

by Dustin Mauser-Claassen and Marla Spector

FBA North Central Florida Chapter Honors Its Newest Federal Judges

On September 16, 2013, the North Central Florida Chapter of the Federal Bar Association successfully hosted its annual meeting and a reception honoring the newest members of the federal bench. More than 100 attendees, including distinguished federal and state court judges, local practitioners, and students from the University of Florida Levin College of Law (UF Law) took part in the reception, which was held at the historic Hippodrome Theatre in downtown Gainesville.

The reception celebrated the region's newly appointed federal judges. UF Law's Dean Robert Jerry kicked off the event by thanking the chapter for its efforts to engage the law school in federal practice. Next, Chapter President-Elect Ron Kozlowski announced the honorees which included: Mark E. Walker, U.S. district judge, Northern District of Florida; Karen K. Specie, chief U.S. bankruptcy judge, Northern District of Florida; Gary R. Jones, U.S. magistrate judge, Northern District of Florida, Gainesville Division; and Philip R. Lammens, U.S. magistrate judge, Middle District of Florida, Ocala Division. The region is truly fortunate to have such accomplished and well-respected individuals serving on the bench.

District Court Judge Mark E. Walker is a double Gator, receiving both his undergraduate and Juris Doctor from the University of Florida. Judge Walker's judicial experience includes clerking for Judge Emmett Ripley Cox of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, Justice Stephen H. Grimes of the Florida Supreme Court, and Judge Robert Lewis Hinkle of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida. After clerking, Judge Walker spent several years as an assistant public defender for Florida's Second Judicial Circuit and worked in private practice for a decade. In 2009, Judge Walker took the bench as a Florida Circuit Judge in Tallahassee before being appointed to the federal bench by President Barack Obama in 2012. Furthermore, it

is no small accomplishment that in today's political climate Judge Walkers's nomination was confirmed by a unanimous 94-0 vote of approval from the U.S. Senate.

Judge Karen K. Specie earned her Juris Doctor at Florida State University and subsequently entered private practice in both New York and Tampa. After moving to Gainesville, Judge Specie represented business and individual debtors and served as a Chapter 7 panel trustee for the Northern District of Florida Bankruptcy Court for five years. In addition to re-entering private practice in 2011, she has served as an adjunct professor at UF Law for the past four years, teaching courses in bankruptcy law and secured transactions. Judge Specie plans to continue teaching a bankruptcy seminar each spring at UF Law during her tenure in the bankruptcy court.

Magistrate Judge Gary R.

Jones graduated with his Juris Doctor from the University of Miami and earned his LLM in international law from New York University. Judge Jones has practiced commercial litigation in Florida for 18 years. He achieved partner status in a large firm and was a named partner in a small commercial litigation firm in Miami before taking the bench as a magistrate judge in the Middle District in 2000. Further, he was the first magistrate judge to be appointed to the Financial Disclosure Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States. After 10 years of serving as a magistrate judge in the Middle District, Judge Jones was appointed as a magistrate judge in the Northern District of Florida.

Magistrate Judge Philip R. Lammens is a double Gator, earning both an undergraduate degree and a Juris Doctor at the University of Florida. Judge Lammens' prior experience includes clerking for Judge William Terrell Hodges in the U.S. District Court of the



Chief Bankruptcy Judge Karen Specie from the Northern District of Florida with several students from the University of Florida Levin College of Law.

North Central Florida continued on page 16

Dustin Mauser-Claassen and Marla Spector participate with the FBA North Central Florida Chapter as law student representatives from the University of Florida Levin College of Law.

this early exposure to analytical debate for her future successes.

Stafford wants to promote the development of strong critical thinking and language skills, both verbal and written, in the minority community. She hopes that the MDPCC will help to provide an atmosphere where these skills will be encouraged and can flourish. As part of her motivation in promoting language skills, Stafford cites Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor's struggles with grammar at Princeton. Justice Sotomayor, who spoke Spanish at home, had trouble using proper syntax in her writing. With the mentorship of a dedicated professor, Justice Sotomayor was able to develop her written grammar. Stafford hopes that minority students can receive similar mentorship and guidance through the MDPCC's programs.

