

FOUNDATION INSIGHT



Texas Bar Foundation

Providing Opportunities, Protecting Justice

Summer 2026 Issue

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR FELLOWS CHAIR



Dear Fellows,

Welcome to a new year for the Texas Bar Foundation. I am honored to serve as your 2026-2027 Fellows Chair. I want to begin by thanking each of our Fellows, Life Fellows, and Sustaining Life Fellows for your continued dedication to the Foundation's mission.

Your contributions make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless Texans who rely on the services provided by worthwhile charitable organizations awarded grants by the Foundation.

For more than 60 years, the Texas Bar Foundation has remained committed to enhancing the rule of law and the system of justice in Texas. The unwavering generosity of Fellows has made it possible for the Foundation to award more than \$30 million in grants to programs and organizations that provide legal assistance, expand access to justice, and serve communities across our state. Your support reflects not only your generosity, but also your belief in the importance of justice for all.

This fiscal year, the Foundation will award more than \$2 million in grants to organizations across Texas—an accomplishment realized through the collective support of our more than 11,000 Fellows.

As we look ahead, I encourage you to deepen your involvement with the Foundation. Consider becoming a Sustaining Life Fellow, whose contributions go entirely to grant funding. I also encourage you to reach out to me or your district's nominating chair to let us know about colleagues that deserve to be nominated as a new Fellow and those that deserve to be nominated for awards. Encourage charitable organizations that meet the Foundation's mission to request a grant. Your continued support helps extend our reach and strengthen our impact.

Thank you for your commitment to the Texas Bar Foundation and for helping ensure that our mission continues to serve Texans for generations to come.

I look forward to another outstanding year, working together.

Diana M. Geis

Diana M. Geis, Fellows Chair
Sustaining Life Fellow

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TXBF AWARDS



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2026 Annual Dinner: A Night to Remember

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Tangible Impact of our Fellows:
Success Stories

QUICK INSIGHTS

\$1,952,237

Awarded in grants during the
2025-2026 fiscal year

to

165

Nonprofit organizations



*Congratulations to our 2026 Texas Bar Foundation
Award Recipients!*



Standing: Kenda Culpepper, David W. Copeland, Fred Hagans, Joel W. Mohrman, Hon. Michael Gomez, Hon. David M. Gunn, William G. Hagans, Jane Webre.
Seated: Hon. John J. Specia, Jr., Hon. Raul A. Gonzalez, Jo Ben Whittenburg, Jerry C. Alexander.
Not in attendance: James M. Loveless.

Outstanding 50 Year Lawyer Award

Jerry C. Alexander, Dallas
Hon. Raul A. Gonzalez, Retired Justice, Texas Supreme Court, Austin
Hon. John J. Specia, Jr., San Antonio
Jo Ben Whittenburg, Beaumont

Dan Rugeley Price Memorial Award

James M. Loveless, Fort Worth

Lola Wright Foundation Award

Joel W. Mohrman, Houston

Outstanding Law Review Article Award

Hon. David M. Gunn, Houston

Ronald D. Secrest Outstanding Trial Lawyer Award

Fred Hagans, Houston

Samuel Pessarra Outstanding Jurist Award

Hon. Michael Gomez, Houston

**Gregory S. Coleman Outstanding Appellate
Lawyer Award**

Jane Webre, Austin

Terry Lee Grantham Memorial Award

David W. Copeland, Coppell



James M. Loveless



William G. Hagans and Miles
Loveless accepting the Dan Rugeley
Price Memorial Award

2026 ANNUAL DINNER

On June 12, 2026, in Houston, Fellows from across Texas, along with their families and friends, gathered for a special evening with the Texas Bar Foundation. Together, we celebrated an incredible year of impact, the Foundation's ongoing commitment to justice and service, and the outstanding individuals honored with our annual legal awards. The event was a meaningful tribute to their achievements and a moment to reflect on all we've accomplished as a Foundation. Thank you for being part of this memorable evening. We look forward to another year of growth, service, and shared success!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



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Lighthouse Legal Services, PLLC
Meredith Clark Law PLLC
Harriet Miers
St. Mary's University School of Law
Hon. Carolyn Wright & James Sanders



1. Leigh Hunt Goodson, Deborah J. Race, Andy Tindel, Justice C. Michael Davis and Hon. Diane DeVasto.
2. William G. Hagans & Kenda Culpepper.
3. G. David Smith, Felicia Lewis and Mariame Aana.
4. Roland Garcia, Jr., Justice Scott K. Field and W. Stephen Benesh.
5. Darien Harris, Jay R. Aldis and Brandili Dehls Aldis.
6. Mana Yegani, Jed R. Silverman, Santos Vargas and Patricia Rouse Vargas.
7. Deborah L. Cordova, Hon. Kirsten Cohoon, Cori A. Harbour, Natalie Koehler Denbow, Sylvia A. Cardona.
8. Judge Audrey F. Moorehead, Krisi N. Kastl, Sarah C. Keathley, Nicki Stafford, Samantha-Anne Nadolny and Cheryl C. Murray.

TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION IMPACT ACROSS TEXAS

UNLOCKING DOORS

Unlocking Peer Support

Unlocking Peer Support: Rebuilding After Release

Reentry from the criminal justice system can feel like an uphill battle. Through its Reentry Brokerage Program, Unlocking Doors® connects individuals with a network of reentry services including employment opportunities, housing resources, and recovery support providing a stable foundation as they rebuild their lives.

A \$10,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation is helping Unlocking Doors® strengthen this work by supporting peer mentorship and reentry navigation services designed to reduce recidivism and empower individuals to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Through the generosity of Texas Bar Foundation Fellows, this funding helps provide returning citizens with the guidance, accountability, and resources needed to build stable, productive futures.



Unlocking Doors mentoring session

Reentry programs that include peer mentorship have countless benefits for the community: reducing recidivism, contributing to safer communities, helping returning citizens find meaningful employment, and providing individuals with substance use challenges access to much-needed support and counseling. The Texas Bar Foundation's investment in Unlocking Doors® is creating opportunities for successful reentry one person at a time. For James Monk III, that investment meant access to the support, mentorship, and resources that helped him rebuild his life.

When Monk first walked into Unlocking Doors®, he was stepping into a world that had moved on without him. His Reentry Broker worked with him to build a clear, manageable plan focused on employment, training, and stability.

Through the Unlocking Doors Reentry Brokerage Program, Monk connected with Keidrain Brewster, an in-house peer mentor who understands reentry firsthand. After serving his sentence, Brewster rebuilt his life by entering the trucking industry, starting as a driver and eventually growing Brewster Logistics into a fleet employing more than 15 people.

"I like the fact that he was open to receiving the mentorship we provide at Unlocking Doors®," Brewster said. "He stays connected with me, and I check on him every one or two weeks. That level of accountability matters. Mentorship is the bridge between where you are and who you're capable of becoming. Organizations like Unlocking Doors® help make sure people actually get across."

Monk completed his Commercial Driver's License training and entered the workforce as a truck driver, building a stable career in an industry that offers long-term opportunities. Today, he is working, supporting himself, and continuing to move forward.

Monk's story reflects the impact the Texas Bar Foundation strives to make through every grant awarded. By investing in organizations like Unlocking Doors®, the Foundation helps provide individuals with the tools, mentorship, and opportunities needed to break the cycle of recidivism and build stable, productive lives. For Monk, that investment turned determination into opportunity and opportunity into lasting stability.

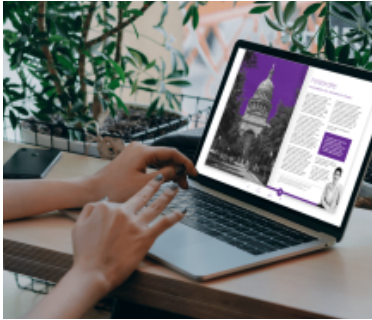
"We sincerely appreciate the Texas Bar Foundation's substantial contribution, which will support the expansion of our Peer Mentoring initiative. These funds will enable more clients to benefit from mentorship provided by individuals with lived experience, who are uniquely equipped to understand the challenges associated with reentry into society."

-Christina Melton Crain, Founder and President/CEO of Unlocking Doors®

TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION IMPACT ACROSS TEXAS

TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT

Promoting Best Practices for Victim Safety



Protective orders website

Protecting Lives: A Survivor Success Story

For survivors of domestic violence, access to legal representation can mean the difference between living in fear and finding lasting safety. Through the generosity of Texas Bar Foundation Fellows, a \$12,500 grant was awarded to Texas Advocacy Project to support its Promoting Best Practices for Victim Safety program.

The impact of that support is reflected in the lives of survivors like Kiana, whose journey demonstrates how access to legal advocacy can provide not only protection, but also the opportunity to rebuild a life free from abuse.

Kiana met her abuser in college. At first, the relationship seemed promising. He was attentive, spoke about wanting to give her new experiences, and the two quickly formed a close bond. But after several months, the relationship began to change. Over the years, Kiana endured emotional manipulation, financial abuse, and increasing isolation from her family and friends. Eventually, the abuse became physical, leaving her living in constant fear.

One evening, an argument over cookie dough escalated into a violent assault that left Kiana seriously injured. In addition to the physical violence, she endured sexual assault and emotional trauma that forever changed her life. After that night, she realized she could no longer face the abuse alone.

Encouraged by her best friend, Kiana confided in her brother, Kayvon, who immediately came to her side and accompanied her to the police station to file a report. Knowing she also needed legal protection, Kiana reached out to Texas Advocacy Project.

Thanks to the support of Texas Bar Foundation Fellows, Texas Advocacy Project was able to provide critical legal services. Given the severity of the abuse, the organization accepted Kiana's case for direct representation. Her attorneys carefully explained her legal options and recommended pursuing a permanent lifetime protective order.

With Kiana's extraordinary courage and the guidance of her legal team, the court granted her a permanent lifetime protective order. Today, Kiana is no longer living in fear. She enjoys spending time with her dogs, reconnecting with her family, and finding peace in the simple freedom of being outdoors. She is rebuilding her life with hope and confidence for the future.

