

THE GBA NEWS DOCKET

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Manisha P. Patel, Esq.
*President of the
Greensboro Bar
Association*

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Message from the President

As we approach the holiday season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the spirit of service and connection that has defined our Association this year. November was a particularly inspiring month, as we celebrated Theodora Vaporis, the recipient of the 2024 Pro Bono Award. Her dedication exemplifies the impact we can have when we commit our time and talents to serving others.

In the same spirit, the Community Involvement Committee partnered with the Out of the Garden Project for a meaningful service event, showcasing how we can come together to support our local community. The Young Lawyers Section remains active as ever with networking and service events throughout Greensboro. We welcomed our newest members to our November 2024 membership meeting and heard from the NC Mock Trial Program Executive Director, Jerry Smith on the tremendous growth of the program and support the North Carolina Judicial Branch has put into its expansion. I urge you to watch this [brief video from the presentation](#) to learn more about the longstanding impact of this program on the lives of North Carolina high school students over the years.

Looking ahead, I hope you'll join us for our annual Holiday Celebration on December 11th at Elon Law from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM. This is always a special evening filled with good food, great conversation, and an opportunity to celebrate the season with colleagues and friends. As we close out 2024, let us carry forward the values of service, connection, and gratitude into the new year. I am deeply grateful for each of you and the ways you contribute to our profession and community.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyous and peaceful holiday season.

Warm regards,

Manisha P. Patel, Esq.

President, Greensboro Bar Association and the 24th Judicial District



You can contribute news or topics of interest to the GBA by contacting Editor Jonathan M. Parisi:
jparisi@spanglerestateplanning.com

DECEMBER CALENDAR NOTES

- December 2 Jones Book Fair,
8:15 AM, Jones Elementary
- December 5 Real Property Section Meeting,
5:30 PM, Tuggle Duggins
- December 6 Nomination Deadline for
GBA Centennial Award
- December 11 GBA Board Meeting,
4:00 PM, Self-Help Building
- December 11 Holiday Party,
5:30 PM, Elon Law
- December 18 YLS Board Meeting,
12:00 PM, Turning Point Litigation
- December 20 Submission Deadline
for January Newsletter

[Click to keep up with GBA Events Online](#)

[Click Here for Legal Community Events](#)

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to Like Us on Facebook!](#)



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to Follow Us on LinkedIn!](#)

DONATE TO HUNTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL!

In the spirit of the GBA's theme of "Service to Others" this year, the Young Lawyers Section has partnered with Hunter Elementary School to provide our young students with the resources necessary to succeed in school, such as school supplies and educational opportunities outside of the classroom. Anything helps!

Scan below to make a generous donation to our future leaders!



Wellness Corner

BarCARES is a confidential, short-term intervention program provided cost-free to members of the 24th Judicial District Bar and other participating judicial district bars, voluntary bar associations and law schools. If you would like additional information about the program and/or its availability in your area, please contact the BarCARES coordinator at 919.929.1227 or 1.800.640.0735 or click on the icon below.

BarCARES®

NOTICE

Submissions for consideration for the Greensboro Bar Association Newsletter should be made to Jonathan M. Parisi at jparisi@spanglerestateplanning.com. All written submissions should be made in Word format and should be in complete and final form, and any photographs should be submitted in jpeg format. Any photographs submitted should contain a caption identifying the person or persons in the photograph and, where applicable, other information necessary to understand the context of the photograph. Submissions made in other formats, including e-mail text submissions, may not be considered for publication.

Young Lawyers Section: Connections



Tyler Nullmeyer is President of the Greensboro Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section and Associate Attorney at [Turning Point Litigation](#).

An Update from YLS

In October, YLS held a networking event with NCBA YLD (Young Lawyers Division) at Bull City Ciderworks! We enjoyed the opportunity to connect with many of our members, as well as members of NCBA YLD. On November 1st, YLS held a fall swearing-in ceremony at the Old Guilford County Courthouse. Congratulations to the 11 individuals that were sworn into state or federal court!



Credit and thank you to Guilford County for photographing the swearing-in ceremony.

On November 4th, YLS held a service event with Greensboro Urban Ministries. Members of YLS provided and prepared dinner for about 100 people. Thank you to all those that participated! We enjoyed seeing many of our members at these recent events!



