The Real Justice League
Alumni at Dade Legal Aid Fight for Justice
A Message from the Dean

Dear Alumni and Friends,

St. Thomas Law is close to my heart, and I feel blessed and humbled to have the opportunity to serve this institution as Dean again. I am excited to work with administration, faculty, students, and especially our alumni to continue to strengthen this unique institution that brings so much diversity to the legal profession, and offers so much to the communities we serve.

Over the next few months, you will hear from me on two important initiatives that will further strengthen our diversity and service initiatives while tangibly helping our students succeed—endowed scholarships and the solo/small practice incubator. By providing more financial support to our students and by providing support to our graduates to launch their own practice, we can truly impact the success of our students and alumni. I hope that you will join me in these efforts as it will take our community working together to meet these goals.

I am also pleased to introduce this issue of The Lawyer which highlights alumni, students and faculty who are living the mission of this school—to serve their communities and to help those in need. This year, St. Thomas was ranked in the Top 10 Law Schools for Pro Bono Graduation Requirements by Super Lawyers. While this recognition is flattering, the real testament to the success of this program is our alumni who graduate from here and continue to serve in so many different ways.

This issue of the magazine includes stories of a graduate who has adopted a victim of human trafficking, students who are helping unaccompanied alien children, and a powerhouse group of alumni who make up nearly half of the legal team at Dade Legal Aid. These stories show that, for us at St. Thomas Law, pro bono is so much more than a graduation requirement. It is a heartfelt belief in using time and talent to build a better world.

I am overjoyed to be back at the helm of a law school that has such a wonderful mission, and has such talented, dedicated students, faculty and alumni living out that mission each day.

With warmest regards,

Alfredo Garcia
Dean

On the cover: St. Thomas Law Alumni at Dade Legal Aid with Dean Garcia: (front row, L-R) Michelle Ortiz ’04, Dean Garcia, Ashley Juchawski ’12, and Dana Viggiano ’08; (back row, L-R) Steven Paulson ’04, Yolande Henry ’02, Evita Llaguno-Feria ’06, and Mark Brown ’00; (not pictured) Brenda Rivera ’96.
Cover Photo by Roldan Torres-Moure, Picture Works Photography, Miami
Nurturing New Lawyers
St. Thomas Looks to Open a Solo/Small Practice Incubator to Get New Grads On Their Feet

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On March 18, 2015, St. Thomas Law welcomed over 100 judges, attorneys, legal scholars, alumni and friends for an event honoring Judge William Hoeveler and announcing the selection of St. Thomas Law’s Alex Hanna Legal Information Center as the repository for Judge Hoeveler’s judicial papers. The collection includes his personal anecdotes, exchanges with attorneys and notes which serve to document Judge Hoeveler’s career and give unique insight into the process of his judicial deliberation. These documents bring judicial history alive for law students, legal scholars and the public alike in a way that textbooks cannot. In addition to the papers, the law school will house memorabilia including courtroom sketches from the Manuel Noriega trial, the Benemerenti Medal bestowed by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, personal photographs, and Judge Hoeveler’s famous briefcase.

Monsignor Franklyn Casale expressed his pride that the law library was selected as the repository. He spoke of his admiration for Judge Hoeveler and the impact he has had on the law both locally and nationally. He noted that the papers will join those of the late U.S. District Judge C. Clyde Atkins whose papers are also housed at St. Thomas University.

Dean Alfredo Garcia highlighted Judge Hoeveler as a legal giant in the South Florida community who was fair, humble, patient, joyful, deeply religious and courageous. “The Noriega trial is the prism through which we can view the career of the most respected jurist in South Florida,” stated Dean Garcia. “The case was complex: there were more than 250 pretrial pleadings, motions, responses, memorandums and court orders. The trial lasted a few months. Amidst all of this, Judge Hoeveler demonstrated remarkable patience, legal understanding and, above all, fairness.” Dean Garcia noted that, during his sentencing speech, Noriega rebuked the U.S. government but praised Judge Hoeveler – a testament to the character of the judge and the man.

Judge Graham presented a brass dedication plaque to Judge Hoeveler on behalf of the judges of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida and members of the Bar.

Judge Hoeveler was presented with a book entitled “Judge William M. Hoeveler – A Humble Judicial Hero.” The book is a published collection of reflections and anecdotes from over 80 contributors who know him personally or professionally.
Changing Lives

Alumni Robert Kerr ‘07 and Jennifer Tritt Kerr ‘08 Adopt a Victim of Human Trafficking

“The Human Trafficking seminar at St. Thomas Law opened my eyes to the problem of, even the very existence of, human trafficking. I don’t think I had even heard of it before,” says Robert Kerr. “It is certainly not something I ever thought I would deal with first-hand–especially in Augusta, Georgia. And yet, my wife, Jennifer, and I are now in the process of adopting a teenage victim of human trafficking and her infant son.”

The Kerrs came to know the young woman who has become a part of their family when Jennifer was the attorney for all children in foster care in Richmond County, Georgia. The young woman’s story is a heartbreaking one of years of abuse by both her own family members as well as strangers, drug addiction and worse. Ultimately, the man who had “purchased” her was arrested, and she was taken into the care of the Department of Children and Family Services.

Once in the foster care system, the young woman struggled to fit in. “Because of the poor fit in her foster homes, she starting spending time with us on weekends,” says Kerr. “We got to know her and to see what a resilient person she is. She could be the most bitter, angry, chip-on-her-shoulder person but she is not. Her strength and potential is awe-inspiring.”

Upon her father’s release from prison, she was being threatened by him and she moved in with the Kerr family as an emergency placement. Kerr notes that “her frame of reference is 180 degrees from the way we were brought up and how we live.” He remembers, “the first time she came to our house to eat lunch, she told us it was the first time she ever sat at a table as a family and ate, despite growing up with two parents and three younger siblings.”

Bringing this young woman into their family has brought many changes. The day after Halloween she gave birth to a son, a pregnancy that was the result of the trafficking. She and her child join the Kerr’s two other children, a three- and a four-year-old. “Money is tight,” notes Kerr. “We have gone from a family of four to a family of six overnight.” He adds, “scheduling is a challenge. My wife and I each run our own law practice, in addition to managing drop-offs, pick-ups, and after school activities.” And, he says, “we have had to learn how to parent a teenage daughter.”

