

ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS TEXAS CHAPTER



Annual Report: January 1st 2007 through January 1st 2008
Submitted to AFCC by
Aaron Robb, Texas Chapter President
January 21st, 2008

2007 Chapter Board Members

Office	Name	E-mail	Profession	City
President	Aaron Robb	arobb@texasounseling.org	Counselor	Keller
President-Elect	Martha Mussleman	musselman.lawfirm@yahoo.com	Attorney	The Woodlands
1 st Vice President	David Eaker	deaker@neplaw.com	Attorney	Rockwall
2 nd Vice President	Jack Bannin	jbannin@bexarfamilyolutions.com	Counselor	San Antonio
Treasurer	Scott Clarke	divorcefinancial@yahoo.com	Financial Analyst	Hurst
Secretary	Louise Lee	louise@childlawmatters.com	Attorney	Houston
Past President	Laurie Nowlin	lnowlin@akinsnowlin.com	Attorney	Round Rock
At-Large '05 – '07	Rocky Deutscher	rdeutscher@tarrantcounty.com	Social Work	Ft. Worth
At-Large '05 – '07	Rosemary Garza	RosemaryGarza04@aol.com	Attorney	Houston
At-Large '05 – '07	Susan McMillan	drslmcm@aol.com	Psychologist	Austin
At-Large '05 – '07	Alissa Sherry	alissa.sherry@mail.utexas.edu	Professor of Psychology	Austin
At-Large '05 – '07	Mardi Winder-Adams	winder_mardi@hotmail.com	Mediator / Parent educator	Naples
At-Large '06 – '08	Gilda Bowen	bowen_associates@yahoo.com	Social Work	Mission
At-Large '06 – '08	Mary Fogel	Mary.Fogel@co.travis.tx.us		Austin
At-Large '06 – '08	Frank Rynd	Frank_Rynd@Justex.net	Judge	Houston
At-Large '06 – '08	Vicki James	vmjames@sbcglobal.net	Counselor	Dallas
At-Large '06 – '08	Trevor Townes	trevor_townes@co.harris.tx.us	FCS Director	Houston

2008 Chapter Board Members as approved by electronic vote of the membership
(due to bylaws revisions the board was downsized from 17 to 13 persons)

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President	Martha Mussleman	musselman.lawfirm@yahoo.com	Attorney	The Woodlands
President-Elect	Louise Lee	louise@childlawmatters.com	Attorney	Houston
Treasurer	Patricia Barrett	pb@lifetimeplanning.cc	Financial Analyst	Houston
Secretary	Mardi Winder-Adams	winder_mardi@hotmail.com	Mediator / Parent educator	Naples
Past President	Aaron Robb	arobb@texasounseling.org	Counselor	Keller
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At-Large '06 – '08	Vicki James	vmjames@sbcglobal.net	Counselor	Dallas
At-Large '08 – '09	Jack Bannin	jbannin@bexarfamilysolutions.com	Counselor	San Antonio
At-Large '08 – '09	David Eaker	deaker@neplaw.com	Attorney	Rockwall
At-Large '08 – '09	Stephanie Hall	sj.halls@hotmail.com	Attorney	Houston
At-Large '08 – '09	Alissa Sherry	alissa.sherry@mail.utexas.edu	Professor of Psychology	Austin

Board and Membership Meetings

1. A Chapter membership meeting was held on 10/6/2007 at the Annual Texas Chapter AFCC Conference – *minutes not available at time of report*
2. Chapter Board meetings – *minutes attached*:
 - a. 1/12/2007 Tarrant County Family Law Center, Ft. Worth
 - b. 4/20/2007 South Texas College of Law, Houston

Minutes not available at time of report:

 - c. 10/4/2007 Doubletree Hotel, Austin

Financial Report:

Attached are the 2007 financial statement and year-end summary from the treasurer

Conference:

The annual conference was held October 5th & 6th, 2007 at the Doubletree Hotel in Austin, Texas. The Conference was entitled “Child Custody and Mental Health Professionals: Social Sciences on the Witness Stand” and featured keynote speakers Jon Gould and Tim Tippins. Although there were some concerns that a litigation-focused conference may not attract the same numbers of participants as our traditional alternative-dispute and education focused conferences there was a near-record turnout of 106 paid registrants plus speakers and volunteers in attendance. As we addressed at the conference, while we might hope for a time where families are able to resolve their issues without surrendering their autonomy to the state, the reality that we deal with is that many families will ask the courts to make parenting decisions for them. The families that travel to this final destination in the family court system deserve the highest level of professional services that can be provided, both from attorneys and from the many other professionals who they may interact with. *The program brochure is attached.*

Membership Events:

