



2008 NEWSLETTER

Issue #2

President's Note

Martha Musselman, Texas Chapter President

Special Points of Interest:

46th Annual Conference

*Children, Courts and Custody:
Back to the Future or Full Steam
Ahead?*

May 27-30, 2009
New Orleans, LA
Sheraton New Orleans

AFCC Eighth International

**Symposium on Child
Custody Evaluations**
September 25-27, 2008

AFCC Eighth International

**Congress on Parent
Education and
Access Programs**
September 26-27, 2008

Albuquerque Marriott
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Our 2008 8th Annual Fall Statewide Conference is just around the corner. For the first time, this year's Conference will be held at and in conjunction with South Texas College of Law in Houston on October 3-4, 2008. This year's conference is "*The Full Spectrum of Domestic Violence: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You,*" featuring keynote speaker, the world renowned Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Child Trauma Academy. In another first for our Chapter, we will have Conference workshops and sessions presented by legal, mental health, judicial, ADR and governmental professionals from all over the USA and Canada. In short, this year's Conference promises to be one of our most innovative and informative conferences ever.

More information regarding the Conference can be found below and on our website. I hope to see all of you in Houston in October!

The Texas Chapter of AFCC needs your time and energy to accomplish the goals we've set. We are interested in your opinions, issues, and other areas of interest for where we take the Texas Chapter of AFCC in the future. While the Board tries to be representative, both geographically and professionally, of our membership as a whole, we genuinely want your feedback regarding what you think is important for our Chapter. In a state as large as Texas it is particularly important that we have input from all areas - as practices vary widely across our state. I would like to challenge each and every one of

you to become involved in the Texas Chapter of AFCC. Please help us continue to keep the Texas Chapter active and vibrant through your participation.

We have at least six committees on which you may serve, including:

1. Finance/Audit Committee, chaired by Trevor Townes, Director, Family Court Services & Dispute Resolution Division, Harris County Domestic Relations Office;
2. Membership & Education Committee, Co-chaired by Louise Lee (President-Elect) and David Eaker (At Large Director);
3. Publications Committee, Chaired by Jack Bannin (At Large Director);

[Continued at "President's Note," p.2]

2008 8th Annual Texas AFCC Chapter Conference News

Important Reminder: Membership Meeting to be Held October 3, 2008 at 5:30 PM

Location: South Texas College of Law

1303 San Jacinto, Houston, Texas

Register today for the 2008 8th Annual Texas AFCC Statewide Conference: *The Full Spectrum of Domestic Violence: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You*, featuring keynote speaker, the world renowned Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Child Trauma Academy, speaking on "*Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children in High Conflict Families*". The Child Trauma Academy is a unique interdisciplinary organization dedicated to helping understand and serve high-risk children. Founded in 1990 by Dr. Bruce Perry, Chief of Psychiatry at Texas Children's Hospital at Baylor College of Medicine, CTA is now located in Houston, Texas, and focuses on non-medical models of care, cross agency collaborations, and interdisciplinary educational

activities for professionals working with maltreated and high-risk children. This year's Conference will explore new and emerging legal, judicial, mental health and dispute resolution interventions, special services, and models of care for children and their parents affected by domestic violence and challenge previously held conventions. The Conference will be held at, and in conjunction with, South Texas College of Law on Friday, October 3, and Saturday, October 4, 2008. For information about registration, hotel reservations, and conference details, download a copy of the conference brochure at:

<http://www.texasafcc.org/pdfs/2008TxAFCCConf.pdf>

4. Nominations Committee, Chaired by the Honorable Frank Rynd (At-Large Director);
5. Texas Parenting Coordination Taskforce Committee, Chaired by Aaron Robb (Immediate Past President); and/or
6. Annual Statewide Conference Planning Coordinating Committee, Chaired by Martha J. Musselman (President).

