Acadiana (treasurer, Executive Board member), the American Association for Justice and the Louisiana Association for Justice (Board of Governors, Legislative Committee). He also is a founding board member of the Lafayette-Acadiana Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and served as chapter president in 2007.

He currently serves on several community organizations, including the Lafayette Downtown Development Authority (Executive Board member, secretary), Downtown Lafayette Unlimited (Executive Board, past president) and the Governmental Affairs Committee of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. He is a founding board member of "The 705: Acadiana's Young Professionals," an emerging leaders' organization focused on leadership in the community.

- **Bat P. Sullivan, Jr. Chair's Award**

Francesca L. Hamilton-Acker is recognized for her work in coordinating disaster response and recovery efforts through her service with the American Bar Association's (ABA) Young Lawyers Division. Hamilton-Acker is a staff attorney for the Acadiana Legal Service

Corp. in Lafayette. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and her law degree from Southern University Law Center. She was admitted to practice in Louisiana in 1999.

She currently serves as Louisiana's district representative in the ABA's Young Lawyers Division. She is also the at-large representative on the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Young Lawyers Section Council. She is a member of the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence and was selected to the Young Lawyer Leadership Program for the ABA Section of Litigation.

She is a member of the LSBA's Access to Justice Committee, the Diversity Committee and the Public Access and Consumer Protection Committee. She is a member of the Lafayette Bar Association and is currently co-chair of the Law and Civic Education program for the Lafayette Young Lawyers Association. She is a member of the Acadiana Inn of Court, serving on the Membership Committee. She is a Fellow of the Louisiana Bar Foundation.

- **Hon. Michaele Pitard Wynne Professionalism Award**

Alona R. Croteau is claims counsel for The Gray Casualty & Surety Company in Metairie. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education in 2000 from the University of New Orleans and her law degree in 2005 from Loyola University College of Law. During law school, she was a William L. Crowe, Sr. Scholar; *Loyola Law Review* member and managing print editor; Moot Court staff member; and the recipient of several awards and scholarships. She was admitted to practice in Louisiana in 2005, in Mississippi in 2008 and in Minnesota in 2009.

Croteau is the recipient of a 2009 Louisiana State Bar Association Crystal Gavel Award. She is a member of the LSBA Community Action Committee, the Young Lawyers Section and the Consumer Protection Law Section.

She is secretary and Law Day Program Committee chair for the New Orleans Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section. She also chairs the NOBA Construction Law Committee. She is a Young Lawyers Division member of the Mississippi State Bar Association and the Federal Bar Association. She is a member of the American Bar Association's Tort, Trial and Insurance Practice Section and the American Bankruptcy Institute.

From 2000-02, she worked as an elementary school teacher at the Newcomb Childcare Center in New Orleans and for the Jefferson Parish Public School System.

- **Pro Bono Award**

Olita Magee Domingue is a solo practitioner in the Law Firm of Olita Magee Domingue, L.L.C., in Lafayette. She earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Loyola University in 2000 and her law degree from Loyola University College of Law in 2003. She was admitted to practice in Louisiana in 2004.

While in law school, she was a member of the Moot Court Team and president of the Board of Advocates/Trial Advocacy Team. In addition to concentrating on her studies, she worked as a law clerk and investigator for the Jefferson Parish District Attorney's Office.

She is a member of the Lafayette Bar Association, the Acadiana Inn of Court and the Lafayette Young Lawyers Association (Executive Board member). She is a committee member for the Lafayette Volunteer Lawyers, a member of the board of directors for the Children's Advocacy Center and secretary/treasurer of the Bayou Vermillion District Board of Commissioners. Domingue has twice received the Lafayette Bar Association's highest award for

pro bono advocacy, the Top Lafayette Volunteer Lawyer Pro Bono Award. She has continued her volunteer efforts by becoming involved in the Homeless Experience Legal Protection (H.E.L.P.) program, sponsored by the Lafayette Volunteer Lawyers. In 2007, she volunteered for 18 days, which equated to two full months of service. She has been honored by the Lafayette Volunteer Lawyers as the Outstanding Pro Bono Attorney for 2007 and is the recipient of the LVL's Protective Order Program Award in 2008.

- **Service to the Public**

The New Orleans Bar Association Young Lawyers Section hosted its first-ever Charity Poker Tournament in 2008, with the help of Harrah's Casino. More than 120 lawyers, judges, law students and other members of the legal community participated in a "Texas Hold 'em" tournament mimicking that of the World Series of Poker and competed for substantial prize packages. All proceeds from the tournament benefitted The Pro Bono Project in New Orleans, a non-profit organization devoted to the provision of free, quality legal services to low-income residents of southeastern Louisiana.

Through this project and others, the New Orleans Bar Association Young Lawyers Section has contributed to the enhancement of pro bono legal services to residents in need and provided the indigent and those devastated by recent hurricanes with access to legal assistance.

- **Service to the Bar Award**

In 2008, the Baton Rouge Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section Council decided to publish a New Lawyer's Survival Guide to assist young lawyers with a basic information reference book. As the information was compiled, the Council realized it was a useful resource for any attorney and the title was changed to "The New (and not-so-new) Lawyers' Survival Guide."

The guide includes "need to know" information for all practicing attorneys, including contacts for various courts, rules of the Louisiana Supreme Court, instructions for admission to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, details on how to become a Louisiana notary, information on the Secretary of State and the Division of Administrative Law, and explanations on pro bono, case referral services and service as a curator with local bar associations and courts.

The easy-to-use guide contains information about the practice of law that is not taught in any law school course and answers some off-beat questions such as where to park and permissible electronic devices.

The guide can be downloaded from the Baton Rouge Bar Association's Web site, www.brba.org/forms/YLS_survival_guide.pdf. Plans are to update the guide on an as-needed basis.

High-resolution photos of award winners are available for download at <http://www.lsba.org/2007NewsResources/pressphotos.asp?Photos=17>.

The Louisiana State Bar Association assists its more than 20,000 members in the practice of law. The statewide association, as part of its multi-faceted mission, promotes and maintains access to justice initiatives for the state's residents, assists the Louisiana Supreme Court in its regulation of the practice of law, upholds the honor of the courts and the profession, and supports programs that increase public understanding of and respect for the law.

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