

The Scribe

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TCCA GOES GREEN

The Texas Court Clerks Association is taking a big step toward “going green”. Members in attendance at the 2009 TCCA Annual Conference in Abilene, stated loud and clear that they did not see the need to prepare the large conference binders every year.

Each year, the TCCA Annual Conference Host has the huge task of preparing 100 to 150 binders, full of information, ranging from speaker biographies and lesson plans to TCCA committee and chapter reports.

The TCCA Board has been discussing the high cost of preparing the binders each year and the huge amount of time that is spent on preparing the binders, but were worried that attendees would miss having the binders available dur-

ing the conference and for reference afterwards.

The question was posed to attendees in Abilene, and the overwhelming response was to do away with the binders and take advantage of new technology.

Beginning with the 2010 Conference in Southlake, attendees will receive a USB flash drive (thumb/jump drive) that will contain all the information usually found in the conference binders. The information will also be available on TCCA’s website for review before and after the conference.

Some necessary information such as conference schedules and important notices will be handed out at the conference in a

small folder. Also, reports, which usually are not formalized until the pre-conference board meeting, may also be handed out to attendees in printed format.

This latest effort to “go green” will also ease the TCCA budget. It has been estimated that the cost of preparing one binder is

Clerks say “NO MORE BINDERS!”

approximately \$35, not including the personnel time to prepare it. Travelers will also appreciate the lighter load on their flights home.

If you have any suggestions for TCCA and/or the conference, please contact a board or committee member listed in this newsletter.



DPS Streamlines Driver Record Requests

DPS has reviewed the services they provide at their driver license offices to search for ways to enhance the service given to customers and reduce the amount of time customers wait for assis-

tance. As a result, effective November 2, 2009, the Department discontinued accepting requests for driver records at the following locations: Austin-Denson, Garland, Houston-South Gessner and

Universal City. Individuals may request driver records through the mail or online. These requests will be processed in order of receipt and will be mailed in 7-10 business days.

Southlake Invites Members to 2010 Conference

Plans are already being made for a great time at the 2010 Annual Conference. In 2010, the Conference will be held in Southlake, Texas at the Southlake Hilton Hotel on October 3-6, 2010. Southlake is located in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and because of its close proximity to the DFW Airport, there will be shuttle service from the Airport to the conference location. The hotel is located within Southlake Town Square and has many different shopping and dining options, all within walking distance of the hotel. The room rate for the Southlake Hilton Hotel is \$149 a night and reservations can be made by calling 817-442-9900. You must state that you are attending the TCCA Conference to receive the discounted rate.

There will also be an opportunity for attendees to experience the shopping, food, and festivities of the Southlake *Octoberfest* on Sunday evening. For those of you who are sports fans, Monday evening will be

a treat as delegates take a tour of the new Dallas Cowboys stadium in Arlington. Delegates will also be able to get autographs and pictures with some Dallas Cowboy football players and cheerleaders. The Annual Awards Banquet on Tuesday will be semi-formal black and white attire and will include a live orchestra and ballroom dancing lessons.

The education sessions are going to be both informational and exciting and will include a high tech courtroom hands-on exhibition, self-defense action class, creative and fun compliance ideas, cooperative team building, dispatch/jail 101, and mock jury trials. As you can see, there will be something for everyone and you will not want to miss this Conference. Make plans now to at-



tend. If your City is going through tough times and you would like information on how to apply for a scholarship, visit the TCCA website at www.texasclerk.org and click on the certification tab. There you will find a scholarship application and information on how to apply.

If you have any questions regarding the 2010 Conference in Southlake, Texas, please contact the 2010 committee chairperson, Leah Huff, at lhuff@ci.southlake.tx.us.

—Jennifer Dorsett, Decatur

TCCA Salary Survey Committee Undertakes New Project

The Salary Survey Committee, which was recently honored by TCCA with the *2009 Board of Directors Award*, is now taking on another valuable project for its members. The Committee will begin surveying all municipal courts in Texas regarding various topics such as salary, benefits, staff size, caseload, certification pay, etc.

The Committee will gather this information and compile it into a user-friendly publication to be distributed to all TCCA members. This is yet another reason

TCCA membership is so valuable. The Committee hopes to have the publication ready to reveal to members at the 2010 Conference in Southlake in October.