1. A biannual electronic newsletter was distributed to the membership. *Copies are attached.*
2. Each board member distributed AFCC membership literature to at least one professional meeting they attended during the year.
3. There was considerable advertising and publicity for the annual conference in the statewide social work and psychology newsletters, the marriage and family therapy association listserv, and to every family law section member by direct mail.
4. A series of Parenting Coordination Seminars were hosted by a pair of our Houston-area members with support from the Chapter Board. *A copy of the program for the series is attached.*

Special Projects:

1. Texas AFCC completed a renovation to the Chapter webpage, including revamping our service referral directory. The service referral directory is an evolution of the previous “Service Models” project. As a service to both our members and the public, Texas AFCC maintains a list of members who provide services directly to families or children involved in family law matters. The list is intended to serve as one possible point of contact for families trying to locate services as well as for professionals trying to connect with other professionals. Texas AFCC does not endorse any specific provider or model; the list is provided for informational purposes only.

Services listed include:

- amicus/ad litem representation
- child custody evaluations/social studies
- co-parenting education
- collaborative law (allied professionals)
- collaborative law (attorneys)

- financial planning
- mediation/arbitration
- parenting coordination
- supervised visitation
- therapy/counseling

We significantly streamlined listings from the previous “Service Models” format – the list is maintained as Excel spreadsheet, which is sortable by geographic area, city, or type of service. The listing is available at http://www.texasafcc.org/pro_services.html .

2. The Board reviewed several policies and procedures and updated both the Financial Policies and Procedures as well as creating a Web Page Linking Guidelines (*copies attached*).
3. The Texas Chapter had its provisional 501(c)(3) status upgraded to a permanent determination by the IRS. Additionally we petitioned for and received non-profit mailing status from the USPS (*copies attached*).
4. In a final piece of internal review the Texas Chapter Board put forth a proposal to trim the number of board members from 17 to 13, cutting 2 officer positions (1st and 2nd Vice President) and 2 at-large directors. The board felt that this change would help improve efficiency and streamline various projects that the board was involved in. This proposed change was approved by our members during end of the year voting (*copies attached*).
5. 2007 was a year where the state legislature was once again in session. Many Chapter members were active in that process in their roles as individual practitioners and as representatives of their agencies. Advocates spoke on both sides of the debate on HB 555, regarding Parenting Plans and Parenting Coordination, and with much input the legislature passed compromise legislation which further solidified parenting coordination services in Texas. While the current standards for parenting coordination fall far short of the consensus best practice standards now that the discussion has moved on from whether Texas should have parenting coordinators in statute or not the focus seems to be turning toward how to implement best practice standards in Texas.
6. Another major legislative issue that many of our members were involved in was HB 772 which addressed the integration of standards for social study (child custody) evaluations into the Texas Family Code. Starting from Texas’ historical statutes and issues raised in the AFCC *Model Standards* many, many members worked in a loose collaboration with Texas AFCC, the statewide Domestic Relations Offices, the mental health and social work professional organizations, and the Family Bar to craft a major advance in the level of professionalism standards for custody evaluation in Texas. The full text of the bill, along with details of some of the legislative process it went through, is available through the Texas Legislature Online (<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>) using the “Bill Lookup” features.

7. The Texas Chapter participated in the post-legislative session discussions and worked to fulfill its mission to provide an interdisciplinary forum for the development constructive methods for resolving family disputes by initiating a statewide Parenting Coordination Taskforce. Drawing on attorneys and mental health professionals from around the state the PC Taskforce took the AFCC *Guidelines for Parenting Coordination* as a starting point and looked at how we could adapt national practices to our local needs. Many meetings later a general consensus was developed and published as a report of the Taskforce (*copy attached*). As Chapter President I would like reiterate the public thank-you I have previously published to the Taskforce committee members, who devoted a significant amount of time and energy to numerous face-to-face and telephonic meetings, as well as much e-mail back and forth on the various issues we encountered.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Chapter Membership Meeting Minutes:

1. 10/6/2007 (*not available at time of report*)

B. Chapter Board Meeting Minutes:

1. 1/12/2007
2. 4/20/2007
3. 10/4/2007 (*not available at time of report*)

C. 2007 Financial Summary and end of year statement

D. 2007 Conference Brochure

E. Chapter Newsletters:

1. Spring 2007
2. Winter 2007

F. Advanced Training for Parenting Coordinators, Legal Professionals, and Other Allied Professionals Brochure

G. Updated Financial Policies and Procedures

H. Guidelines for Web Page Linking

I. Tax-Exempt Determination Letter from the IRS

J. USPS Non-profit mailing status determination letter

K. Current Bylaws as Revised 12/2007

L. Texas Chapter Parenting Coordination Taskforce Report