Other ways you can become involved with the Texas Chapter of AFCC include:

1. Attending the annual Texas Chapter of AFCC membership meeting on October 3, 2008, at 5:30 p.m. at South Texas College of Law, located at 1303 San Jacinto Street, Houston, Texas. A door prize of a **free AFCC membership** will be given away at the annual meeting, but you must be present to win.
2. Suggesting a topic or a speaker for the annual Conference put on by Texas AFCC by contacting the President or our website.
3. Sponsoring any one of our Conference programs or activities. This year, we are asking for your help to make the Houston area annual Conference a huge success.
4. Giving a brief training session that offers some type of continuing education credit at various meetings and groups in small counties and rural areas on topics of interest, such as court testimony, how to help with families going through court, etc.
5. Contributing to the Chapter Newsletter by submitting an article, blurb, notice or other information of interest to the membership to Jack Bannin at:
txafccweb@yahoo.com

6. Nominating yourself or a colleague for a position on the Board of Directors. If you have an interest in being nominated, notify this year's Chair of the Nominating Committee, The Honorable Frank Rynd, at:
Frank_Rynd@Justex.net of your interest, and include your curriculum vitae and contact information.

Last, but not least, you can join us in our efforts to increase the membership of the Texas Chapter of AFCC. Did you know that every time you recruit a colleague to join the Texas Chapter of AFCC for the first time (and they name you as the referral source), you earn TEN AFCC dollars (received as a credit at the beginning of the calendar year)? That means if you get 17 people to join and name you, your next year's membership is free! Or you can use your credit toward future Conference registrations or publications purchases. What a nice way for you to share your enthusiasm and pride in our wonderful organization and be rewarded for it. Spread the word!

Please share the enclosed information about our wonderful organization with a colleague you think might be interested in joining and/or attending our Conference. If we can help you by sending more information, or through other support, please let us know!

Very truly yours,

MARTHA J. MUSSELMAN
Attorney & Counselor at Law - Mediator



A Special "Thank You" To Our 2008 Conference Sponsors

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AFCC Texas Chapter State Conference
Houston, Texas // South Texas College of Law, Houston, Texas
“The Full Spectrum of Domestic Violence: What You Don’t Know Can Hurt You”
October 3-4, 2008

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

<i>Sponsor Dr. Bruce Perry, featured presenter (\$3000 level)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition in Conference Materials, AFCC Newsletter, and on the AFCC Texas website • Company Representative introduced during sponsored event • Exhibit Table (Upon Request) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference Co-Sponsor • Company brochure included in Conference Materials
<i>Sponsor Happy Hour Reception (\$2500 level)</i>	
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<i>Sponsor Friday or Saturday Breakfast (\$1500 level)</i>	
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Exhibitor Tables (\$100; \$75 for non-profit organizations)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listed in the Conference Materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to display your program, products, or services
Friend and Supporter of AFCC (\$50)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance to network with a multi disciplinary group of professionals 	

PLEASE PRINT YOUR INFORMATION AS YOU WISH IT TO BE LISTED

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Amount of Sponsorship:	Exhibit Table? <div style="text-align: right;">_____ YES _____ NO</div>

To ensure that you are recognized as a Sponsor in our conference brochure, please submit your contributions by May 30th, 2008. All sponsorships received after this date will be recognized at the conference.

Please return completed form with check payable to: Texas AFCC
c/o Patricia Barrett
11659 Jones Rd., Box 352
Houston, TX 77070

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION AND DIVORCE
A GUIDE TO THE RULES AND PROCEDURES
By Patricia Barrett CFP CDFA

Editor's Note: *In this issue we present the first installment of a multi-part series on financial planning for divorcing executives and their spouse. This article is not intended to provide specific advice on family law cases, but is an overview of financial issues that commonly arise in divorces of executives and their non-employee spouse.*

Introduction:

Financial advisors can secure additional assets for management following the divorce of an executive since the non-employee spouse often receives 50% of a 401k, pension, or other plan. The qualified plans are eligible for rollover to an IRA following the divorce. The non-employee may also receive stock options or other payments, as well, resulting in additional funds for investment. Attorneys are not experts on executive benefit plans, allowing the financial advisor to provide valuable input to the executive or the non-employee spouse.