If you have any questions you would like included in the survey, contact any Salary Survey Committee member. Current Committee members are Chair Jennifer Sullivan, jsullivan@ci.sealy.tx.us; Wanda Kelly, Shenandoah-wkelly@ci.shenandoah.tx.us; Luane Pettrash, [\[lpetrash@cityofwebster.com\]\(mailto:lpetrash@cityofwebster.com\); Geralyn Mingo, \[PortArthur-gerri@portarthur.net\]\(mailto:PortArthur-gerri@portarthur.net\); and Lynda Kilgore, \[LaPorte-kilgoreL@laporttx.gov\]\(mailto:LaPorte-kilgoreL@laporttx.gov\).](mailto:Webster-</p>
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New Publications Committee Members

The Publications Committee, which prepares this newsletter, *The Scribe*, welcomes new members Carol Talley of Springtown, Jennifer Dorsett of Decatur and April Christiansen of Cedar Park.

The Scribe is printed twice per year and members from all over Texas are invited to contribute news, articles, job postings, etc. to the publication. The Committee is also open to new ideas for the newsletter. If you would like to contribute to *The Scribe*,

please contact Scribe Editor Jennifer Sullivan of Sealy at jsullivan@ci.sealy.tx.us. The deadline to submit information is May 15 for the

June edition and November 15 for the December edition. Past editions of the Scribe are available online at www.texasclerk.org.



Jennifer Dorsett



Carol Talley



April Christiansen

Warrant Round-Up Coming Up

It's time to get started with the **2010 Great Texas Warrant Round Up**. The round up arrests will begin on Saturday, March 6, 2010. Roundups should be concluded no later than Sunday, March 15th. Notices will be mailed on or around Friday, February 19, 2010. These are the main dates, but they must not be shared with the media yet. A number of press confer-

ences are scheduled on or near the date the notices are mailed so we do not want the information distributed to the media before then. Last year, a number of media outlets contacted us about the date and they were just told "we will be having one in the Spring and will make an announcement closer to the date". It worked!

To participate, go to www.cityofaustin.org/court and download the form. You can also see a list of participating agencies. Even if you join every year, we appreciate someone returning the form to roundup@ci.austin.tx.us.

—Rebecca Stark, Austin Municipal Court

Scribe Editor: Jennifer Sullivan, Sealy Municipal Court

The Scribe is published semi-annually by the Texas Court Clerks Association. Articles for the next newsletter must be submitted by May 15, 2010. Send articles, editorials, job postings, etc. to Jennifer Sullivan at jsullivan@ci.sealy.tx.us.

Job postings and news articles

may also be published to TCCA's website:

www.texasclerk.org.

Please send information to be placed on the website to Julie Kubeczka at jukubeczka@cityhall.cityofalvin.com.



**Deadline for submissions for the next edition of *The Scribe*:
May 15, 2010.**

TCCA Recognizes Members At Awards Banquet

The following individuals were recognized at the 2009 TCCA Annual Banquet in Abilene:

Distinguished Service Award—Sue Kennedy, Corinth; Lezli Murchison, Lockhart; Melissa Pace, Haltom City; Leah Huff; Tina Taylor, Angleton; Fred Garcia, San Antonio; Michelle Rodriguez-Sanchez, Big Spring; Eva Glaspie, Conroe

Extraordinary Achievement Award—Lesia Keith, Justin; Wanda Kelly, Shenandoah; Lisa Howard, Hurst, Ronda Scarborough, Conroe; Fawn Mackey, Sealy

Board of Directors Award—2009 Salary Survey Ad Hoc Committee members: Lynda Kilgore, La Porte; Jennifer Sullivan, Sealy; Luane Petrash, Webster; Geralyn Mingo, Port Arthur; Wanda Kelly, Shenandoah

Excellence Award—Elaine Brown, Katy



Elaine Brown receives the prestigious Excellence Award

Minor Alcohol Awareness Course News

With the rising number of alcohol charges involving minors being filed, a quick reference may be helpful to all of us for alcohol awareness classes. When an Alcohol Awareness Course is not readily available in the immediate area, there are other options available.

