Stetson Welcomes Family and Friends to Campus
By Callie Cowan

On Friday, October 9, family and friends of Stetson students visited the Gulfport and Tampa campuses to discover what the law school experience is like for their loved one.

The Honorable Emily and Mike Peacock served as the day’s honorary chairs. As the parents of a current law student, they were able to explain more about the rigors of the law school curriculum and the expectations on a law school campus.

Guests then experienced a “mock class” conducted by Professor Charles Rose and heard from a panel of family members and loved ones of current law students who shared their advice about what to expect from the law school experience.

After a barbeque lunch in the Courtyard, family and friends were able to take part in an actual Contracts class with their student.

A similar program took place at the Tampa Law Center Friday evening. Then the festivities continued into the weekend with dozens of students and their families visiting the Dali Museum and the Tampa Bay History Center on Saturday.

Students Find Their Place to Give Back at the Pro Bono Fair
By Callie Cowan

On October 13, the Office of Student Life hosted the Fall 2009 Pro Bono Fair in the Great Hall.

All students are required to complete a total of twenty pro bono hours prior to graduation, and at least ten of those hours must be spent doing legal pro bono work.

Pro Bono Fairs are held twice a year as an opportunity for students to connect with local non-profit agencies and organizations where they can find a special place to volunteer their time.

This year, more than twenty-five local organizations attended the Pro Bono Fair to meet students and discuss their opportunities for service. These organizations included the Salvation Army, Gulfcoast Legal Services, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and many more.

If you missed the Fall Pro Bono Fair but are interested in finding out more about local volunteer opportunities, contact Associate Director of Student Life Tammy Briant at probono@law.stetson.edu.
Professor Jules L. Coleman of Yale Law School presented the distinguished Nichols Lecture to a capacity crowd of students and faculty on October 21 in the Great Hall on Stetson University College of Law’s Gulfport campus. Professor Coleman has been described as one of the world’s most influential philosophers of law.

Coleman encouraged Stetson students to think about the purpose and nature of liability in the law of torts and how liability is understood from the two leading theoretical perspectives on torts: law and economics and corrective justice.

He observed that economists view the tort system as a tool for achieving the most efficient cost-avoidance, and tort liability as simply a means to that end. He then encouraged students to consider liability and torts in a different light. He explained that giving people the authority to demand accountability from others is more about accountability than liability. "My aim is to get you to see that tort law is not just a mechanism by which we solve a variety of social problems," Professor Coleman explained, referring to how the law helps make cars safer, baby cribs safer, and drugs safer. Instead, tort law can be used to make us more accountable to one another by emphasizing decency, responsibility, and fairness.

Coleman is the Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld Professor of Jurisprudence and Professor of Philosophy at Yale Law School, author of The Practice of Principle: In Defence of a Pragmatist Approach to Legal Theory, and the immediate past editor of the Legal Theory journal, which he helped found and edited for 15 years. He directs the Yale Center for Law and Philosophy and is a prolific author who has written dozens of articles and several books about legal theory, philosophy and ethics. His work has been translated into at least four languages.

The Nichols Foundation Prominent Speakers Series was established at Stetson in 1995. The series’ namesake is Perry Nichols, among the nation’s most successful trial lawyers and past president of both the American Trial Lawyers Association and the International Trial Lawyers Association.

Inaugural Legal Community in Action Day Held

By Brandi Palmer

On October 22, the entire student body at Stetson University College of Law spent the day serving the local, campus, and legal communities during the law school’s first Legal Community in Action Day: Serving the Public, Serving the Law, and Serving the Profession. In total, 1Ls gave approximately 1,500 public service hours to various local charities, hospitals, schools, legal offices, and other Tampa Bay organizations.

The campus-wide Legal Community in Action Day is designed to remind students, at each level of their law school career, about their service responsibilities as members of the legal profession. Classes were cancelled so that students could participate in one of three programs based on their class year:

- First-year students volunteered at more than 50 community service organizations throughout the Tampa Bay area.
- Second-year students attended workshops on legal scholarship and how it impacts the practice of law.
- Third-year law students participated in a professionalism retreat that focused on transitioning from law school into the profession. Leaders in the legal community presented seminars on professionalism, work/life balance, and activism.

"The Legal Community in Action Day was developed to teach our students, before they graduate and head out into the world, about the important roles that lawyers play in the community at large," said Roberta Flowers, who holds the Wm. Reece Smith Jr. Distinguished Professorship for her academic commitment to professionalism and ethics. "We wanted to give our students a solid foundation in stewardship, scholarship and professionalism before they leave law school to enter the legal profession."