Financial advisors walk a tightrope when their clients are going through divorce, often considered as aligned with one of them. This paper will provide a proven method for maintaining a strong relationship with both spouses, as well as educate the advisor in the intricacies of executive benefit plans during divorce.

Corporations use a large assortment of plans, both qualified and non-qualified, in order to reward their executives. The variety is only limited by the imaginations of those in charge. The complexity of these plans can be daunting for the executive anytime, but when divorce is imminent, the plans become even more confusing. Must they be divided with the ex-spouse? What if the plan provides a benefit for services performed in the future, post-divorce? Will the plan legal document even allow the division with a spouse during divorce?

This article will address these questions for the following types of plans and related issues:

- Pension Plan (Defined Benefit)
- Offsetting Plan Assets
- Taxes due to Divorce
- 401k Plan (Savings Plan)
- Separate Property Interest in Plans
- Employee Stock Options
- Restricted Stock
- Excess Compensation Plan
- Bonuses
- Life Insurance

For simplification of the wording, this paper will assume that the husband is the executive and the wife the non-employee spouse, although we have seen divorces where the wife is the executive and the husband is the non-employee. We will also assume that the wife has been a long-term homemaker with no skills for the workplace. While retraining is possible and often advisable, this paper will assume that the wife requires resources to fund her living expenses (usually reduced due to the divorce) currently and post-retirement age.

While the writer is a Divorce Financial Analyst in Texas and her knowledge broad in that realm, most of this article will apply to all corporate plans in all states. Especially those plans governed by ERISA (qualified plans) will have a common element in all states, since ERISA rules trump state law. Having assisted over 100 individuals with the financial intricacies of their divorce, she is able to use those cases to make certain assumptions and share certain observations concerning the treatment of executive benefit plans during the divorce.

Generally speaking, in Texas, the stay-at-home mom married to the executive usually receives 55% or 60% of total assets, although this is sometimes reduced if alimony is included. The alimony in Texas is usually "contractual" in nature and not mandated by the courts, unless there are no assets or there is a conviction for spousal abuse. In the Texas executive's divorce, alimony is frequently negotiated between the spouses and their attorneys, sometimes affecting the division of assets. The amount to her is based on her ability to join the workforce, the length of the marriage, the earnings level of the husband, and the health of the two parties.

Keeping More of the Pension through Offset Method:

Homestead as Offset:

The wife often wishes to retain the homestead with a substantial equity, thereby allowing the executive to retain a greater percentage of his executive benefit plans. However, this may actually be a disservice to the wife, since continuing to own the home may actually impoverish her in the long run. It can be extremely helpful to employ the services of a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst who is proficient in long-term lifestyle planning. The CDFA can quantify the decision in black and white, helping to overcome the emotional issue involved with keeping the home. Through a long-term lifestyle analysis for 20 years, the wife can understand the consequences of maintaining a large home instead of downsizing and investing part of the equity.

Example for Retention of Homestead:

Assuming a homestead valued at \$500,000, with a \$250,000 mortgage, the \$250,000 net equity would be retained by the wife. The husband would be able to offset \$347,222 of qualified plans or taxable non-qualified plans. This assumes that the \$250,000 equity is free of tax, since equal to the IRS exemption allowed for a single individual (\$500,000 for marrieds). We assume that the executive's benefit plans are adjusted for 28% tax ($\$250,000 / (1 - 28\%) = \$347,222$). We show the adjustment for taxes on the benefit plan as an imputed liability. Thus, if he has a Deferred Compensation Plan valued at \$250,000, we would show a liability of \$97,222, representing the imputed tax on his plan. This

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requires awarding him an additional \$97,222 worth of assets in order to compensate for this tax. (Attorney views on this methodology may differ, as well as state statutes and case law).

<u>Wife's Assets</u>		<u>Husband's Assets</u>	
Homestead	\$500,000	Pension Plan	\$347,222
Less mortgage	(250,000)	Less Imputed Tax	(\$97,222)
Net	\$250,000	Net	\$250,000

Alimony Offset:

Alternately, the husband may provide alimony payments for a period of years to smooth her cash flow. (This is mandatory in some states, though in Texas it is negotiable). The writer, who is a CDFA, frequently includes a present value of these payments as an asset to the wife and as a liability to the executive, further allowing retention of qualified or non-qualified plan assets. Note that the present value of alimony should be adjusted for each spouse's tax bracket post-divorce.

