



## Press Release

Kansas City, Mo., April 17, 2009

**For Immediate Publication**

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### **KCMBA Spotlights 2009 BBBC Award Winners**

The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association (KCMBA) will recognize their 2009 honorees at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Bench-Bar & Boardroom Conference held at Tan Tar-A Resort Golf Club & Spa. More than 400 attendees will pack the resort for educational seminars, award dinners, sports and recreational events, music, fun and collegial camaraderie. The 2009 award winners to be recognized at the conference include:

#### **Congenial Counselor Award**

Nathalie C. Elliott and Michael A. Williams are the 2009 recipients of the Congenial Counselor Award. Created in 1998, this award is presented annually to one or more members of the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association who their peers believe to exemplify professional gallantry, peacemaking, harmony and friendship.

#### **Nathalie C. Elliott**

Nathalie C. Elliott is a Shareholder at Levy & Craig, P.C., where she currently serves as president of the firm. Her practice is limited to the area of family law, including not only the traditional litigation model but also collaborative law and mediation in Missouri and Kansas. Elliott received a B.A. from Benedictine College in 1983, and graduated from UMKC Law School in 1990—where she was a member of the UMKC Law Review and served as an associate justice of the Moot Court. She is admitted to practice in both Kansas and Missouri.

Elliott has been active in local bar associations and in the Ross T. Roberts Inn of Court program. She is a member of the American Bar Association, Association of Women Lawyers, Clay County Bar Association, Johnson County Bar Association, Platte County Bar Association and the KCMBA. She is an alumni and former chairperson of the Ross T. Roberts Inns of Court in 1996-1997, and was co-chair of the Homeless Outreach Legal Services Project from 1994-1996.

In addition to spending time with her son, Christian, Elliott enjoys being active in her community. She graduated from Centurions, a civic leadership training program sponsored by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and served for many years on the Family Conservancy Board of Directors. She particularly enjoys doing volunteer work for organizations that assist families and children. She received the Volunteer of the Month award from the Lawyers Association of Kansas City in 1997 and has been a *Super Lawyer* since 2006.

### **Michael A. Williams**

As a Partner of the Lathrop & Gage LLP law firm, Michael A. Williams represents employers in arbitrations and in litigation of discrimination and retaliation claims before local, state and federal agencies. He has served as lead trial attorney in jury trials before federal and state courts in both Kansas and Missouri. Williams received his B.A. in 1995 and his J.D. in 1998 from the University of Missouri – Columbia. An involved alum of the University of Missouri, he regularly counsels business clients regarding human resources, workers' compensation retaliation, and many other employment related issues.

Williams is very active in the Kansas City community as a mentor for disadvantaged youth. He is the immediate past chair of both the Diversity Committee for the firm and the KCMBA Heartland Diversity Legal Job Fair Committee. Additionally, Williams served as an adjunct professor of Labor Law at the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law in 2004 and 2005, and was the first African-American to serve on the Kansas Bar Association Board of Governors. Williams interacts with his community in a variety of ways. He is active in many bar and community organizations, including the Missouri Bar Association Young Lawyer Council; University of Missouri Alumni Association; Jefferson Club Board of Directors; MU Law School Foundation Fundraising Committee and Board of Directors; and he has served as a Centurion in the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. He has also been active in the United Way Young Leaders Society, The Missouri Bar, KCMBA YLS, Lawyers Association of Kansas City and the American Bar Association.

Many accolades have already been bestowed on Williams including being recognized as the 2008 Distinguished Recent Alumni Award by the University of Missouri School of Law and the Arts and Science Distinguished Recent Alumni Award in 2006. He also received Young Lawyer of the Year Award from the KCMBA in 2006 and the KCMBA President's Award in 2008.

### **Thomas J. Conway Award**

Daniel A. Thomas is the 2009 recipient of the Thomas J. Conway Award. This award honors a younger trial lawyer who exemplifies two traits of the late Tom Conway: 1.) Outstanding trial skills and 2.) The ability to be a fierce advocate and a good friend to opposing counsel at the same time.

### **Daniel A. Thomas**

Daniel A. Thomas dedicates his practice exclusively to representing victims of catastrophic injuries and wrongful death involving trucking accidents, motor vehicle accidents, product defects and medical malpractice. As an Associate at Humphrey, Farrington & McClain, P.C. in Independence, Missouri, he continues that firm's national reputation of aggressive representation of those most horrifically harmed. Thomas brings a unique talent and mindset wherein he refuses

to be limited by traditional boundaries in pleading, discovery, settlements or trial. This tenacity comes from serving on active duty in an elite Military Police unit within the United States Marine Corps. Thomas was an active duty Marine from 1995 until 1999—he was a reserve Marine until 2002. He received his undergraduate degree from Park University in 1999 in Criminal Justice and went onto receive his J.D. from UMKC in 2002.

Thomas was ranked by *Missouri Lawyers Weekly* as the 5<sup>th</sup> top plaintiffs' lawyer in Missouri for 2008 with over \$19.34 million obtained by verdicts and settlements and for obtaining the top settlement in Missouri (\$18 million) for the families of three elderly women killed in a tractor-trailer collision. Also in 2008, he was recognized by Law and Politics as a *Super Lawyer Rising Star* in Missouri and Kansas and by *Missouri Lawyers Weekly* as an Up and Coming Lawyer. He was also inducted as an Inn Master for the American Inns of Court, Ross T. Roberts Chapter; appointed chair of The Missouri Bar Tort Law Committee, and appointed as one of only two members on the State of Missouri Advisory Board for the Association of Interstate Trucking Lawyers of America. Thomas also serves on the KCMBA Board of Directors.