Besides the growing pains, Kerr says that the addition of a daughter and a grandson to their family has brought joy. “People sometimes ask us ‘why?’ and it is difficult for me to pinpoint an answer,” says Kerr. “It certainly was not for any accolades, since most days go by and it is not even mentioned. It was not for financial gain, since we receive no financial assistance. It was not to make life easier and less complex, since certainly the opposite is true.” At the end of the day, he says “so much of our decision was based on the person, the woman, we met and got to know. It is her attitude and fortitude, so positive despite the hell from which she grew, that allowed us to believe that this was something we could do.”
Power Player
Dean Garcia Named to Lawyers of Color’s Annual Power List

Dean Alfredo Garcia has been named to the Lawyers of Color’s Fourth Annual Power List, a comprehensive catalog of the nation’s most influential minority lawyers and non-minority diversity advocates.

“I am honored and humbled to be selected to the Lawyers of Color Power List,” stated Dean Garcia after hearing the announcement. “As an immigrant to this country and the first member of my family to attend college and professional school, I hope to represent the values and mission of this esteemed group.”

As the first Cuban-born Dean of a U.S. law school, Dean Garcia is an eminent scholar with a wealth of experience as an administrator, faculty member, and legal practitioner. Prior to academia, he was an Assistant State Attorney in Miami and also worked in private practice as a criminal defense attorney. He has served as Vice Chair of the Race and Racism in Criminal Justice Subcommittee of the ABA's Criminal Justice Committee and on the Editorial Board of Human Rights Magazine, published by the ABA.


Pro Bono Pride
St. Thomas Law Recognized as Top Ten in the Nation for Pro Bono

The 2014 edition of Super Lawyers ranked St. Thomas Law as sixth on its national list of “Top 10 Law Schools for Pro Bono Graduation Requirements,” making St. Thomas one of only two law schools in Florida to be recognized on the list. Super Lawyers compiles the top ten list on an annual basis to provide visibility to outstanding law schools that exemplify excellence in service to others, and to help guide law school applicants who have an interest in giving back.

While pro bono service is a graduation requirement at St. Thomas Law, most law students far exceed the required 40 hours. Further, their interest and commitment to service goes well beyond the graduation requirement, as the experience of giving back helps to influence their goals and lives.

Arlene Hernandez, a 3L graduating in 2015 who has completed over 280 hours, explained: “I truly enjoy giving back to the community, and specifically making a difference in someone’s life.”

This sentiment aligns with St. Thomas University’s Catholic mission and the law school’s commitment to scholarship, service, and to training ethical lawyers who are leaders in the community. Assistant Dean Peter Kelly says, “We are proud of what our students accomplish and learn through our pro bono program, and we are equally proud of how our alumni give back to their respective towns and communities.”
Best Foot Forward

In a ceremony at the law school in October 2014, Dean Alfredo Garcia honored Christopher Varca (December ’14) as the first recipient of the “Best Foot Forward Scholarship” — a $10,000 scholarship in recognition of the significant academic obstacles that Chris overcame while growing up in foster care in Florida, and of his ongoing commitment to giving back to foster youth.

Mr. Varca and his two sisters were placed into foster care at a young age after their mother died, and their father was incarcerated. Throughout childhood, Chris and his two sisters were moved around to various foster homes where physical and mental abuse was a daily and unfortunate reality. Despite these challenges, Chris focused on his education, completed high school, and then graduated from the University of Florida – a significant achievement, given that less than three percent of students who have been in foster care graduate from college. Mr. Varca is active in supporting other foster youth, and has served as panel chairman for Foster Care Review. Successful in running his own business before entering law school, Chris will continue to support foster youth going forward. Having just passed the February 2015 Florida Bar exam, Chris begins the next chapter of his life as a solo practitioner.

Best Foot Forward (BFF) is a Palm Beach County-based, nonprofit organization that is committed to creating educational opportunities for foster care youth. It is the only program of its kind in the country that focuses specifically on academic support. Donna Biase and Debbie Ellman formed BFF five years ago after recognizing the gap in services in academics for foster youth. Best Foot Forward also serves as a pro bono placement opportunity for St. Thomas Law students. For more information about Best Foot Forward, go to www.bestfoot.org.

“Through all the ups and downs in my life, the centerline has always been my education. Thank you to St. Thomas Law and Best Foot Forward for establishing this scholarship and continuing to help others find success.”

- Chris Varca ’14
In March 2015 at the Phi Alpha Delta (PAD) National Mock Trial Competition for law school chapters in Alexandria, Virginia, St. Thomas Law’s PAD Mentschikoff Chapter won first place. The St. Thomas team – Freddy Figueroa ’16, Ileana Garcia ’16, Natasha Pargas ’16, and Tayron Lopez ’16 – was coached by South Florida attorneys Jarred Whaley, Debra Kay Cohen, and Lance August Harke. Additionally, the team credited its high standards of professionalism and ethics to the law school’s mock trial coach, Michael Mayer ’07, who taught them the most essential skills of a mock trial competition.

After three rounds of competition, the team advanced to the finals and secured first place against a formidable opponent from the University of Tennessee – the previous year’s champions. The defense team of Freddy Figueroa and Ileana Garcia also earned the award for Best Defense.

Ileana Garcia exclaimed after the win: “I was just so thankful! All the practicing definitely paid off. It was a great experience. I met some amazing law students and attorneys, and we competed against some really good competitors. I was happy about how we won – we didn’t make anyone feel inferior and when we won, everyone was very happy for us.” Freddy Figueroa added that the competition was “won by a team who believed in, trusted, and encouraged one another.”

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Public Service Career Fair

On February 5, 2015, St. Thomas Law held its annual Pro Bono and Public Service Fair with over 50 local non-profit and government employers on campus. The participants ranged from city and county attorney offices across South Florida to the state attorney and public defender offices and numerous non-profit and community organizations. This group included a dozen St. Thomas Law alumni who spoke with current students about their experiences in the public sector. We enjoyed having these organizations and alumni on campus, and look forward to welcoming them back at next year’s event.

Nearly 20% of employed 2014 St. Thomas Law grads chose a government or public interest career.

Educational Partnership Launched

Thanks to a new “3+3” agreement between Miami Dade College and St. Thomas Law, aspiring lawyers will now have an opportunity to earn their bachelor’s and law degrees in just six years. A signing ceremony to celebrate the agreement was held in February 2015 at St. Thomas University.

The leaders of the two institutions, Msgr. Franklyn M. Casale and Dr. Eduardo Padrón, noted that this 3+3 agreement was another example of the two local universities collaborating for the benefit of students in South Florida. The agreement will provide qualified students the opportunity to earn both their bachelor’s and JD degrees within six years (three at Miami Dade, and three at St. Thomas Law), and will help students save significantly in an environment with ever-increasing tuition costs.

Pictured (seated): Msgr. Franklyn M. Casale, President of St. Thomas University and Dr. Eduardo Padrón, President of Miami Dade College.