Courts can go to <http://www.texasonline.com/portal/tol/en/gov/9/10/1> and click on Counselors—Drug and Alcohol. There you will find information regarding resources, current initiatives, reports and publications. Some of the information you find online could be printed and placed in your court lobby or distributed during municipal courts week. The brochures you provide to the public may be just what someone needs in their lives at the time that they are visiting your court. We are all aware of the Traffic Safety Initiative Awards, and this is a way we can take a step further in providing outreach programs to the citizens appearing before our courts every day.

Online, you can also find links to information on counselor licensing, emerging drug trends, and resources for finding treatment, sometimes court ordered, provided by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse at <http://www.texasonline.com/portal/tol/en/gov/7/13>.

I hope each and every one of you find this helpful in some way...remember to educate, educate, educate.

—Carol Talley, Springtown

Innovative Celebrations for Municipal Courts Week

Clerks from across Texas found new and fun ways to celebrate Municipal Courts Week in November. Here a few of their stories.

The City of Luling Municipal Court recently remodeled the front of their court building with the help from its "Main Street Project" grant. The newly remodeled building is pictured at right. This brought about a little history of their building. Old photos were found in the archives showing the building was previously a Green Cross Pharmacy, attached by a causeway to the Green Cross Hospital. The Main Street architect prepared a rendering of what the building previously looked like, and these pictures were used to reconstruct the front. The only thing that didn't change was the front door, due to the expense.



Also, in Luling, pictured at left, is Etta Weise, Deputy Court Clerk; Connie Crenshaw, Court Administrator; Mike Hendricks, Mayor; Johnny Lee Spriggs, Judge; Bobby Berger, City Manager; and John Wells, City Council Member. Staff members hosted an open house with refreshments on November 4, 2009, where they showed the video "The Municipal Court's Role in City Government". This was the first year Luling participated. They hope to expand activities next year to include a mock trial, with the help of the local high school government class.

The El Paso Municipal Court along with other municipal courts, city councils, and local communities across Texas celebrated Municipal Court Week. Municipal Court Appellate Judge Odell Holmes held presentations at Irvin High School on November 2 and Austin High School Criminal Justice/Public Service Academy on November 5. Judge Holmes provided information about the role of Municipal Court in the community and informed students about traffic safety and consequences of their decisions. The Municipal Court Sentencing Coordinator also presented information about court proceedings to schools. On November 3, Mayor John Cook issued a local proclamation recognizing the work of the Municipal Court and court personnel.

The City of Brenham celebrated the week in an innovative way. During the summer, Leona Clay from Harker Heights visited Brenham to observe their court. They decided at that time, that for Municipal Courts Week, the Brenham and Harker Heights staff would take a "field trip" and visit each other's Court. On Tuesday, the Brenham staff (clerks, Marshal, and Presiding Judge) traveled to Harker Heights. The City Manager greeted them and their staff gave a tour of their facility. Brenham clerks spent over an hour visiting with their entire staff, including the Judge. They discussed all kinds of things, such as how to handle different processes and procedures, etc. They concluded the visit by going out for lunch. Then a few days later, the Harker Heights staff traveled to Brenham to visit. It was a very relaxing, yet educational time for all and everyone enjoyed the time away from the office, seeing another court in action. The Brenham employees enjoyed this so much, that they are hoping to do this again next year with another city!



City of Andrews Municipal Court Judge Black, Mayor Bob Zap, Court Clerk Debbie Gomez and Anthony Pena were present when a proclamation signing was captured by their local newspaper.

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The Texas Court Clerks Association would like to thank the following generous sponsors of the 2009 TCCA Annual Conference in Abilene:

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Customer Service—More Than Just a Smile

What does it mean to provide excellent customer service? Although it sounds like an easy question to answer, when you get right down to it, that's not necessarily the case. If you don't believe it, just google the phrase "customer service" and see how many different definitions you can come up with.

Wikipedia defines it as "the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase".

BusinessDictionary.com calls it "all interactions between a customer and a product provider at the time of sale, and thereafter," and goes on to say that it "adds value to a product and builds enduring relationships."

According to *AboutCustomerService.Info*, it is "the ability of an organization to constantly and consistently exceed the customer's expectations".

In reality, good customer service means different things to different organizations. Imagine the following scenario: a customer at a large discount store picks up several MP3 players and says to the clerk "Tell me everything I need to know about these MP3 players in order to make an informed decision on how to proceed". The clerk could either give the easiest answer "Well I don't know all the details, but, this one is definitely the most popular," or the clerk could provide all of the pertinent information: "Well, this one has better battery life, faster processing, easier navigation, sleeker design, *and* it's the most popular".