In December, YLS looks forward to participating in the GBA holiday party! We welcome you to join us at our table! At the holiday party, YLS will also be collecting socks, hats, and gloves for children of all ages (baby/toddler to high school age) for Backpack Beginnings!



Andrew Carter

YLS Member Spotlight: Andrew Carter, Board Member

Andrew practices construction law and business litigation in the Greensboro office of Maynard Nexsen. Andrew's favorite part of his job is "thinking of creative solutions to difficult problems." Andrew chose to join the YLS board to serve his community and connect with new and experienced lawyers. When asked what his advice for new attorneys is, Andrew stated "Participate in community events; you can learn from experienced lawyers, grow with your peers, and inspire newer lawyers."

Continued on page 7



Camille Stell
is President and
CEO of Lawyers
Mutual Consulting
& Services. Continue
this conversation
by contacting
Camille at [camille@
lawyersmutualinc.com](mailto:camille@lawyersmutualinc.com)
or 800.662.8843.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY FOR SMALL LAW FIRMS

In today's interconnected and diverse world, cultural competency has emerged as a vital skill for professionals in every field, including law. For small law firms, often embedded in the fabric of their communities, cultural competency is not just a beneficial attribute—it is a necessity. By fostering a deeper understanding of cultural differences, small law firms can better serve their clients, improve their reputation, and contribute positively to the community they operate in.

This article explores the importance of cultural competency for small law firms, practical ways to cultivate it, and the profound benefits it brings to the firm, its employees, and the community at large.

Meeting Diverse Client Needs

Small law firms typically deal with deeply personal legal matters such as criminal defense, family law, estate planning, and small business ownership. These areas often intersect with an individual's cultural background, values, and traditions. For instance:

- In family law, differing cultural perspectives on marriage, divorce, and child custody may influence a client's decisions and priorities.
- Estate planning may involve navigating cultural beliefs about inheritance or familial obligations.
- Small business clients from immigrant communities may face unique challenges tied to language barriers, unfamiliar regulations, or cultural expectations.

Without cultural competency, lawyers and staff risk misunderstanding their clients' needs, offering ineffective counsel, or inadvertently alienating the very people they aim to serve.

Lawyers in small communities often become trusted advisors, and their reputation can make or break their practice. Cultural competency fosters trust and respect by demonstrating a genuine commitment to understanding and valuing clients' diverse perspectives. Clients who feel heard and

respected are more likely to refer others and return for future legal needs, strengthening the firm's standing in the community.

Addressing Implicit Bias

Implicit biases—unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that affect decision-making—can hinder a lawyer's ability to provide impartial and effective representation. Cultural competency involves recognizing and mitigating these biases, ensuring that every client receives fair and equitable treatment.

How to Cultivate Cultural Competency

Developing cultural competency is a continuous process that involves education, self-awareness, and active engagement. Here are some practical steps small law firms can take:

1. Training and Education

Invest in regular training for all staff members, including attorneys, paralegals, and support staff. Topics should include:

- Recognizing and addressing implicit bias.
- Understanding cultural norms and values that may influence legal decisions.
- Effective communication strategies for working with clients from diverse backgrounds.

Many of our bar associations are offering continuing legal education programs on topics such as addressing implicit biases. The Center for Creative Leadership located in Greensboro offers excellent courses in topics of diversity and inclusion, creating leadership development programs, and other solutions that will help your firm cultivate cultural competency.

2. Hiring and Representation

A diverse team brings varied perspectives and experiences, enhancing the firm's ability to understand and serve clients from different backgrounds. When possible, recruit employees who reflect the diversity of your community. Representation within the firm can also make clients feel more comfortable and understood.

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THEODORA VAPORIS NAMED PRO BONO AWARD RECIPIENT

The GBA is happy to announce that Theodora Vaporis, Director at Tuggle Duggins, has received the Pro Bono Award this year. The Pro Bono Award, established in 1996, recognizes outstanding service, and was presented to Ms. Vaporis at the November 21 member meeting at Greensboro Country Club.