Standing: Dr. Lenore Rodicio, Provost for Academic and Student Affairs at Miami Dade College; Dr. Irma Becerra, Provost of St. Thomas University; and Dean Alfredo Garcia.
New Provost Steers Growth at STU

A national leader in higher education has taken the academic helm at St. Thomas University. New Provost and Chief Academic Officer Dr. Irma Becerra is a demonstrated innovator with a broad educational background that spans the fields of engineering, information technology and business.

With a reputation for understanding today’s marketplace demands, Provost Becerra is working to expand graduate programs in Business, Science, Theology and the liberal arts, and fast-track the development of undergraduate programs focused on addressing in-demand jobs – such as cyber security and sports tourism. More than two dozen new degree programs are in various stages of approval and implementation, with many of the programs coming online in Fall 2015.

Provost Becerra is also expanding Dual Enrollment offerings, and working to implement a Career Academies model for Catholic high schools, providing the schools with the latest college prep strategies that will also accelerate their eventual graduation.

A published academic, Provost Becerra served as a Vice President at Florida International University, following a two-decade career in academia that has included leadership positions in and out of the classroom. Msgr. Casale, President of St. Thomas University, notes that “Dr. Becerra-Fernandez is well known in the higher education community in Miami-Dade County and nationally. She is a recognized scholar. She is a wonderful person who has served in many positions at Florida International University and in the community at large. Her credentials, experience and vision will support our progress in becoming the leading Catholic university in the Southeast.”

New Vice President for Advancement

Ms. Hilda Fernandez was appointed Vice President for University Advancement at St. Thomas University in June 2014. Msgr. Casale stated that Vice President Fernandez “is a respected member of the Miami community who has held many important positions in government and the private sector. I am happy to welcome her, and I know that she will be extremely instrumental in achieving the University’s ‘Blueprint for Leadership’ capital campaign.”

Prior to joining St. Thomas, Ms. Fernandez served as Executive Director of the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust. “I am thrilled with the opportunity to join St. Thomas University at such an exciting time in the University’s history,” said Ms. Fernandez. “I look forward to working with our Board, President, administration, faculty, students and alumni in ensuring that our university is able to continue its mission of preparing leaders for life. I am confident that we will achieve many great things in the years to come.”
Interviewer: What is a solo/small practice incubator?

Dean Garcia: A solo/small practice incubator offers recent law graduates office space at a reduced rent, and access to experienced mentors who have practiced law and who can offer guidance and expertise. Ideally, the program provides graduates with the tools for success to launch their own firm.

Interviewer: What are the goals of a solo/small practice incubator?

Dean Garcia: The goals of the incubator are threefold: 1) to provide substantive skills in the law, 2) to teach recent graduates client development skills, and 3) to teach law office management skills. With these three skills rehearsed and perfected during the incubator, and with a client base in hand, the result is a recent graduate with the skills necessary to hang out their own shingle.
**q&a**

**Interviewer:** What are the plans for the St. Thomas Law incubator?

**Dean Garcia:** We hope to partner with a community organization, such as Dade Legal Aid, in order to secure office space that we can lease out to students at a reduced rate. Our intent is to allow the participants in the program to lease the space for eighteen months. We will also hire a mentor who will guide the incubator participants in client development and law office management. We plan to start small—with four or five students—ultimately growing to ten to twelve students maximum on a rotating basis.

**Interviewer:** What do the recent graduates provide in return for entering the incubator?

**Dean Garcia:** To me, this is one of the most important components of the program. The graduates working in the incubator must dedicate a portion of their practice to serving “low bono” clients—folks who do not qualify for legal aid but who cannot afford a private attorney. This is a win-win for everyone involved—the recent graduates receive help in launching their own practice while helping those in need in our community.

**Interviewer:** Why is the incubator one of your priorities as Dean?

**Dean Garcia:** The incubator will fill an important role in the education of our students. Most law students are not equipped with the necessary tools and skills to launch their own firm right out of law school. And yet, the statistics are staggering. Close to 50% of lawyers in the U.S. today are in solo practice or small firms. Our own student body is entrepreneurial in nature, and many of our graduates open their own firms or join together with fellow alumni to open a small practice. In today’s legal market, this incubator is a necessity—and offers a wonderful opportunity to our graduates while furthering our mission to serve the underserved.

**Interviewer:** Is the incubator something unique to St. Thomas Law?

**Dean Garcia:** No, in fact there are about 30-35 of these incubators at law schools across the country. The movement is gaining a lot of traction in this tight legal market. I have to give credit to John Makdisi who, years ago as Dean at St. Thomas Law, was ahead of his time when he launched the Community Law Center.

“Close to 50% of lawyers in the U.S. today are in solo practice or small firms. Our own student body is entrepreneurial in nature, and many of our graduates open their own firms or join together with fellow alumni to open a small practice. In today’s legal market, this incubator is a necessity.”
These new incubators closely parallel John Makdisi’s model for the Community Law Center, and he should be recognized as a visionary whose Community Law Center is a forerunner to this movement.

**Interviewer:** What is the timeline for having the incubator up and running?

**Dean Garcia:** Our hope is to have the first handful of graduates in the incubator this fall. Students who pass the Florida Bar this summer would be eligible. The details are still being worked out, but there would be a screening process, and the graduate would need to have taken certain courses in law office development and management, and be dedicated to opening a solo or small firm.

**Interviewer:** How can alumni become involved?

**Dean Garcia:** I feel this project is close to home for a lot of our alumni and believe that it will have strong alumni support. Alumni and friends can help get the incubator off the ground by lending their time, talent and treasure. We need mentors, advisors and seed money to get the project up and running. I look forward to partnering with alumni as well as community organizations and leaders to bring the incubator to fruition.

**Interviewer:** The incubator is an exciting project. Do you have other initiatives you want to accomplish as Dean?

**Dean Garcia:** Right now, my other priority is to raise money for endowed scholarships in order to reduce, as much as possible, our students’ debt burden. By creating an endowed scholarship with a gift of $100,000 or more (paid over five to ten years), donors provide a steady stream of scholarship money for law students in perpetuity. In light of today’s legal market, I strongly feel that both the incubator and the endowed scholarships are crucial for the success of our law school and our alumni.

"The Incubator fosters the mission that St. Thomas Law has committed to its alumni and to the community of providing practical experience and scholarship while at the same time training lawyers to be sensitive to the needs of underrepresented communities.

It provides resources that help new practitioners understand how the practice of law merges with the business of law. Overall, it’s the most effective platform to enable solo and small firm practitioners to enter the legal profession in the correct way."