Kiana's story is one example of the life-changing impact made possible through Texas Bar Foundation grants. By investing in organizations like Texas Advocacy Project, the Foundation helps ensure survivors of domestic violence have access to legal representation, advocacy, and protection during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Every Texas Bar Foundation grant represents more than financial support—it represents safety, justice, and hope.

"Thanks to the Texas Bar Foundation's generous support, our Protective Orders in Texas report sheds light on how these protections are working in practice and where gaps remain. This data will help strengthen systems, inform policymakers, and ultimately expand access to safety and justice for survivors across our state."

— Heather Bellino, CEO, Texas Advocacy Project

TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION LASTING IMPACT

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY DEDMAN SCHOOL OF LAW

Founding Supporter of the VanSickle Family Law Clinic



Jason P. Nance, Judge James Noel Dean and Professor of Law at SMU Dedman School of Law and Kenda Culpepper, 2025-2026 Chair of the Texas Bar Foundation.

On April 22, 2026, Texas Bar Foundation Chair Kenda Culpepper joined faculty, students, alumni, and supporters in Dallas to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the SMU VanSickle Family Law Clinic.

The milestone was especially meaningful for the Foundation. A decade ago, the Texas Bar Foundation awarded a \$25,000 grant as a Founding Supporter of the clinic, helping launch a program that continues to make a lasting difference in the community.

Ten years later, the clinic stands as a powerful example of the enduring impact of Texas Bar Foundation grants. Thanks to the generosity of our Fellows, the clinic has trained future advocates while expanding access to justice for individuals and families throughout the Dallas area.

This anniversary serves as a reminder that investments made today can strengthen communities and transform lives for years to come.

FELLOWS APPRECIATION RECEPTIONS

District 9 Austin



Carlos E. Cárdenas, Patrick Keel and Ryan A. Botkin

District 3 Beaumont



Gabrielle Navarrette, Patrick R. Scott, William G. Hagans, Christy Amuny, Cori A. Harbour and Baillie Milliken

District 10 San Antonio



Hon. Dori Contreras, Patricia R. Vargas and Hon. Beth Watkins

Districts 7 & 14 Fort Worth



Gary L. Nickelson and Mike Micallef

District 4 Houston



Denise P. Leisten, Melanie Bragg, Santos Vargas and Samantha-Anne Nadolny

District 5 Sugar Land



Jeffery F. Nadalo, Brittany A. Holcombe, Kenda Culpepper and James L. Ware

District 6 Dallas



Ashton Barrineau Butcher, Kelly-Ann F. Clarke and Courtney Perez

Each bar year, the Texas Bar Foundation hosts Fellows Appreciation Receptions across the state to recognize the generosity, commitment, and impact of our Fellows. These receptions frequently include presentations from local grant recipients who offer meaningful insight into how Foundation funding has advanced their missions and positively affected the lives of those they serve. Please join us for a future reception!

2026-2027 TEXAS BAR FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Chair-Elect	Deborah J. Race
Secretary-Treasurer	Cori A. Harbour
Past Chair	Kenda Culpepper

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Fellows Chair-Elect	Christy Amuny
Fellows Secretary	Mike Oldham
Past Fellows Chair	William G. Hagans

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Justice Gina M. Benavides	Laura Gibson	Michael C. Smith	
Elizabeth Sandoval Cantu	Wendy A. Humphrey	Amy M. Stewart	
Kelly-Ann F. Clarke	Felicia Lewis*	Judge Graham Quisenberry	
David C. Courreges	Mike Micallef*	Hon. Beth Watkins	

*Public Member

DO YOU KNOW AN OUTSTANDING ATTORNEY?

Help us recognize your esteemed colleagues and mentors in the legal profession. Each year, the Texas Bar Foundation honors those who exemplify the highest standards of legal practice. The 2027 award recipients will be celebrated at our Annual Dinner on Friday, June 18, 2027, in Fort Worth. Nominees for these prestigious awards do not need to be Fellows of the Foundation. We welcome all nominations of individuals who have made significant contributions to the legal field.



Nominate Now!
**Scan the QR code to
 learn about the Texas
 Bar Foundation Awards**

FELLOW BADGES

The Texas Bar Foundation encourages Fellows, Life Fellows, and Sustaining Life Fellows to display their official Fellows badge in email signatures, on firm websites, and in other professional materials as a visible acknowledgment of this distinguished honor and support of the Foundation's mission. Fellows who have not yet received their badge file are encouraged to contact the Foundation office, and we will be pleased to provide it.



HELP US SPREAD THE WORD

Next Grant Deadline:
January 15, 2027 at 5:00 pm CT.



Scan the QR code to check out
our Grant history or visit
www.txbf.org



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An honor or memorial gift to the Texas Bar Foundation celebrates the legacy of a cherished colleague or mentor. Mark work anniversaries, milestones or memorialize someone special with a contribution that honors their impact.

To make a gift, call (512) 480-8000 or visit www.txbf.org/donate



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