Example for alimony:

Assuming alimony of \$5,000 per month for five years and a 5% discount rate, the present value is \$235,058 (compared to total payments of \$300,000). Assuming a 28% tax bracket, the adjustment to assets would total \$169,242. The husband could retain an additional \$169,242 of company plans, while providing tax-deductible alimony payments to the wife. Alimony payments would be taxable to her at her income tax rate. The tax-adjusted value to the wife of the \$235,058 totals \$199,799, assuming head-of-household status and 15% bracket. Using the two tax-adjusted present value calculations, \$169,242 and \$199,799, the executive's assets are decreased by \$187,033 while the wife's are increased by \$220,803 before calculating the 50/50 (or other percentage). This provides the executive an additional \$30,558 in assets awarded due to the tax savings he experiences.

<u>Alimony Payments (\$60,000 for 5 Years)</u>	<u>Present Value</u>	<u>Present Value Tax Affected</u>	<u>Additional Assets to Husband</u>
\$300,000	\$235,058		
Tax Bracket - Husband	28%	\$169,242	\$30,558
Tax Bracket - Wife	15%	\$199,799	

Property Settlement Note:

Another method for the executive to retain more of his pension is to use a property settlement note for offset. A property settlement note differs from alimony in that it is a non-taxable division of marital property and not maintenance. If the note bears interest (frequently included), the interest is taxable to the recipient, but not deductible to the husband. Many times, the executive foresees 10 or 15 years of high income in his future; while the wife is largely without skills for the workforce. In order to assist with cash flow for the wife, the executive can buy out her interest in the pension plan (or other asset) using the property settlement note:

Example:

\$500,000 Pension Plan Lump Sum Value at Divorce
 \$250,000 Wife's interest (assuming married for entire time employed)

\$32,376 annually for 10 years would buy her out of her interest, assuming 5% interest.

Join us for our next installment, "Taxes and the Executive Divorce"



Evaluating Sexual Abuse Reports in Family Court

By Bill Eddy, LCSW, ESQ.

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One of the most difficult issues which can confront parents, counselors, attorneys and judges is the concern that a child has been sexually abused. Evaluating an allegation against a parent is especially difficult in the context of separation or divorce. The child's statements and behavior may be responses to the stress of the divorce and wrongly interpreted as sexual abuse. Or true sexual abuse reports may be wrongly discounted as a weapon in the divorce conflict.

I have handled several cases with sexual abuse reports as a family law attorney and as a superior court mediator. In one family court case, over a 12-month period there were nine hearings involving seven different judges, a psychological evaluation, professionally supervised visitation and no finding of sexual abuse. In another case, there was an extensive evaluation by a university department, considering many theories and a finding of sexual abuse. Unfortunately, many cases reach less clear results, and drag on for years.

With training, these cases can be more quickly and clearly resolved. To this end, I have provided seminars for CPS workers and in 1997 I co-wrote a 60-page Proposed Family Court Protocol with my colleague, William Benjamin, CFLS. The following is a summary of my on-going review of the research and recommendations.

No Assumptions - Reports of child sexual abuse (CSA) are made in only a small percentage of divorce cases, according to the most extensive study of this issue in 1989 by Thoennes and Tjaden. They found that half of the reports in divorce cases were confirmed to be true, a third were confirmed to be untrue, and the rest were unclear. With lying increasing in society, half may be untrue now. Therefore, one cannot safely assume a report is probably true or probably not true. An assessment of several factors and theories must occur.

Until the 1980's, it was generally assumed that CSA allegations were not true. Children's testimony was considered unreliable. During the 1980's and early 1990's, children's advocates properly persuaded the public and law-makers that child sexual abuse is a real and serious problem. However, the pendulum swung too far. Most reports were assumed true and children's statements assumed accurate.