Stafford encourages minority youth to develop these necessary skills in the practice of law, not just as a way of helping them directly, but also to benefit the profession and the community as a whole. As an African-American prosecutor, Stafford recognizes the vital importance in having a criminal justice system that fairly reflects the diverse community it serves. This is of particular

importance given that the legal profession remains largely Caucasian and is not projected to change, even though the trend in the community is toward greater diversity. Stafford hopes that her efforts in the Federal Bar Association will not only expand minority penetration in the legal field in general, but also increase diversity specifically among federal court practitioners. Stafford hopes that the FBA Diversity Committee's programs will help to alleviate the under-representation of minorities who practice in federal court.

When asked if she feels like a hero after receiving the Unsung Hero Award, Stafford says that she feels like she is fulfilling an obligation. Stafford recognizes how fortunate she has been and is dedicated to giving back to the community. She believes that increasing diversity has layers. She has only scratched the surface and is still learning what the issues are, but there is definitely "more to do." Stafford will not be an unsung hero for long. ☉

NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA continued from page 14

Middle District of Florida and Judge Joel F. Dubina in the Eleventh Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals. Before his appointment, Judge Lammens worked in the Torts Branch of the Civil Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, was an assistant general counsel for the City of Jacksonville, and an assistant U.S. attorney in Middle District of Florida.

The reception gave the local legal community the opportunity to mix and mingle while getting better acquainted with the newly appointed judges outside of the courtroom. Many young members of the legal community from UF Law also took advantage of this opportunity by introducing themselves to members of the Federal Bar and other distinguished members of the legal community.

Judge Lammens remarked, "The FBA event was a wonderful opportunity to meet and talk with lawyers and local judges from our North Florida community." The meeting also allowed some of the newly appointed judges to meet each other for the first time while connecting with old friends. Judge Lammens said, "It was also a great opportunity for me to meet U.S. District Judge Walker and U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Specie. I hadn't met them prior to the event, and I was delighted to have some time to speak with both of them. And, of course, it is always nice to have a chance to talk with U.S. Magistrate Judge Jones, whom I have known for several years." Judge Jones commented that he "would like to thank the board of the North Central Florida Chapter of the Federal Bar Association for hosting the event" and stated, "The turnout and support from the members of the Gainesville and Ocala legal communities was really outstanding."

Throughout the reception, many of the honored judges spoke about goals they have set for themselves during their tenure and expressed a deep commitment to the community. Judge Walker paid homage to the Gainesville bar stating that "I work in all four divisions" of the Northern District "and I find the highest quality of advocacy in Gainesville, making it a pleasure to work there." Judge Jones expressed a similar affinity to the Gainesville com-

munity stating, "The strong support by local federal practitioners for an event like this demonstrates that the greater Gainesville legal community has a vibrant and very able-bodied group of lawyers engaged in federal practice." Judge Walker also expressed his dedication to the region by vowing to conduct himself "in the tradition of Judge Paul and Judge Mickle" and recognized that he has "big shoes to fill." Judge Lammens expressed that he was particularly glad to see practitioners from Ocala and further discussed that he hopes that "... more local lawyers will handle the federal cases pending in the Ocala Division." All of the judges expressed gratitude to the chapter for hosting this event.

To close out the evening, the chapter held its annual meeting to elect its officers and general board members. The chapter thanks everyone for their attendance at the annual meeting and reception and welcomes the region's newly appointed federal judges. ☉

Editorial Policy

The Federal Lawyer is the magazine of the Federal Bar Association. It serves the needs of the association and its members, as well as those of the legal profession as a whole and the public.

The Federal Lawyer is edited by members of its Editorial Board, who are all members of the Federal Bar Association. Editorial and publication decisions are based on the board's judgement.

The views expressed in *The Federal Lawyer* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the association or of the Editorial Board. Articles and letters to the editor in response are welcome.