Ms. Vaporis was selected to receive the Pro Bono Award due to her lengthy and regular pro bono work here in North Carolina. She has been named six times to the Herb Falk Society, which recognizes GBA members who contribute at least 75 hours of pro bono service annually. In 2023 alone, Ms. Vaporis completed 97 hours of pro bono service, including:

Representation of senior citizens in litigation, creditor issues, and estate planning

- Representation of veterans with powers of attorney, other estate planning documents, and one who had been defrauded
- Served in a guardianship for an indigent disabled adult ward
- Assisted low-income college bound students with advising on and drafting powers of attorney
- Provided advice to a food bank startup and corporate services for another non-profit startup
- North Carolina Bar Association meetings and 4All service

Please join us in congratulating our colleague for her exemplary service.



Theodora Vaporis and GBA President, Manisha P. Patel

PANEL DISCUSSION: REBUILDING WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Join the GBA's Real Property Section on Thursday, December 5th, for an insightful panel discussion on the legal issues affecting Western North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Helene.

The meeting will take place at 5:30PM at the office of Tuggle Duggins, located at 400 Bellemeade Street, Suite 800, Greensboro, North Carolina 27401. Our guest panelists, who have been deeply involved in Hurricane

Helene response, relief, and recovery efforts since September, will shed light on the magnitude of damage sustained by communities in Western North Carolina, assess and discuss the key legal challenges facing residents and businesses in the Western part of the state, and provide more information on how interested attorneys can get involved in the recovery effort! Dinner will be served. We look forward to seeing you on December 5th!

NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE FOR THE 2025 OUTSTANDING YOUNG LAWYER AWARD

The Outstanding Young Lawyer Award debuted in early 2024 and is bestowed upon an attorney with fewer than 10 years of practice experience who is a member in good standing of the NC State Bar and an active member of both the GSO Bar Association and the Young Lawyers Section. This individual exhibits professional excellence; service to the profession and the bar; service to the community; and a reputation for advancing legal ethics, personal professionalism and professional responsibility.

Nominations for the Outstanding Young Lawyer Award will close on January 05, 2025.

To submit a nomination, please click [HERE](#), and then proceed by clicking on the link that says, "GBA members may submit nominations [HERE](#)."

With questions, please contact Awards Chair Jennifer Mencarini – jmencarini@foxrothschild.com.

NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE FOR THE GBA CENTENNIAL AWARD

We hope you will consider nominating a colleague for the Centennial Award this year before the December 06, 2024, deadline. Co-sponsored by the North Carolina Bar Association, the Centennial Award recognizes outstanding and exemplary community service. To submit a nomination, please click [HERE](#), and then proceed by clicking on the link that says, "GBA members may submit nominations [HERE](#)."

With questions, please contact Awards Chair Jennifer Mencarini – jmencarini@foxrothschild.com. The award will be presented at the January 2025 member dinner meeting at Starmount Forest Country Club.



SUPPORT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROJECT!

The book program at Jones Elementary School is a wonderful Greensboro Bar Association tradition! This year, GBA member donations will be used to allow the children in grades K-5 of the Traditional English program to select a book of their choice (\$10 or less) at the school's Book Fair, to be held the week after Thanksgiving. We will also provide a gift book for all "graduating" 5th graders in the Spring, both in the Traditional English and Spanish Immersion programs. To do this, we need to raise at least \$2,200. GBA volunteers are welcome to help children shop at the Book Fair this Fall, and to deliver the 5th grade graduation books to the students next Spring.

[Donate now online](#), or mail your check made payable to the Greensboro Bar Association Foundation, with "Elementary School Project" in the memo line, to:

Greensboro Bar Association Foundation
P.O. Box 1825
Greensboro, NC 27402

To volunteer or for more information, please contact Elementary School Project committee co-chairs [Adam Kerr](#) or [Erin Reis](#).

Donations are tax-deductible, with receipts sent to each donor. Thank you in advance for your continuing support – the children and teachers at Jones thank you, too!

[Click to Donate Online Now](#)



GBA HOLIDAY GATHERING: REGISTRATION OPEN!



[Register Here](#)

Reservations are required and must be made by Friday, December 6th at 5:00 PM.

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GBA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: SARAH ROANE



Sarah Roane

Sarah Roane is a Pro Se Law Clerk with the United States District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina. Her work involves researching and drafting opinions for United States Magistrate Judge L. Patrick Auld involving Social Security administrative appeals and state prisoner habeas petitions under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Sarah has been licensed as an attorney in North Carolina since 1997.