By the mid-1990's, research confirmed that children are suggestible and may wrongly confirm the investigator's theory of a case. After a landmark 1994 New Jersey Supreme Court case, several convictions were overturned because of this "confirmatory bias" by investigators. Now interviewers must be careful to avoid "tainting" the child's statements.

Five Theories of CSA Reports

There are at least five possible explanations or theories to be considered when there is a child sexual abuse report in a divorce case. An investigator must keep an open mind in gathering evidence, and explore all theories.

Pre-existing Abuse - In some families there has been on-going sexual abuse. Its discovery may be the reason for the divorce. It is also possible that it was not discovered until the divorce process began, because the child may not have felt safe to disclose it until the parents were separated.

Divorce-Related Abuse - Sexual abuse may occur for the first time after the separation of the parents. The abusing parent may turn to the child for emotional/physical needs, or suppressed sexual urges may no longer be controlled by the presence of the other parent.

Sincere-But-False Allegations - Researchers indicate that the majority of false allegations are sincere. A parent may misunderstand or overreact to vague distress or ambiguous statements by a child. The stress of going from one tense parent to another at the beginning or end of visitation may be misinterpreted as abuse.

Intentionally-False Allegations - Some parents falsely report abuse in order to obtain an advantage in court, such as a change of custody or a significant reduction in the other parent's contact with the child. They may knowingly represent the child's anxious behaviors as signs of sexual abuse.

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Sexual Abuse by Someone Else - There may be sexual abuse actually occurring, but by some other adult -- or even another child (often with an abuse history of their own). A young child may be frightened or confused and indicate that it is their own parent instead of the actual abuser.

Many Factors to Consider - There is no single factor that is conclusive for the presence or absence of child sexual abuse by a parent. Researchers have found that several child behaviors are common symptoms of emotional distress, which may simply be a response to a difficult divorce. Examples are: bed-wetting, nightmares, clinging, constipation and even redness in the genital area (often related to normal bathing issues).

On the other hand, researchers have found that only about 30% of confirmed true cases of child sexual abuse have medical evidence. Therefore, the absence of injury or medical evidence cannot be used as proof there is no abuse.

Gathering Evidence

Since there is no single factor which is conclusive, anyone investigating a report should look at the context and totality of the evidence available.

Many Sources - Any investigation of child sexual abuse should include information from several sources. This would include others who know the child and/or the parents, and their patterns of functioning and behavior. Mental health professionals doing custody and visitation evaluations are required to obtain information from more than one source.

Interviews With the Child - This has been an area of great controversy and much research in the past few years. There is now growing agreement among researchers that the way a child is interviewed can significantly influence their answers. Therefore, most professionals now know what "leading questions" are and that they should be avoided. Leading questions suggest a specific answer, or highly limited choices. Until recently, these were commonly used.

Use of Anatomical Dolls - Professionals remain split over the use of anatomical dolls. Some say that they are necessary to elicit information from very young children, while others say they are still too suggestive. When they are used, more careful procedures have been developed in recent years. Drawings are also used. The key point is that these tools are used to confirm or elaborate, and not used as the initial or primary basis of an evaluation.

Parents Should Avoid Questioning Child - A child's answers can be influenced by the way their parent (or any other adult) asks them questions, and these answers can become part of their memory. This can permanently "taint" the child's report, resulting in a true report being thrown out or a false report being prosecuted. If a parent has concerns that their child has been sexually abused, they should immediately contact a professional -- ideally one trained in identifying the presence or absence of sexual abuse: their therapist, attorney, or CPS.

Relationship with Child - Interviewing the child with each parent reveals a great deal about the report of abuse in a divorce case. Is the child comfortable or uncomfortable being with the accused parent? Is the child comfortable or uncomfortable being with the accusing parent? Does the child show anxiety during visitation exchanges, but relax with one or the other parent alone? Is the child over-involved with either parent's emotional needs? Does either parent have age-inappropriate expectations for the child?