Even though the clerk in the second scenario provided better customer service, the customer in either situation is likely to leave the store happy; buzzing with excitement at the

thought of downloading the newest Taylor Swift song (or whoever might make them buzz with excitement). The store clerk's lazy answer may not have a negative effect at all on the customer's experience.

For those of us working in municipal court, it has to be more than offering a smile and ensuring that the customer is happy. As we all know, it is entirely possible that a customer can leave happy even when they haven't been provided with good customer service. For example, a court clerk may incorrectly tell a defendant that they don't have to appear in court on their barking dog violation unless a summons is issued (they did sign the citation), and the defendant will likely be happy that they may not have to appear. In this case, the court clerk made the defendant happy, but provided poor customer service because they provided inaccurate information.

In this scenario the defendant misses

his/her court appearance, the fine is increased, and his/her license is suspended. Two months down the road he/she is out driving around town, happens to be going a little too fast, gets pulled over, and gets arrested on an arrest warrant for failing to appear on the barking dog ticket. Yikes.

So, some organizations simply want happy customers who will keep coming back. Though, that's not the goal in municipal court, it is actually a really good rule of thumb. Treat your customers like you want them to keep coming back over and over, even though they definitely don't want to! And remember that, although we would of course like it if our customers were happy to see us, we can't lose sight of the fact that providing good customer service in municipal court also means consistently providing accurate information to our customers.

—April Christiansen, Cedar Park



Gulf Coast Chapter Clerk of the Year

Wanda Kelly of Shenandoah received the GCC Clerk of the Year Award, pictured here with GCC President Tammy Odom.

Letter from the President

Dear TCCA Members,

If you were unable to attend the Annual Conference in Abilene - we missed you. On behalf of the entire TCCA Board - sincere thanks to Teresa Borcik and the City of Abilene for your hospitality and outstanding educational topics. Please mark your calendars now to attend the 2010 Annual Conference in Southlake, October 4th - 6th. Leah Huff is your conference host and is already hard at work to insure that your visit is enjoyable and educational. Congratulations to Suzy Seitzler and the City of Waco on securing the bid to host the 2011 Conference.

Congratulations to this year's award recipients. It is so rewarding to be recognized and honored by your peers. Best wishes for continued success. Congratulations also to Tammy Odom for being elected to serve as Vice President, David Preciado for being elected to serve as Treasurer and to elected Directors at Large Elaine Brown, Lisa Howard and Melissa Pace. I look forward to working with

you during the next year. Thank you for your willingness to serve and represent our members.

At the time of the Annual Conference, we had 459 clerks certified at Level I, 293 certified at Level II and 38 at Level III. This shows just how successful our Certification Program has become. Congratulations to those of you who became certified at either Level I or Level II this year. I encourage you to make the commitment to begin working on the requirements for the next level of certification. For those of you who completed Level III - best wishes for a successful future. May this accomplishment bring you personal satisfaction and continued professional development. The Education Committee continues to find ways for certified clerks to maintain their certification and unveiled their Cali Law Program during the conference. Thank you for all you do to improve upon and promote the Certification Program.

We ended the year with an astounding 904 members. I encourage you to renew your membership for 2010, and challenge each of you to bring in at least one new member. It should be an easy sell - who wouldn't want to take advantage of the networking and educational

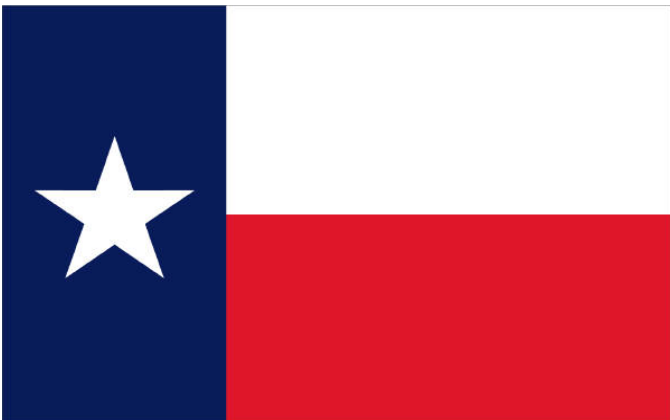


opportunities this Association has to offer. As our membership continues to grow, the TCCA Board of Directors is committed to finding ways to meet the needs of all members. One example, is your request that we move away from conference binders and provide conference materials on a flash drive. We are excited about this request and have made plans to do so during the 2010 conference!