In the past, Thomas has also volunteered his time as a Youth Friend at local elementary schools. He recently formed the Shooting Star Foundation in April with Julie Taylor to help empower Kansas City's at-risk youth. Consistent with this vision, the Foundation's philanthropy and education initiatives focuses the majority of their resources on developing and supporting programs/ partnerships that promote educational opportunities for diverse populations across the entire Metro area. He has also begun work on the Robin S. McGlasson Scholarship, named after his mother, which is going to be awarded to single mothers who are balancing the demands of being a law student and raising children on their own.

### **Young Lawyer of the Year**

Lauren Perkins Allen of Randy W. James & Associates, PC, will receive the 2009 Young Lawyer of the Year Award. Presented annually at the Bench-Bar & Boardroom Conference, the award recognizes excellence in public service, professionalism and legal accomplishments.

### **Lauren Perkins Allen**

Lauren Perkins Allen is a Shareholder with Randy W. James & Associates, PC where she focuses her practice on products liability, wrongful death, personal injury and premises liability cases. Allen graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and received her J.D. from the University of Missouri School of Law in 2000. Her legal career in Kansas City began as a judicial law clerk for The Honorable J.D. Williamson, Jr. of the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri. She has been in private practice with Randy James since 2002. Her dedication and commitment to her trial work has led to many successful resolutions by way of settlement or verdict on behalf of their clients.

Allen's commitment to the legal profession extends beyond her office and the courtroom. Currently, she serves as the District Representative to the American Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division National Council. In that role, Allen represents the Missouri and Kansas' young lawyers on the national council, promotes national public service projects to her state affiliates and coordinates the ABA YLD's Disaster Legal Services Hotline in conjunction with FEMA. She also serves as one of the Kansas City representatives to The Missouri Bar's YLS

Council and on the Board of Governors for Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys. At the KCMBA, Allen currently serves on the Board of Directors as CLE Co-Chair. Her past involvement includes Vice-Chair of the Finance & Investments Committee, Chair of the Solo & Small Firm Committee, Bar Leadership Academy Graduate and numerous other committee appointments. She is a member of the American Association for Justice, Kansas Bar Association, Kansas Trial Lawyers Association, Eastern Jackson County Bar Association and Johnson County Bar Association. Allen also volunteers her time with Vanderbilt's Kansas City Alumni Chapter in the recruitment of local high school students for undergraduate admission, sits on the Community Impact Council of The Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri and works with Gillis Center in promoting children's literary issues.

### **Robert C. Welch Volunteer Attorney Project**

Each year the Robert C. Welch Volunteer Attorney Project Award is given to recognize attorneys and law firms, who, through their participation in the Volunteer Attorney Project (VAP), have demonstrated exemplary commitment to the delivery of pro bono services in our community. Sarah Baxter and Charles German will be honored with the 2009 Robert C. Welch Volunteer Attorney Project Award for their outstanding contributions to pro bono legal services.

### **Sarah Baxter**

Sarah Baxter is an Assistant City Attorney for Kansas City, Missouri. Baxter is recognized for her outstanding dedication to providing pro bono services. She has been a member of VAP for five years and although that's not a particularly long time, she has been able to represent a large number of clients by accepting one case after another and, by the way, with successful resolutions each time. In addition to the number of cases she has handled, another reason Baxter stands out is because of her continued willingness to accept cases whenever called upon. Whether it's a complex matter or an emergency—*must be done right now* case, Baxter has always said "yes" when called upon. Although she has a very challenging work schedule, it is evident that she has made providing pro bono services one of her top priorities. VAP sincerely appreciates Baxter's commitment and we should all feel fortunate to have someone with her dedication to providing pro bono services in our community.

### **Charles German**

Charles German of Rouse Hendricks German May PC is being honored for his extraordinary devotion to the provision of pro bono legal services. Never in the history of VAP has one person done so much, so quickly to further pro bono efforts in the Kansas City community. After recognizing crucial legal needs that were being unmet, German gathered forces, created new projects, recruited volunteers and made sure services were delivered all within a matter of a few months. As a result, today VAP, in conjunction with the KCMBA, have two new special projects which focus on the legal needs of the homeless—the Transactional Law Project, which matches up transactional lawyers with non-profit organizations serving the homeless, and the Warrant Relief Project. The Warrant Relief Project is one of VAP's most successful specialized projects. Through this project, homeless shelter residents with outstanding municipal court warrants can obtain free legal representation to address the warrants. Since February 2008, the project has helped 68 clients eliminate warrants, which in turn has helped them to overcome the barriers to securing employment and affordable housing. When commenting to a newly recruited volunteer about German's ability to encourage so many to be involved, the volunteer responded, "You just

can't say no to Charley." That comment in itself is a testimony to the measure of the man German is, but we have witnessed firsthand what his enthusiasm, determination and commitment can accomplish. VAP is truly fortunate to have attorneys as committed as German and he certainly deserves recognition.

### **Deans of the Trial Bar and Barons of the Boardroom**

*(Winners announced in an earlier April Press Release)*

The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association (KCMBA) has selected Thomas G. Kokoruda, Robert L. Langdon and Karen A. Plax as this year's recipients of the prestigious Deans of the Trial Bar Award; and William E. Carr and Richard N. Nixon for the Barons of the Boardroom Award.

*Photo's available upon request.*

The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association serves approximately 5,000 members in the nine-county Kansas City metro area: Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas and Cass, Clay, Jackson, Johnson, Lafayette, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri. The mission of this Association is to serve our members and our community by promoting justice, professional excellence and respect for the law.