Timing of the Report - Does the report coincide with a benefit or disturbing event for the reporting parent? If so, it increases the likelihood it is false -- if not, it may be true. In a divorce case, it is easy to determine if there is a hearing pending, a custody battle, or a major financial decision to be made. Sometimes, a former spouse's re-marriage or new baby may trigger a report. If there is no related event and the report embarrasses or harms the accuser, it may be true.

Family Court Decision-Making

Courts Are Faced With Two Conflicting Concerns - Immediate protection of the child and obtaining an objective evaluation. At times, professionals have prematurely reached incorrect conclusions in their efforts to make quick decisions. The following is based on our Proposed Protocol:

Protection of the Child - To be initially safe, a court should order supervised visitation -- without forming any judgment about the underlying report. "No Contact" orders are to be avoided, because supervised visitation is usually sufficient for the child's safety and the accused parent should be observed with the child as soon as possible.

Gathering Evidence - Investigators (CPS workers, police, therapists) should gather as much information as possible without forming conclusions. This information should be readily accessible to attorneys for the parties.

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Evaluating Evidence - A well-trained psychological evaluator should evaluate the family, and examine the information gathered from all sources. Only then should a recommendation be made to the parties and to the court.

Making a Finding - The court should reach as clear a conclusion as possible. It is recommended that the court make a finding about the likelihood that abuse occurred or that a false allegation occurred. By avoiding a conclusion, families have often remained in long-term chaos and continually return to court. A case should be examined until the pattern of evidence is clear enough to make a judgment.

Orders and Treatment - Regardless of whether there is evidence of sexual abuse or false allegations, the family is seriously in need of help. Long-term orders should be made to address the dysfunction in the family, including counseling for the child and the parents. Consequences are also important. If there is likely abuse, then there should be a criminal investigation. If it appears to be a knowingly false allegation, then sanctions should be imposed.

Training

In the past five years there has been a great deal of new research in objectively evaluating child sexual abuse reports. With ongoing training for court-related professionals and more parent education, our society will better protect children from the serious harm of sexual abuse while avoiding the serious harm of making mistakes.

A Few of the Many Good Resources Available

Child Maltreatment: Journal of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, SAGE Publications (Quarterly Journal since 1996)

Journal on Child Sexual Abuse, Haworth Press (Qtrly issues)

Jeopardy in the Courtroom, Ceci and Bruck, APA, 1995

True and False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse, Ney, 1995

Inaccuracies in Children's Testimony, J. Meyer, 1997

Interviewing for Child Sexual Abuse: A Forensic Guide (Videotape), Kathleen C. Faller, Guilford Press, 1998.

High Conflict Institute provides training and consultations regarding High Conflict People (HCPs) to professionals dealing with legal, workplace, educational, and healthcare disputes. Bill Eddy is the President of High Conflict Institute and the author of "It's All Your Fault!" He is an attorney, mediator, and therapist. Bill has presented seminars to attorneys, judges, mediators, ombudspersons, human resource professionals, employee assistance professionals, managers, and administrators in 25 states, several provinces in Canada, France, and Australia. For more information about High Conflict Institute, our seminars and consultations, or Bill Eddy and his books go to: www.HighConflictInstitute.com or call 602-606-7628.

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Who are this year's Board Members?

The 2008 Executive Committee

Texas AFCC Board President for the 2008 year is Martha J. Muselman, Attorney at Law and Mediator in private practice in Harris and Montgomery Counties.

President-Elect is Louise Lee, Attorney at Law in private practice in Houston. Louise will take over as Board President on January 1, 2009.

Board Secretary is Mardi Winder-Adams, M.Ed., a parenting coordinator, parent educator and mediator living in Naples, Texas, but who serves families and Courts in an area encompassing several counties in East Texas.

Board Treasurer is Patricia Barrett, who is a Certified Financial Planner, a Certified Divorce Financial Analyst, a Mediator, and runs Lifetime Planning LLC in Houston.

Immediate Past President is Aaron Robb M.Ed., NCC, LPC, a mental health professional in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area who does primarily forensic counseling, custody evaluations and parenting coordination in Tarrant County.