-Francoise J. Blanco ’13
Francoise J. Blanco P.A.
Justice League

The Real Justice League

St. Thomas Law graduates Evita Llaguno-Feria ’06, Yolande Henry ’02, Michelle Ortiz ’04 (front row), Ashley Juchawski ’12, Steven Paulson ’04, Dana Viggiano ’08, Mark Brown ’00 (back row), and Brenda Rivera ’96 (not pictured) serve those most in need through their public service careers at Dade Legal Aid. They are the living embodiment of the law school’s mission to graduate lawyers who are sensitive to the needs of underrepresented communities. Every day, these men and women speak for those without a voice in our society, and, in doing so, make our community a safer, healthier, and happier place to live.
“The service-oriented mindset and ‘give-back-to-the community’ attitude at St. Thomas Law was powerful and influential,” says Steven Paulson ’04, a Domestic Violence Project attorney at Dade Legal Aid. “I went to law school to help people,” he adds, “but it was through my work in the Family Law Clinic at St. Thomas that I solidified what I wanted to do as an attorney. As a Certified Legal Intern (CLI) at Dade Legal Aid, I was able to represent and work with victims of domestic violence even before I graduated from law school.”

When asked how they chose a public service career with Dade Legal Aid, every one of these selfless alumni traced the roots back to experiences they had at St. Thomas Law. Some knew they wanted to pursue public interest law and experiences at St. Thomas led them to the doorstep of Dade Legal Aid; while others had their first exposure to public service in law school.

“It was through my internship at St. Thomas that I was first introduced to public service attorneys, and was able to see the positive impact that they had on the community,” says Michelle Ortiz ’04, a Domestic Violence Project attorney at Dade Legal Aid. “Graduating in the top 5% of my class, I had numerous employment offers. It was after going to work in private practice that I realized I belonged in public service.” She adds that she has gained so much from her experiences at Legal Aid. “Every day I witness the resilience of victims of crime who have the strength and courage to carry on and succeed despite the adversity they have suffered. It is truly inspiring to hear their stories and see them transition into a better time in their lives.”

“Through my work as a Certified Legal Intern at Legal Aid Society during my final year of law school, I saw the real need for attorneys who represent the indigent population of Miami-Dade County,” remembers Evita Llaguno-Feria ’06, a family law attorney with Legal Aid. “I also obtained the skills necessary for me to take on this role,” she adds. “As a CLI, I received invaluable hands-on courtroom experience.”

Dana Viggiano ’08, an attorney for Legal Aid's Child Advocacy Project, also served as a Certified Legal Intern in law school and found it to be “an amazing experience.” She says, “I knew then it’s what I wanted for my life, and where I needed to be in my career. My internship through the St. Thomas Law clinical program was the most valuable experience of my law school career.”

As a student at St. Thomas Law, Brenda Rivera ’96, along with two others, revived the Public Interest Law Committee and hosted a breakfast for public service agencies from Dade and Broward. “I met Karen Ladis, now the Executive Director of Dade Legal Aid, and she invited me to intern with the Put Something Back Pro Bono Project,” she says. “I interned for two years and was hired in 1997 to establish a Legal Aid satellite office in Homestead.” Now the Senior Supervising Attorney, she oversees the Domestic Violence Unit that, last year, helped over 800 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking and human trafficking. Brenda is also leading future generations of public servants as the Family Court and Domestic Violence Court Clinic Adjunct Professor at St. Thomas Law.

Ashley Juchawski’s introduction to Dade Legal Aid came through her volunteer work with the Patently Impossible Project fundraiser. “Through this experience, I understood the impact Legal Aid attorneys have on the community, and the critical support they provide for those in need,” she says. “So, I jumped at the chance to join

“I feel so lucky to help those that need it the most, and they are so appreciative. I have many cards and thank-you letters. Some of our clients come back every holiday season with the kids to update us on how they are doing. It is like a huge extended family. In stabilizing thousands of families every year, I believe we are making Miami a better place to live for all of us.”

-Mark Brown ’00
Dade Legal Aid as a full-time staff attorney to launch their newest program— the Venture Law Project— serving entrepreneurs and start-up businesses.” Juchawski ’12 adds, “St. Thomas always emphasized a commitment to pro bono work and highlighted the value of using your law degree in a way that gives back—and it is something that stuck with me. St. Thomas gave me the values and skills to be successful in spearheading this new program.”

For Mark Brown ’00, Senior Attorney and Director of Development, it was the career services office that led him to Dade Legal Aid. “As a 2L, I visited career services and found out about IOTA Fellowships through the Florida Bar. I was awarded an IOTA Fellowship, went to work at Dade Legal Aid, and never left,” says Mark. “I have been at Legal Aid for 15 years—it is the only job I have had as an attorney.” He adds, “I feel so lucky to help those that need it the most, and they are so appreciative. It makes going to work a great experience.”

No matter what road they took to get to Legal Aid, all of these alumni have one thing in common—they love what they do. Yo landslide Henry ’02 enjoys “being able to offer people solutions to their problems and answers to their questions.” She says “it is rewarding to achieve an outcome for a client—whether it is custody of a relative child or bringing the court’s attention to a child support issue. They are so happy and they realize that they have options in their life.” Steven Paulson always feels appreciated for the work he does. “Whether we are successful or not, my clients always thank me for explaining things to them, helping them, and believing in them,” he says. “I enjoy working with people who are coming from a bad place in their lives and helping them to move forward and build a new life for themselves and their children.” He adds, “Often former clients come back to visit and the transformation they have made in their lives is amazing.”

Michelle Ortiz comments on how fortunate she feels “to work with other agencies in the community to provide not only legal services, but to help clients with shelter, relocation and therapy.” “My clients are mostly immigrants who do not know that in the U.S., they have the right to access the courts for help with the violence they are suffering,” she says. “Through community outreach and our partnerships, we are able to help not only with legal avenues, but also by providing readily accessible services.” “Their gratitude and appreciation is sincere and heartfelt,” she adds.

Dana Viggiano, who primarily works with teenagers in foster care, loves having the opportunity to “make an abused, abandoned or neglected teen feel heard and empowered in a challenging court system.” “There are no words to express how incredible it feels,” she says. “These kids are so grateful that someone listened to them. I get lots of hugs and happy texts!” And Evita Llaguno-Feria notes, “I truly enjoy my clients who are all special in their own way, and who have helped me to forge a perspective on life that I would not otherwise have been exposed to.”