Stetson has a long history of community service. Stetson students donate more than 14,000 hours of pro bono service annually at more than 100 organizations in the Tampa Bay area and across Florida. Stetson was the first law school in Florida and one of the first in the nation to establish a pro bono service requirement for students and faculty.
BLSA’s Annual Survival of the Fittest Program a Success
By Tinelle Rose

The George Edgecomb Bar Association (GEBA) of Tampa, the Offices of Career Development and Student Life, and the Black Law Students Association of Stetson University College of Law held the annual Survival of the Fittest program on Saturday, October 17. During this program each Fall semester, GEBA attorneys conduct workshops on successful techniques in job searching, networking, preparing a legal resume, and interviewing. These attorneys also critique each student’s resume and conduct mock interviews. The program is always praised as being highly practical.

The members of GEBA who spoke this year came from a diversity of backgrounds including solo practitioners, associates at large firms, in-house counsels, a former clerk for a federal judge, and a circuit court judge. Among the successes of this year’s program was the turnout, which was one of the highest in recent history with over forty students participating.

Federalist Society and Christian Legal Society Welcome Michael Cromartie
By Chris Abercrombie

Michael Cromartie, the Vice President of the Ethics and Public Policy Institute in Washington, DC, visited the Stetson campus as a guest of the Federalist Society. In addition to a program, he also found time to guest lecture for Professor Finch’s Law and Religion Class. Leaders from both the Federalist Society and the Christian Legal Society met with Mr. Cromartie over dinner and were joined by Professor Jeff Minetti and Professor Blake Hudson.

The group found Mr. Cromartie to be engaging and personable, and the topics of conversation during dinner ranged from Nixonian politics to “When Harry Met Sally” to his days as the mascot for the Philadelphia ’76ers. He shared how honored he felt to be asked to speak with the students. After asking for advice on what sights he should see during his limited time in the area, he retired early for the evening in order to be prepared for meetings the following day.

During the lunchtime speech, Mr. Cromartie talked extensively about the modern American religious decline and the concurrent increase in spirituality in its stead. He attributed this decline to many things, but he focused mainly on the fundamental lack of awareness and knowledge of the Christian religion and faith by the media.

He stated that the media’s coverage of Christianity is indicative of their lack of knowledge, and showed that often the characterizations of the so-called “Christian Right” and its leaders are not representative of the religion at all. His proposed solution for this problem was to host retreats in which the media and religious representatives of major denominations could sit down and explain their faith and answer any questions the journalists had.

Mr. Cromartie genuinely seemed to welcome and enjoy the question and answer portion of his presentation where he was able to interact with students. The program came to an end before everyone had their chance, but many students followed him out afterwards to have their questions answered while sitting with him in the coffee shop.
ABA/LSD Circuit Meeting
By Jay Wadhwani

The ABA Law Student Division’s Fifth Circuit Leadership Summit was an exciting event for those who attended. Student representatives were given the opportunity to network with judges and lawyers in the Southeastern region and were able to make connections with other law students from around the circuit. The Stetson students who attended also explored critical leadership skills that will help them become more competitive in the job selection process upon graduation.

Stetson’s involvement in the Leadership Summit began with a short essay contest, where students expressed their interest in attending the event. The most common desire expressed by the students was the opportunity to become more involved with ABA and to serve as a vocal representative for Stetson on a national level. The eight students who represented their Stetson peers left together on October 2 to travel to the meeting in Jacksonville.

Friday night kicked off with a social event organized by the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Circuit Governors and Lieutenant Governors who welcomed representatives from nineteen law schools. Everyone took part in the meet-and-greet to get to know the other students from around the region. The goal was to build connections and share ideas with other ABA members in a relaxed atmosphere.

On Saturday morning, attendees arrived early to meet with judges and attorneys in the local legal community. Joining them for breakfast and coffee, the students gained insight from their experiences. The most fascinating aspect about this portion of the event was the diversity of character—each and every professional had experience in a different field of law and brought something new to the table. Shortly after, students attended seminars with different guest speakers from the legal profession. The speakers discussed their own interpretations of leadership skills and the vital role they play in their careers. They also discussed the importance of ethics and the future of the legal community.

The next session was hosted by staff from the Career Services Department of Florida Coastal School of Law. The staff explained how to effectively transform a college resume into one suitable for the legal profession. They described various tactics on how to improve a resume and make a cover letter stand out from the masses. Since 85% of prospective jobs are never advertised, the speakers discussed alternative, but effective, ways to network in the area.

The final event of the day offered roundtable discussions for ABA and SBA members on the following issues: how to host special events on campus; how to build interest in campus organizations; how to promote and encourage diversity; and how to maintain a more healthy mental character.

Every ABA member who attended was able to take home something new, whether it was advice on how to make them more competitive in the job selection process or information on how to improve a common pitfall or shortcoming as a student leader.