Attend local bar association and Inn of Court meetings. Sign up to be mentored by veteran attorneys in your area. You never know when a hiring manager, having previously met you at a function, might decide to give you a shot, even if your credentials (at least on paper) do not meet some minimum requirement. That happened to me back in 1997, and that job then opened doors to other jobs and changed the trajectory of my legal career.

What is one lesson you've learned during your career that you think is important for others to know?

One of the biggest teaching moments I experienced in my career happened about ten years ago. I was fundraising for a project, and a very kind woman, upon learning of the fundraiser's cause, whipped out her checkbook and, without hesitation, wrote out a check for \$100. After she walked away, I looked down at the check and realized she had been a plaintiff in a lawsuit against one of my former clients when I was in private practice. In the midst of the litigation, I had viewed her in a negative light, but that day, I met her as a selfless, generous colleague. That moment continues to serve as a good reminder that there are always two sides to every story and that, no matter how contentious litigation may be, there is human being on the other side of that "v."

What do you enjoy most about practicing law in our community?

The collegiality of our local bar is very special. The GBA provides so many opportunities for lawyers and judges to socialize with each other outside the more formalized settings in which we work. These opportunities have been truly meaningful for me, and help to round out my experience as a lawyer, because I do not represent clients or interact much with other lawyers in my job.

What advice would you give to someone just starting out in the legal field?

The two pieces of advice I would give to any law student are to 1) take every opportunity you can to network within the legal community where you want to practice, and 2) not sell yourself short when applying for jobs.

YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION: CONNECTIONS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

New YLS Email Address

YLS has a new email address, younglawyerssection@greensborobar.org. YLS is taking this moment to update its email list. YLS is a free GBA section for attorneys of any age who have been practicing for 5 or less years, or attorneys 40 years of age or younger. If you satisfy one or both of these criteria and would like to be included on emails about upcoming events, please email younglawyerssection@greensborobar.org. We look forward to connecting with all YLS eligible members of GBA!

Upcoming YLS Events:

At 5:30 PM, on **Wednesday, December 11, 2024**, GBA will be hosting its annual holiday party at Elon University School of Law! We encourage all YLS members to attend!

January Lunch – YLS is planning a lunch for its members in January 2025! Additional details will be available in the near future.

For more information about YLS events & service opportunities, follow us on Facebook (Greensboro Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section) or email us to be added to our email list (younglawyerssection@greensborobar.org).

Connect with YLS:

To provide feedback & suggestions for future events/programming, please email the Young Lawyers Section at younglawyerssection@greensborobar.org. For more information about YLS events & service opportunities, follow us on [Facebook: Greensboro Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section](#).

The Young Lawyers Section would like to celebrate the personal milestones and professional accomplishments of its members. Email YLS at younglawyerssection@greensborobar.org to share achievements that you would like celebrated.

3. Active Listening

Active listening is a cornerstone of cultural competency. Encourage lawyers and staff to:

- Avoid assumptions about a client's values or priorities.
- Ask open-ended questions to clarify understanding.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues that may signal discomfort or disagreement.

4. Language Access

Language barriers can be a significant obstacle in legal matters. Small law firms can address this by:

- Hiring bilingual staff or partnering with professional interpreters.
- Providing key documents in multiple languages.
- Utilizing translation technology when necessary.

5. Community Engagement

Building relationships within the community helps law firms stay attuned to the cultural dynamics that affect their clients. Attend local events, join cultural organizations, and participate in community discussions. These efforts demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and provide opportunities to learn directly from community members.

6. Regular Self-Assessment

Cultural competency is an evolving skill. Encourage ongoing reflection by:

- Soliciting feedback from clients and employees about the firm's cultural sensitivity.
- Reviewing cases to identify areas where cultural understanding played a critical role—or where it fell short.
- Setting measurable goals for improving cultural competency.

The Benefits of Cultural Competency

Culturally competent lawyers are better equipped to identify and address the unique needs of their clients, leading to more favorable outcomes. For example:

- A culturally sensitive approach to family law might result in custody arrangements that respect a family's traditions.
- In estate planning, understanding a client's cultural values can help draft documents that honor their wishes.

When clients feel their values are respected, they are more likely to trust and follow their lawyer's advice.