The dedication of these alumni runs deep. They are not lawyers looking for career experience only to trade their public service job in for a high-paying job at a private law firm. Together, their time at legal aid totals 71 years, not including their years as CLIs, and their belief in the work they are doing only grows stronger by the day. “Legal Aid helps people every single day,” says Dana Viggiano. “Many of these people are intimidated by a court system that they can’t afford. Legal Aid is their road map, their voice, and their shoulder to cry on.” She adds, “it is an extraordinary organization with a
“I have always enjoyed public interest work because I get the chance to help those in need. I feel this is an area where I can contribute and serve those in my community. My reward comes from the expressions of gratitude from those I have helped.”

- Yolande Henry ’02

“Every day, hundreds of people lineup outside of our office in need of legal assistance but without the means to hire a private attorney,” says Ashley Juchawski. “The diverse practices in our office keep residents in their homes who are facing eviction, keep families together, protect victims of violence and abuse, advocate for children, and launch new businesses.”

Every day, these eight St. Thomas Law alumni open the doors of their offices to the most neglected in our society, comforting them, advising them, and ultimately, helping them change their lives for the better. As Evita Llaguno-Feria says, “I love it here, and I encourage anyone who is thinking about public service to try it out. It may just change the course of your career... the course of your life... and the lives of hundreds of others!”

DADE LEGAL AID BY THE NUMBERS

In 2014, Dade Legal Aid/Put Something Back served 6,000 clients via direct representation by 19 staff attorneys, thousands of pro bono attorneys, hundreds of law firm stakeholders, dozens of law schools, self help clinics and community education workshops.

Dade Legal Aid:

• Served 1,000 victims of abuse and sexual assault providing advice, representation, and enforcement of restraining orders impacting the lives of innocent victims and countless children
• Represented 1,500 clients in complex divorce, custody and paternity cases directly affecting over 1,000 minor children
• Served 900 clients as the only agency offering assistance to those serving as guardians for elderly, physically or mentally incapacitated family members/loved ones/aging adults.
• Represented 750 clients in defense of foreclosure cases, preserving homes, protecting individuals from unlawful evictions and filing bankruptcy proceedings.
• Educated thousands of clients and vulnerable populations about basic fiscal concepts, such as budgeting, consumer protection laws, identity theft, predatory lending schemes, taxation, bankruptcy, estate planning and more.
• Put Something Back matched thousands of attorneys with clients in need of an attorney in all areas of civil law. Over 6,000 private attorneys are involved and 250 Law Firm Stakeholders provided over 21,000 hours of their time last year, at a value of over $4.5 millions dollars in free legal services.”

“I have always enjoyed public interest work because I get the chance to help those in need. I feel this is an area where I can contribute and serve those in my community. My reward comes from the expressions of gratitude from those I have helped.”

- Yolande Henry ’02
Back in 1993, when I was an attorney-investigator for the UN Truth Commission on El Salvador, I had a disturbing conversation with the commissioners. I had been assigned to investigate the case of the four U.S. churchwomen murdered by National Guardsmen in 1980. A colleague and I interviewed four of the five police officers, each serving a 30-year sentence, including the commanding officer. All admitted their crimes in hopes of benefitting from an amnesty.
I reviewed the case files from the criminal investigation, including investigations conducted at the scene where the women’s bodies were found. Overwhelming physical evidence existed that they had been sexually assaulted before being shot. At least one guardsman admitted that they had taken “sexual liberties” with the women before shooting them. We thoroughly documented this evidence in our report. The three commissioners identified several illustrative cases for the final report, this being one of them. They edited each report and drew conclusions based on the evidence gathered. They told me that they had decided not to mention the sexual assaults because it would detract from their conclusion that the men were acting under higher orders. One commissioner described the sexual liberties the men had taken as a “freebie”, suggesting that sexual violence against women was somehow disconnected from other systematic violations of their human rights. Their explanation was unsatisfactory, and I went on to help found the Washington College of Law’s Women & International Law Program, working with leading experts.

“FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO MAKE THE PERILOUS JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES IN SEARCH OF PROTECTION, PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS SHOULD NOT SERVE AS THE VEHICLE FOR DENYING THEM A MEANINGFUL CHANCE TO BE HEARD.”
Flash forward: Summer of 2014. The exodus of children from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala exposes the startling degree of gender violence that permeates these societies.

Nowhere is this more rampant than in El Salvador, where an alarming number of women and girls have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and rape. Women are considered men’s property, mistreated by parents and partners and pursued by gangs. They are coerced into intimate relationships with gang members, punished for refusing their advances, and targeted by other gangs. El Salvador has the world’s highest rate of femicide (gender-motivated killings). Crime is rampant. Slums built along ravines are hidden beneath the veneer of upper class neighborhoods, and armed gangs roam the streets. Home invasions are commonplace and domestic workers are robbed on their way home from work. Despite legal reforms, police remain unresponsive to family violence. Salvadoran women have nowhere to turn. More than 20 years after the Peace Accords, violence against women has transformed from a weapon of war into a tool of social control.

Meanwhile, in the United States, while resources have begun to reach unaccompanied alien children (“UACs”) in immigration proceedings, few resources are available to adults with children (“AWCs”), despite the fact that many are post-adolescent mothers with children.

Rafael Palacio ’16 was one of a number of Professor Gilbert’s students who spent time during the spring semester assisting women and children with immigration issues. The experience was especially meaningful for Rafael who says, “I am originally from Colombia, and my family and I came to the United States fleeing political persecution. We also had to go through the labyrinth of immigration and naturalization, and sought help from a charitable organization.” He adds, “it is very gratifying to be able to give back the help I once received. It is an overwhelming feeling.”

“Professor Gilbert and Catholic Charities Legal Services of Miami (CCLS) gave my classmates and I an experience like no other by allowing us the opportunity to participate in this project,” says Rafael. “They gave us the knowledge and training necessary to provide effective help, and they made it possible for us to work with real cases, real people, children, who needed effective legal assistance.”

Mostly Rafael worked with unaccompanied alien children (UAC), undocumented migrant children that come to the United States without a parent or guardian. These children, when placed into custody, are subjected to deportation proceedings after having embarked on dangerous journeys from their home countries to escape persecution or other violence. “How could anyone not want to help these children?,” asks Rafael. “Compassion is a driving force as powerful and effective as any other. Personally, I want to make out of my education something meaningful, and by meaningful I mean something that is of value to my community.”

Rafael adds, “I think the work of Professor Gilbert along with CCLS and the pro-se clinic is a great opportunity for law students to gain exposure to the realities, problems and difficulties of the immigration system.”

to integrate a gender perspective into the study of international law and to expand asylum protections for women who had suffered gender-related harm.