Returning Board Members

2008 AT-LARGE DIRECTORS (with Terms ending 12/31/2009)

Jack Bannin, MS, LPC, LMFT, a mental health professional in Bexar County who owns and runs Bexar Family Solutions in San Antonio, specializing in forensic counseling, parenting coordination, and custody evaluations.

David Eaker, Attorney at Law with Noelke English Maples St. Leger, L.L.P, a family law firm in Austin.

Alissa Sherry, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor of Counseling Psychology, Department of Education Psychology, University of Texas at Austin.

Stephanie J. Hall, an At-Large Director, who is an Attorney at Law and Mediator in private practice in Harris and Montgomery Counties

AT-LARGE DIRECTORS (with Terms ending 12/31/2008)

Gilda Bowen, LMSW, who owns and runs Bowen Associates and is a mental health professional doing social studies and other work with families in the Rio Grande valley area.

Mary Fogel, MS, a social worker in the Travis County Domestic Relations Office.

The Honorable Frank Rynd, judge of the 309th Family District Court in Harris County.

What's the Texas AFCC Board doing?

The second Board of Directors meeting for 2008 was held on Friday, June 13, 2008, at 1:00 p.m., in Austin. Among other agenda items, the Board amend the TX Chapter of AFCC Financial Policies and Procedures as follows:

The President and Treasurer shall submit a Chapter Annual Report and Budget to the Board of Directors no later **January 31st** of each year.

The TX AFCC Annual Report and Budget must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors by **February 28th** of each year.

The Board also nominated (at the request of the AFCC parent organization) two (2) leaders from the Texas Chapter, Louise Lee and David Eaker, to attend the first bi-annual AFCC Chapter Leadership Institute to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on September 25, 2008. Finally, the Board reviewed the UNIFORM REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN IN ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND CUSTODY PROCEEDINGS ACT - Drafted by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (Last Revised or Amended in 2007). The Board voted to draft a letter in support of the Act. Individual AFCC members may write additional letters if they desire. Minutes from the Board meeting can be found on the AFCC Texas Chapter website at:

www.texasafcc.org/board_info.html Our next Board of Directors meeting will be on Thursday, October 2, 2008, at 4:00 p.m. at South Texas College of Law in Houston.

How do I become a Board member?

In a state as large as Texas it is particularly important that we have representation from all areas - as practices vary widely across our state. We rotate geographically and professionally the office of the Presidency of the Chapter, as well as members of the Board of Directors. Alternating leadership between mediators, educators, and mental health, legal, and financial professionals not only allows for a continued infusion of ideas and perspectives, but keeps one professional group from "taking over" the chapter. Each fall, the Chapter Nominating Committee meets and determines what board positions will be open for the coming year as the result of terms ending. The Nominating Committee sends out a plea for nominations to all existing board members and then considers all the proposed names in order to present a slate of nominations to be presented to the Chapter membership as a whole. If you have an interest in being nominated, notify this year's Chair of the Nominating Committee, The Honorable Frank Rynd, of your interest, and INCLUDE your curriculum vitae and contact information. That information will be passed on to the Nominations Committee. The 2009 TX AFCC Board of Directors slate will be presented at the TX AFCC membership meeting on October 3, 2008, and then mailed out in ballot form in the next newsletter.

How do I make a comment or suggestion or ask a question about Texas AFCC?

We are interested in your opinions, issues, and other areas of interest for where we take the Texas Chapter in the coming year.

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What's the Texas AFCC Board doing? (Continued from page 9)

While the Board tries to be representative, both geographically and professionally, of our membership as a whole, we genuinely want your feedback regarding what you think is important for our Chapter. First, visit the TX AFCC website at www.texasafcc.org to see if your question is already answered there. If your question isn't answered there, the complete contact information for all Texas AFCC board members is located at: <http://www.texasafcc.org/board.html>. You can contact any board member for further information. Finally, if you have not done so already, you may join the TX AFCC Listserv at TxAFCC-Members@yahoogroups.com or by contacting the moderator, Aaron Robb, at: arobb@texascounseling.org. You can contact me directly at musselman.lawfirm@yahoo.com or click on the "Contact Texas AFCC" link on our webpage to send us feedback. Please help us continue to keep the Texas Chapter active and vibrant through your participation!