Enhanced Reputation and Client Retention

Clients who feel respected and understood are more likely to recommend the firm to others. Word-of-mouth referrals are particularly valuable for small law firms,

where personal connections often drive business. By demonstrating cultural competency, a firm can build a loyal client base and establish itself as a trusted community partner.

Increased Employee Satisfaction

Cultural competency doesn't just benefit clients—it also creates a more inclusive and supportive work environment. Employees who feel valued and respected are more likely to be engaged, productive, and committed to the firm's success. A culturally aware workplace can also attract top talent, further strengthening the firm.

Broader Community Impact

Small law firms play a vital role in the communities they serve. By prioritizing cultural competency, these firms can:

- Foster greater understanding and inclusivity within the community.
- Advocate for policies and practices that address systemic inequities.
- Serve as role models for other local businesses and organizations.

A culturally competent law firm becomes a beacon of fairness and justice, reinforcing the values that hold communities together.

Overcoming Challenges to Cultural Competency

While the benefits of cultural competency are clear, implementing it can be challenging. Small law firms often operate with limited resources and may feel overwhelmed by the prospect of adding another responsibility to their workload. However, even small, incremental changes can make a significant difference.

Finding Affordable Resources

Many organizations offer free or low-cost training programs, webinars, and toolkits on cultural competency. Diversity Lab is an online resource you may want to investigate. Also, you may be able to get CLE credit for bar programs while also enhancing your firm's skills in this area. Local community groups may also be willing to partner with firms to provide insights and resources.

Balancing Cultural Awareness with Legal Requirements

Cultural considerations must sometimes be balanced against legal obligations. For example, a client's cultural preference for informal agreements may not align with the legal requirement for formal documentation. In such cases, cultural competency involves respectfully explaining legal necessities while finding ways to honor the client's values.

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GREENSBORO BAR ASSOCIATION'S 2025 NC LEGAL AID FUNDRAISER SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES

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or Emily Carico at Emily@camino-law.com

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- Company logo displayed on table cards at event
- Company logo included in sponsor's list on promotional material

\$1,000

SILVER

- 6 Tickets
- Company logo displayed on table cards at event
- Company name included in sponsor's list on promotional material

\$750

BRONZE

\$500

- 4 Tickets
- Company name included in sponsor's list on promotional material

COPPER

\$250

- 2 Tickets
- Company name included in sponsor's list on promotional material

SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY MARCH 29, 2025

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Greensboro, NC 27402

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NEW MEMBERS

Approved on November 13, 2024

Adia S. Caviness
Carruthers & Roth, P.A.
Endorser: Keith A. Wood
Membership Category: Newly Licensed

Katherine Cruz
Purrington Moody Weil, LLP
Endorser: Kayla M. McGee
Membership Category: Newly Licensed

Christopher J. Hoffer
IRS Office of the Chief Counsel
Endorser: John H. Wright
Membership Category: Newly Licensed

Morgan McNeil
Hoffman & Hoffman, Inc
Endorser: James R. Faucher
Membership Category: Newly Licensed

Daniel C. Warren
Ruby Chase Taliercio, PLLC
Endorser: Jennifer L. Ruby
Membership Category: Regular

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY FOR SMALL LAW FIRMS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Conclusion: A Win-Win for Everyone

Cultural competency is not just a professional responsibility for small law firms—it is an opportunity to make a lasting positive impact. By investing in cultural awareness, law firms can provide better representation, build stronger relationships, and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable community.

For the firms themselves, cultural competency enhances their reputation, strengthens client loyalty, and fosters a supportive workplace culture. For employees, it provides a sense of pride and purpose, knowing their work aligns with principles of respect and justice. And for the community, culturally competent law firms serve as

trusted allies, advocating for fairness and understanding in every legal matter.

In a world where diversity is both a reality and a strength, cultural competency is no longer optional—it is essential. Small law firms that embrace this principle will not only succeed but thrive, becoming indispensable pillars of the communities they serve.

Camille Stell is the President of Lawyers Mutual Consulting & Services and the co-author of the book, RESPECT – An Insight to Attorney Compensation Plans, 2nd edition is now available. Continue this conversation by contacting Camille at camille@lawyersmutualconsulting.com or 800.662.8843.



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