Please visit TCCA's website often at www.texasclerks.org. This website is updated on a regular basis and is your main source of information about all of the activities of the Association, including educational opportunities, membership listings, certification requirements as well as how to contact a TCCA Board Member or Committee Chair.

Another year has come and gone. Time just seems to move along so quickly these days. It was great to see everyone in Abilene. Best wishes to you and yours for a happy and safe holiday season!

—TCCA President, Shona Bohon



TCCA Board Members/Committee Chairpersons

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Vice President Tammy Odom, Sweeny—tkodom@windstream.net Gulf Coast Chapter President/TML Representative

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2010 Annual Conference Chair

Suzy Seitzler—susys@ci.waco.tx.us

2011 Annual Conference Chair

Rebecca Stark, Austin—rebecca.stark@ci.austin.tx.us

Legislative Committee Chair

Tracie Glaeser, Lewisville—tglaeser@cityoflewisville.com

Certification/Education Committee Chair

**COMMITTEE
CHAIRS**

2010 Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Awards

The deadline is quickly approaching to participate in the 2010 Municipal Traffic Safety Initiative Contest. Guidelines are as follows:

Purpose:

To recognize those who work in local municipalities that have made outstanding contributions to their community in an effort to increase traffic safety. This competition is a friendly way for municipalities to increase their attention to quality of life issues, through traffic safety activities. Best practices will be shared across the state. Each submission will be recognized.

Eligibility:

Any municipal court in the State of Texas is eligible. Entries may be submitted on behalf of the court by the following:

Judge, Court Clerk, Deputy Court Clerk, Court Manager, Court Administrator, City Manager, City Councilperson, Law Enforcement Representative, or a Community Member.

Categories:

There are three categories, with nine (9) awards:

- Two (2) in the large volume courts, serving populations of 150,000 or more;

- Three (3) in the medium volume courts, serving populations between 30,000 and 149,999; and
- Four (4) in the small volume courts, serving populations below 30,000.

Awards:

Award recipients will be honored at the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center (TMCEC) Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Conference, that will be held May 2010, in Houston at the Omni Riverway Hotel. Award recipients receive (for two municipal court representatives) complimentary conference registration, travel to and from the 2010 Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Conference, to include airfare or mileage, that is within state guidelines, two night's accommodations at the conference hotel, and most meals and refreshments. *There may be categories where no awards will be presented due to a*

lack of entries.

Deadline:

Entries must be postmarked no later than Friday, January 22, 2010.

Send applications to:

TMCEC – Traffic Safety Awards

Attn: Lisa Robinson, CFLE
 TxDOT Traffic Safety Grant Administrator
 1609 Shoal Creek Boulevard,
 Suite 302
 Austin, TX 78701

Presentation:

Award recipients and Honorable Mention winners will be notified by Friday, March 19, 2010, and will be honored during the Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Conference to be held May 24, 2010 in Houston at the Omni Riverway Hotel.



It's Time To Renew Your TCCA Membership

Now is the time to renew your TCCA membership! The membership year runs January through December. You can access the membership application online at www.texasclerk.org. Regular membership is \$40, which includes membership into a chapter in your area. Chapter affiliation information

and chapter maps are also available online.

In order to save cost, TCCA will no longer mail membership certificates, unless directly requested by the member. TCCA will continue to mail membership cards as proof of membership. Make sure to send in your

application so you will receive conference information, this newsletter and information regarding the Court Clerk Certification Program. If you have questions regarding membership, contact Lisa Howard, Membership Committee Chairperson, at lhoward@ci.hurst.tx.us.

Texas Court Clerks Association

c/o Sealy Municipal Court
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2010 Conference—Southlake, Texas

2011 Conference—Waco, Texas

2012 Conference—Open for Bid

**If your City or Chapter would like to host
the 2012 Conference, please contact TCCA
President Shona Bohon. Members will
vote for the winning bid at the 2010 Con-
ference in October in Southlake.**

Texas Court Clerks Association

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