Federalist Society Welcomes Ted Frank to Campus
By Jacklyn Steinberg

The Federalist Society welcomed Ted Frank, one of the leading American tort reform advocates as well as the founder and president of the Center for Class Action Fairness, to campus last month. Thanks to the generous financial support of the Templeton Foundation and the participation of Stetson’s own tort scholar, Professor Tim Kaye, the event was a great success.

Mr. Frank presented his view on the American tort system through the lens of McDonalds cases, focusing on three hotly debated and frequently misconstrued civil lawsuits involving the McDonalds Corporation. Professor Kaye’s lively rebuttal dealt with these cases individually as he urged against a fundamentalist approach to tort theory and practice. Rather than representing two divergent views on the issues, the two speakers relied on authentic facts and figures to provide a more complete picture of modern tort policy and practice.

The Federalist Society was pleased with the well-rounded discussion, as the student group is dedicated to providing a forum for legal experts of opposing views to interact with members of the legal profession, the judiciary, law students, academics, and the architects of public policy to redefine the terms of legal debate. The Federalist Society achieved their mission and were especially pleased that so many members of the local Bar associations made an effort to attend.

While the debate brought forward a wealth of information and highlighted fundamental concerns in the tort reform movement, the collegiate atmosphere and mutual respect among the speakers and students left a lasting impression. One local judge even participated in the discussion during the question and answer session following the panel’s presentation.

The tort reform discussion continued at dinner that evening. Federalist Society members were joined by Dr. Kaye and Mr. Frank for dinner in Tampa. Both guests led a thoughtful dinner conversation and provided insight on post-law school life and alternative career paths in the legal field. The enthusiastic support of the faculty as well as the interest and involvement of the student body has surely left an equally favorable impression on Mr. Frank. We hope to continue this trend and uphold a similar reputation at the National Federalist Society Convention in November, which several members of the organization have been invited to attend.
What’s Happening in Your Student Bar Association
By Jessica Crown

October has seen a lot take place in the Student Bar Association. First, the SBA committees have been planning, organizing, and making events happen. The Go Green Committee hosted a table in the Breezeway where representatives from PSTA and South Pinellas Bicycles were present for tune-ups, tips, and information. They also gave away discount coupons, a free bike inspection or repair, and a chance to win a brand new bike. They also had a recycling drive for electronics that are hazardous to the environment if thrown away improperly. Please contact Ashley Grafton at agraf-ton@law.stetson.edu if you are interested in participating in Go Green activities or if you have any questions.

The Student Issues Committee hosted a Town Hall Meeting in early October. The Student Issues committee acts as a conduit for information to flow between the students, faculty, and administration. The Town Hall meetings provide a venue for students to take any problems or concerns they may have to the faculty and administration, while also allowing the faculty and administration to inform the student body about what is being done to address their issues. The next meeting will occur at the Tampa Law Center in November. If you have any questions or concerns, email the Student Issues Chair Nathan Wittman at nwittman@law.stetson.edu.

The Student Professional Development Fund is about to be unveiled. SBA President Evan Raymond has been working with the administration on creating the policies and procedures for the committee. This new fund will allow students to apply for money to attend summits, meetings, or any other educational/professional development opportunities. While the committee will not be able to provide all of the money for any particular event, its goal is to make it more feasible for students to attend functions. For more information, please contact Evan Raymond at eraymond@law.stetson.edu.

SBA Treasurer Chris Billings has worked hard to put together the budget for student organizations for the Spring 2010 semester. An amendment was made at the October 28 meeting to the Treasurer’s Handbook changing the maximum amount student organizations may seek for certain events. Previously, the Handbook provided that the maximum amount an organization may receive for Guest Speakers was $150, while the maximum amount for a Panel was $300. Both of those categories have been eliminated, and a new category was created named Educational Presentations with a maximum amount organizations can apply for in that category now $200. Chris and the Budget Committee met with officers of student organizations in early November to establish the amounts requested for events and organizational funding. The budget went before the SBA Legislative Body on Wednesday, November 4, and was passed on first reading. Please email Chris Billings for more information about SBA funding at cbilling@law.stetson.edu.

The SBA Events Planning Committee recently hosted the Halloween Social at Ferg’s in downtown St. Petersburg. There was a great showing of people and many creative costumes.

That sums up the month of October...and November is already under way. If you have any questions, contact SBA Secretary Jessica Crown at jcrown@law.stetson.edu.

Congratulations to Stetson’s Moot Court Board!

Veterans Law Appellate Advocacy Competition Win

On October 15, two Stetson University College of Law students won the first-ever Veterans Law Appellate Advocacy Competition in Washington, DC, competing against teams from several prestigious law schools around the country. All of the student advocates argued before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Stetson’s team of Chase Hattaway and Megan O’Neill won the Best Respondent’s Brief Award as well as the competition overall. O’Neill was also named Best Overall Oralist, the highest individual award given in any competition. The competition was held in conjunction with the twentieth anniversary of the court.