Rafael Palacio
J.D. Candidate
St. Thomas Law Class of 2016

Rafael Palacio
J.D. Candidate
St. Thomas Law Class of 2016
The Board of Immigration Appeals’ (BIA) 2014 decision in Matter of A-R-C-G- that domestic violence can be a basis for asylum came too late for some but at the right moment for many “AWCs” facing imminent deportation. A-R-C-G- defined the particular social group as “married Guatemalan women unable to leave the relationship”. Subsequent decisions extended that reasoning to other situations where women are unable to leave the relationship. Nonetheless, as substantive legal protections for women have expanded, the Executive Branch has used procedure to limit access to relief for the “AWCs”.

Every immigration scholar knows the Supreme Court’s chilling words in Knauff v. Shaughnessy that “[w]hatever the procedure authorized by Congress is, it is due process as far as an alien denied entry is concerned.” The Court has found that the political branches have broad power to define substantive immigration rules, but has used procedural due process to rein in Executive power, particularly with regard to returning residents.

AWCs, however, as new arrivals, enjoy fewer due process rights. They are kept in detention on national security grounds and/or placed on rocket dockets without representation.

Knauff v. Shaughnessy continues to haunt immigrant advocates. The situation is worsened by 1996 reforms under which undocumented immigrants who have not been “inspected and admitted” are treated as though they are seeking admission. Where the Supreme Court will draw the line remains uncertain. For women and children who make the perilous journey to the United States in search of protection, procedural due process should not serve as the vehicle for denying them a meaningful chance to be heard.

“I am originally from Colombia, and my family and I came to the United States fleeing political persecution. We also had to go through the labyrinth of immigration and naturalization, and sought help from a charitable organization. It is very gratifying to be able to give back the help I once received. It is an overwhelming feeling.”

Rafael Palacio ’16
Voluntary Station-House Confession as Oxymoron

By Professor Jay Silver

At the April 23rd book signing of her acclaimed new book *Dostoevsky and the Law* at Books & Books in Coral Gables, Professor Amy Ronner read to the standing-room-only crowd a passage from her work about a confession drawn from one of Dostoevsky’s characters at a police station. Mitya, the young defendant on trial for murder in *The Brothers Karamazov*, was made to stand naked before his interrogators as he “offered” the confession subsequently used against him at trial. Dostoevsky, who had himself been beaten severely as a political prisoner for his own confession, thus shows the psychological tools by which so-called “voluntary” confessions can be extracted. Professor Ronner noted how, in *Miranda*, our own Supreme Court has recognized the psychological dimensions of coercion.

Dostoevsky, Professor Ronner told us, maintained that no confession obtained through interrogation is truly voluntary. To him, in other words, our notion of a voluntary station-house confession is an oxymoron. At that moment, an audible buzz – of the type when a new and disorienting idea is sprung on a group – emanated from the crowd. “But we’ve studied voluntary confessions,” thought audience members, most of whom were trained or training in law.

Dostoevsky understood, and Professor Ronner indicated, that the type of voluntary confession that reflects real remorse and represents spiritual growth is an internal process necessarily free of concurrent outside pressures, be they the presence of interrogators or promises of “lenient” punishment. Voluntary confessions in this sense reverberate from the heart to the soul – in sharp contrast to station-house confessions reverberating from the suspect’s fear and exhaustion to a recording device.

The common law has its doubts about confessions, as well, requiring additional corroborating evidence before a defendant can be convicted. (Coincidentally, Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, in which two characters confess to independently committing the same murders, illustrates a principal reason for the requirement.)

As Professor Ronner did in her talk, legal scholars raise important legal questions and draw important, law-related lessons from all aspects of human endeavor – be it social and political reform, classic literature, history, popular culture, etc. – and not just from the cases they teach.

The question she raised about the possibility of voluntary station-house confessions is a profound and fundamental one, with many implications for our law and legal system. Should, for example, all confessions be inadmissible at trial, as Dostoevsky urged? If not, how do we justify the admission of confessions that aren’t voluntary in the purest sense of the term? Is real voluntariness actually what we’re looking for in admissible confessions, or might some other quality – perhaps reliability – be sufficient?

The distance between the truly voluntary confession and the merely reliable one is normally measurable in human degradation – whether of the severe, Abu Ghraib-type or the degree necessarily present in police custody and interrogation. To what degree, if any, should confessions come at the cost of human dignity? And to what extent do the pressures inherent in station-house interrogation actually augur against reliability? The Innocence Project estimates, for example, that police managed to obtain false confessions from a quarter of all innocent inmates later released on incontrovertible DNA evidence. Might we instead require that admissible confessions only be issued through defense counsel following his or her retention or appointment?

One new question, as we see here, begets a hundred more.

However these questions are best answered, it took a legal scholar at the intersection of law and another discipline – Russian literature in this case – to raise them for us. The St. Thomas lawyer is more than a repository of innumerable and ever-changing rules. Although the thought is often lost in the swirl of daily events, you are now in the position – in whatever area of law you practice – to protect and promote human dignity. And the broader lesson from Professor Ronner’s book signing is that, like the first-rate scholars who’ve trained you, you too can raise new questions and posit new ideas toward that worthy end.
12 Reasons to Support the St. Thomas Law Annual Fund

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11. Because you’ve attended an alumni reception in the past several years, and you’re looking forward to future events.

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9. Because you’ve been to campus lately. You’ve interviewed some of our students, or served as a mentor at our speed-networking events. You’ve been a guest lecturer at a class, served as a grand marshal at a recent graduation, or you brought your family to the Carnival in March. Now, you’d like to support the activities that continue to bring students and alumni together.

8. Because you were on the moot court/mock trial team as a student, and you’d like to help the current students travel to their competitions.

7. Because you have your own reason: _______________________________________

6. Because you’re excited about the future of St. Thomas Law, and you want to be a part of it.

5. Because you want to pay it forward… someone made a gift to St. Thomas Law in the past, and helped you achieve your goals.

4. Because you want to enhance the value of your degree by giving. You want to do your part and help improve our overall alumni giving percentage, which is one of the criteria U.S. News & World Report considers when ranking law schools.

3. Because you’d like to say “Thank You” to a professor or administrator who helped you along the way.

2. Because you’d like to make a difference in the life of a student.

1. Because you care.

Our giving year ends on June 30th.
To support the Annual Fund, please go to www.stu.edu/lawgiving.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!
ST. THOMAS LAW CARNIVAL
A New Tradition Begins

Over 350 alumni, students, and members of the law school faculty and administration brought their families together to connect, reconnect, and reminisce outside the law school on a picture-perfect Saturday in March 2015. The festivities included bounce houses, slides, and a climbing wall for kids, and food and fun for all. The day began with a very popular CLE session presented by Professor Amy Ronner, who spoke about “Lots of Clients: The Holistic and Ethical Approach to Practice Development.”
Carnival: March 14, 2015
alumni receptions

Miami
alumni receptions

Fort Lauderdale

[Images of alumni receptions in Fort Lauderdale]
alumni receptions

Palm Beach
alumni receptions

Tampa

Orlando
MARK A. ROMANCE, shareholder at Richman Greer in Miami, is recognized in the 2015 edition of "Best Lawyers in America."