News from the Parent Organization

AFCC'S EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM AND CONGRESS Registration, Hotel Reservations and Scholarship Application Online

Register today for AFCC's *Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations*, September 25-27, 2008 and *Eighth International Congress on Parent Education and Access Programs*, September 26-27, 2008. Join AFCC in Albuquerque's vibrant uptown neighborhood at the Albuquerque Marriott for these outstanding conferences only offered in alternate years. For the first time, AFCC will hold the *Symposium* and *Congress* simultaneously, maximizing networking opportunities for participants of both conferences. Please click the following link for the conference program brochure, online registration, hotel reservations, the scholarship application and more. www.afccnet.org/conferences/afcc_conferences.asp

FIRST BI-ANNUAL AFCC CHAPTER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE TO BE HELD IN ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

The first bi-annual AFCC Chapter Leadership Institute will be held in Albuquerque, N.M. at the Marriott on Thursday, September 25, 2008, prior to the *Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations*, and the *Eighth International Congress on Parent Education and Access Programs*. The Chapter Leadership Institute is designed for Chapter leaders: Presidents who are no more than half way through their term at that date, Presidents-Elect, and/or Vice-Presidents. Maureen Robinson (an independent organizational consultant from D.C. who has worked with AFCC for years and has been integral in AFCC strategic planning) and Leslye Hunter, M.A., LMFT, LPCC, NCC, former AFCC President and current AFCC Chapter Services and Development Consultant, will be leading the all day Institute which will focus on organizational development; revitalizing Boards and committees; team building; leadership succession; identifying and cultivating new leaders; and choosing projects to fit Chapter goals among other topics.

ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO FAMILY COURT REVIEW NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH MEMBER CENTER ON AFCC WEB SITE

AFCC is pleased to report that electronic access to *Family Court Review* is now available through the Member Center on the AFCC Web site at www.afccnet.org. Due to the merger of Wiley-Blackwell's online journal systems, Family Court Review has moved from Blackwell Synergy to Wiley InterScience. Any pages you have book marked will be redirected on the relevant page on Wiley InterScience. Thank you for your patience during the transition. AFCC members now receive a 20% discount from Wiley Publishing, which includes the Wiley-Blackwell and Jossey-Bass imprints, and more. All books are available for purchase at www.wiley.com. AFCC members must enter the discount code "SOC01" when completing an order. If you have any questions, please contact AFCC at afcc@afccnet.org or (608) 664-3750.

NEW ORLEANS CALL FOR PRESENTERS

AFCC is accepting proposals for its 46th Annual Conference, *Children, Courts and Custody: Back to the Future or Full Steam Ahead?* May 27-30, 2009 in New Orleans. Last year's conference featured 190 presenters, 80 conference sessions and more than 1,000 delegates in attendance. If you are interested in participating as a presenter, please submit a proposal before October 6, 2008. Download the Call for Presenters brochure at <http://www.afccnet.org/pdfs/2009%20New%20Orleans%20CFP.pdf>

2008-2009 AFCC TRAINING PROGRAMS ANNOUNCED

AFCC is pleased to announce its 2008-2009 training program schedule. The two-day trainings feature topics on parenting coordination, advanced parenting coordination, father involvement and advanced child custody. The trainings will take place in Kansas City, Baltimore, New Orleans and Chicago, and feature expert presenters Matthew J. Sullivan, Ph.D., Christine A. Coates, M.Ed., J.D., Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D., M.S.L., Robin M. Deutsch, Ph.D., Arnold Shienvold, Ph.D., Nancy W. Olesen, Ph.D. and Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D. A description of each training, including the training dates, locations and registration form can be found in the training brochure by clicking the link below. Early registration is recommended as trainings may sell-out. View the training brochure at <http://www.afccnet.org/pdfs/2008-09%20AFCC%20Training%20Brochure.pdf>.