Otero Valdes is board certified in admiralty and maritime law and is a member of the Admiralty and Maritime Law Certification Committee for The Florida Bar.


1995

HELEN DOLLAND has joined the Port St. Lucie office of Greenspoon Marder as an associate in the wills, trusts & estates department.

1996

MICHAEL P. GENNETT was promoted to partner in Akerman’s healthcare practice in Miami. Michael represents healthcare practitioners and institutional providers including medical practice, medical equipment, pharmacies, and surgical centers, with a focus on healthcare licensing, and Medicare and Medicaid compliance issues.

1998

GLORIA GARCIA was elected in December 2014 to the Miami Lakes Bar Association’s board of directors for 2015.

1999

ANDRES FERNANDEZ was named partner at Holland & Knight’s Miami office. Mr. Fernandez practices in the area of banking law and financial services, with a focus on licensing, regulatory and compliance matters. Mr. Fernandez, who began his legal career as a public defender in Miami-Dade County, joins two other St. Thomas Law graduates who are partners at Holland & Knight: Brett A. Barfield ’99 and Frances G. De La Guardia ’88.

2000

DIANA VIZCAINO was recently appointed Miami-Dade County Court Judge. Governor Rick Scott made the announcement on March 12. Ms. Vizcaino, who is currently a City of Miami Assistant City Attorney, beat out four other finalists for the appointment. In his remarks, Governor Scott said “throughout her career, she has demonstrated a strong understanding of the law, which will allow her to serve the citizens of Florida with dignity and compassion.”

2001

KARYL ARGAMASILLA, an attorney at Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod LLP, was inducted into the 2014 CREW-
Miami (Commercial Real Estate Women) Board of Directors and served as CREW’s President in 2014. Recognized as a Florida Rising Star by Florida Super Lawyers each year since 2009, Ms. Argamasilla has extensive experience structuring and executing large commercial real estate transactions and represents national and local developers.

MICHELLE N. SHUPE-ABBAS recently partnered with Neil Dhawan, Esq. to open the law firm of Shupe | Dhawan in downtown Fort Lauderdale. The firm offers a wide variety of legal services for commercial, corporate, estate planning, lender and servicer litigation, litigation, probate & guardianship, residential and commercial real estate closings and title, and tax matters.

CHRISTOPHER BENJAMIN, founder of The Barrister Firm, P.A. in Miami, was recently featured in an article on smallbusinessreporters.com, which highlighted Christopher’s interest in assisting tech startups with everything from filing for patents and trademarks, and determining the best business incorporation, to protecting apps and ideas. The Barrister Firm specializes in a variety of legal services, including civil and commercial litigation, family litigation, criminal litigation, banking, employment/labor and bankruptcy law.

JOSHUA HERTZ was elected in December 2014 to the Miami Lakes Bar Association’s board of directors for 2015.

BEATRIZ A. LLORENTE was selected in 2014 as a Florida Bar Wm. Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Fellow.

2003

GERALD PAUL HILL, II was appointed in April 2014 to the Polk County Court in Florida by Governor Scott. Prior to the appointment, Hill, of Lakeland (FL), had practiced with Frost, Van den Boom & Smith, P.A. since 2011. He began his legal career in private practice in Gainesville in 2003, and maintained a general civil practice at firms in Polk County since 2005. In announcing the appointment, Governor Scott commented, “Gerry Hill will make a great judge on the Polk County bench. During his legal career, he has demonstrated the qualities essential to a good judge – humility and a respect for the rule of law.”

EMAR FLORES ALEJO was selected in 2014 as a Florida Bar Wm. Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Fellow.

2004

MARBET LEWIS is a shareholder in the alcohol beverage group at Greenspoon Marder. Based out of Greenspoon’s new Miami office, Marbet concentrates her practice on the various regulations that govern the alcohol industry and the manufacture, importation, and sale of alcoholic beverages.

2005

VICTORIA FERRER was elected Miami-Dade County Court Judge.

COLLETT P. SMALL, of The Law Offices of Collett P. Small, P.A. in Pembroke Pines, Florida, recently obtained her board certification in elder law, having met The Florida Bar’s highest standards for special knowledge, skills and proficiency in elder law, and professionalism and ethics in the practice of law.

ELINETTE RUIZ is a partner in the Miami office of Arnstein & Lehr LLP. She is a member of the firm’s Municipal & Governmental, Property Tax Appeals, and Land Use practice groups.
2006

CARLOS B. SALUP was named partner at Gaebe, Mullen, Antonelli & DiMatteo in Miami.

MICHAEL MCQUAIDE recently joined Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith L.L.P. as a partner in the firm’s Fort Lauderdale office. Mr. McQuaide is a trial attorney who began his career prosecuting felony, juvenile, and misdemeanor cases at the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office.

2007

JUDD ROY BEAN, II reports from Tampa that Judd Bean Law, which focuses its practice on marital & family law, estate planning and substance abuse law, has opened its doors to a second office in the South Shore area of Hillsborough County. The aspiration for the new office is to provide wide-spread outreach and education to family and friends of loved ones overcome by drug or alcohol addiction. “At Judd Bean Law, we are directing efforts to stimulate ‘calls to action’ in the war against addiction. We are in the business of putting service before self, restoring people to their beautiful old-selves, and proudly denouncing any negativity to provide room for hope!”

DANIELLE BOAZ, LL.M. ’07, is an assistant professor at Drake University in its Law, Politics, and Society Department. Professor Boaz’s teaching interests include constitutional law, human rights, international and comparative law, social and cultural rights, as well as law and religion.

CHRISTOPHER PARDO was recently honored as a “Rising Star” in employment litigation defense by Super Lawyers Magazine. Chris relocated to Boston in 2009, and since then has been an attorney at Constangy, Brooks & Smith LLP, a national employment defense firm. Chris defends employers nationwide in federal and state courts, arbitration, and before administrative agencies, and specializes in the defense of class and collective actions, complex wage and hour issues, discrimination, retaliation, and trade secrets and noncompete litigation.

Michael Winkleman, of Lipcon, Margulies, Alsina & Winkleman in Miami, won a multi-million dollar settlement for his client in an asbestos case against Carnival Cruise Lines.

The case centered around the death of a cruise worker who worked as an electrician for the cruise line from 1985 to 2000.

The worker developed lung cancer in 2001 and lost his life in 2005. The plaintiff’s family filed a suit following his death claiming that he developed cancer as a result of his daily exposure to asbestos in the engine rooms aboard the ship.

This is reportedly the first time that an asbestos case against a cruise line has gone to trial and, after a trial that lasted nine days, the jury awarded the plaintiffs a final settlement of $3.6 million.

2008

ANTHONY DAX BELLO was selected in 2014 as a Florida Bar Wm. Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Fellow.

ALLEGRA PHILLIPS CLEMENTE is a member of Fowler White Burnett’s family law practice group in the firm’s Fort Lauderdale office. She is experienced in handling all aspects of family law, including dissolution of marriage, child custody disputes, paternity and post judgment modifications, same sex divorces, name changes, and dependency matters.

RANDOLPH CLEMENTE has joined Greenspoon Marder’s Fort Lauderdale (Cypress Creek) office in the litigation department.
VICTORIA MESA was selected in 2014 as a Florida Bar Wm. Reece Smith, Jr. Leadership Fellow. She recently opened her own legal practice in Lake Worth (FL), in partnership with her colleague Vanessa Coe. Mesa & Coe Law, P.A. focuses on representing low-wage workers in wage and hour and discrimination cases, immigration, and family law matters. Victoria writes, “We remain committed to assisting our community and providing affordable quality legal services to everyone!”

2009

ANDREW M. GORDON, an associate in the Fort Lauderdale office of Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, has been appointed to the Fort Lauderdale Board of Adjustment by Mayor Jack Seiler. The Board of Adjustment hears appeals in cases involving Fort Lauderdale’s Unified Land Development Regulations and reviews applications for permits, special exceptions and variances. Gordon focuses his practice in the representation of management-side labor and employment matters.

YARA LORENZO was reappointed by the Florida Supreme Court to the board of The Florida Bar Foundation, a statewide charitable organization whose mission is to provide greater access to justice. Yara is a member of the litigation, arbitration, and employment practice group of Hogan Lovells in Miami.

SCHUYLER A. SMITH, an associate in the Miami office of Hamilton, Miller & Birthsel, LLP, was recognized by Legacy Miami magazine as one of Miami-Dade County’s “40 Under 40 Black Leaders of Today and Tomorrow for 2014.” Every year, Legacy Miami features top achievers in the African American community who share a commitment to business success, personal growth, and community involvement.

DARA SCHOTTENFELD has started a ghostwriting and editing business called Pen to Paper, Inc., where she assists firms, attorneys and others with drafting everything from articles to appellate briefs. Her website is www.daraspentopaper.com.

2010

STEPHEN M. FOX, JR. left his position with the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida in late October 2014 to begin a new opportunity at LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. in Plantation, FL. Stephen is now an associate practicing veteran’s disability law at LaVan & Neidenberg, having been promoted in February 2015.

JONATHAN W. MCCONNELL, an attorney at Monnat & Spurrier, Chartered, in Wichita, KS, has been named by the American Institute of Criminal Law Attorneys (AIOCLA) as among its “10 Best” Criminal Law Attorneys for Client Satisfaction in Kansas. McConnell was also named to the National Trial Lawyers’ “Top 40 Under 40” list of top trial lawyers under the age of 40 and from each state.

2011

DANIEL O’BRIEN, a staff attorney in the Office of Mental Health Advocacy within New Jersey’s Office of the Public Defender in Newark, was recently honored as the attorney of the month by Joseph E. Krakora, Public Defender for the State of New Jersey. In presenting the award, Mr. Krakora said of Dan: “Dan started with the office in 2012 and has quickly proven to be an asset. Dan achieved a great result for one of his clients by successfully challenging a Passaic County judge who held a commitment hearing over the phone. By standing up for a blatant due process violation, Dan epitomized the role of a public defender.”
ERIC S. ORNER is a founding partner of Norsoph, Alcalay & Orner LLP (NAO Law) based in Fort Lauderdale. Eric heads up NAO Law’s family law and guardianship division, and also practices in the area of foreclosure law.

CAROLYN A. REYES opened her own practice in August 2014, dealing with primarily family law cases. She can be reached at Carolyn A. Reyes, P.A., 10300 Sunset Drive, Suite 354, Miami, FL 33173.

DOMENICK G. LAZZARA is an associate with the Dogali Law Group, P.A. in downtown Tampa. Dogali Law Group serves a wide variety of corporate, business and individual clients in a broad range of matters, including construction claims, insurance disputes, consumer class actions, ADA and disabilities accessibility claims.

MICHELLE YONG works for HCSB in New York City, in HCSB’s compliance department. Michelle reports: “It’s been an exciting and fulfilling experience. I love my job and being in New York so much that I might not return to Miami.”

2013

ZACHARY DARNELL works at Liberty Mutual in its Miami office.

REBECCA DUFFIELD is pursuing her LL.M. in transactional law at Emory Law, and was recently selected to coach the National Arbitration Competition team. Rebecca and her husband welcomed into the family on March 25, 2014 another baby, Jack, who joins big sister Lily. Congrats, Rebecca and family!

NICOLE LAUGHLIN and her husband, Patrick, welcomed their first child, Fiona Nicole, on December 11, 2013. Congrats to the proud parents!

IN MEMORIUM

James A. Crawford, II
J.D. 2008
May 2, 2014

Frank R. Hughes, II
J.D. 2008
May 2, 2015

Dr. Charles A. Oswald
J.S.D. and LL.M. 2007
August 28, 2014

John P. Page
J.D. 1989
April 24, 2015

Please contact Assistant Dean Peter Kelly (pkelly@stu.edu) if you know of other alumni who have recently passed away.

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On behalf of our students at St. Thomas Law, we gratefully acknowledge the alumni, parents and friends, faculty and staff, foundations and corporations that have generously supported us through gifts and in-kind contributions during the last fiscal year (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014). Thank you for your support!

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Saverio A. Viggiano ’14
Pilar M. Villaverde ’14
Allysa F. Woods ’14
Raisa Woodstock ’14
Joseph Zanetti ’14
Viviana De la Rosa, a December 2014 graduate who recently passed the February 2015 Florida Bar exam, was invited to speak at the Third District Court of Appeal’s Induction Ceremony in Miami on May 4, 2015. Ms. De la Rosa had the honor of speaking on behalf of her fellow inductees because she achieved one of the highest bar exam scores in the State of Florida.

Pictured below are (L-R) Associate Dean Cece Dykas, Chief Judge Frank A. Shepherd, Ms. De la Rosa, Judge Leslie B. Rothenberg, Assistant Dean Jessica Fonseca Nader ’97, and Professor Gary Kravitz.