International Moot Court Win

Three Stetson University College of Law students won the 28th Annual John Marshall Law School International Moot Court Competition in Information Technology and Privacy Law in Chicago, IL, October 1-3. Thirty-two teams competed, including five from overseas.

Stetson’s team of J’Aimee Crockett, Aisha Sanchez, and Ryan Schmidt beat the team from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law in the final round.

CONGRATULATIONS!
SALSA’s Festival of Lights
By Tony Thomas

Stetson’s SALSA (South Asian Law Student Association) group hosted the Festival of Lights on October 16. The event was a vivid display of South Asian culture, beauty, and elegance. The festival celebrated the five major religious festivals that are recognized in South Asia in the Fall and Winter: Christmas, Hannukah, Eid ul Fitr, Diwali, and the Buddhist Festival of Lights.

One unifying theme among religions practiced throughout South Asia is the significance of light, and lights are traditionally used to celebrate all of these holidays. The celebration was a cultural night that served as a reminder to the community and student body that the role of legal practitioners entails not only an understanding of the law, but a recognition and appreciation for cultural diversity and unity. The festival had hundreds of tea lights decorated all over the Great Hall that made for a great ambiance. The use of light served many significations. For many, light signifies hope. To some, it represents victory or triumph and for others, it is a symbol of enlightenment.

The event was decorated with traditional South Asian art and décor and the guests began the celebration by enjoying traditional South Asian food. During dinner, guests enjoyed the keynote address by the Florida South Asian Bar Association (SABA) President Tara Rao. Ms. Rao spoke about the importance of legal cultural groups and the inclusivity of people from various backgrounds. After the keynote address, a special guest from the community, Chaya Bhat, performed a melody of Bollywood dances. Her grace and enthusiasm filled the crowd who joined her to learn some basic Bhangra dance moves. Bhangra is a traditional dance performed in Northern India. Over forty guests participated in the impromptu dance class and got the opportunity to dance the night away to modern and traditional Bollywood and Bhangra songs.

The event was a great success with more people in attendance than expected. Over one hundred guests were present and many said they truly enjoyed the unique event. Vanita Vishnubhakat, Co-Chair of SALSA, said it best, “We [the organization] hope that the light you see around the room tonight – at your tables and throughout the Great Hall – brings you, individually, hope, success, and enlightenment.”

SALSA hopes to continue to bring a little spice to the Stetson community through its programming and to make this an annual tradition. Thanks to everyone who helped with the event.

SBA Presents Go Green Day
By Brandi Palmer

The SBA Go Green Committee encouraged the Stetson campus community to Go Green on October 28 in Gulfport.

Students distributed information about where and what to recycle in Pinellas County, conserving water and eliminating dependence on bottled water, and using public transportation.

South Pinellas Bicycles was on hand to offer free bike inspections and tune-ups as well as a free bike drawing. Students also collected old electronics, batteries, and light bulbs for a recycling drive.

EJW’s Fall Semester Events
By Leah Ellington

Stetson University College of Law’s Equal Justice Works chapter has been busy this Fall planning a new fundraising event as well as networking and educational events. Several members also traveled to the annual Equal Justice Works Career Fair and Conference.

The inaugural Equal Justice Works Fall Auction was a great success. Thank you to everyone who bid on the various items that were available. The organization was able to raise $3,500 to help fund Stetson law students working in low-paying or unpaid public interest positions next Summer. The Friday, October 9, event signified the first time that EJW offered a silent auction in conjunction with Family and Friends Day.

On October 27, eight students left for Washington, DC, to participate in the Equal Justice Works 2009 Conference. The weekend conference included a career fair with over 130 employers represented, various speakers, and resume reviews. Assistant Director of Career Development Jennifer Horton accompanied the students and provided valuable guidance in preparing for the conference and career fair.

The conference’s plenary speaker was Ralph Nader, a long-time advocate for public interest issues. Mr. Nader spoke to the law students about the difference between justice and charity, with justice being about preventing tragedies and problems before they happen and charity being the reaction to the immediate needs that are the product of injustice. He encouraged those present to act as professionals and to take the proactive stance of justice and not trivialize their talents just to get a high-paying job. Mr. Nader also suggested that law students should make their small talk matter and discuss political and social issues with each other on campus.

It has been an eventful semester so far for Stetson’s Equal Justice Works group. Stay tuned for more information about the Spring Auction and the next opportunity to apply for Summer stipends.
"Effective Negotiations" Winning Essay
By Leighton Hyde

"What negotiation skills will make the difference between being an average and an exceptional advocate?"

Celebrated American psychologist William James said, “Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.” Becoming an exceptional advocate requires a commitment to building three important negotiation skills, confidence, creativity and communication. Standing alone, each is valuable on its own merit. More importantly though, these critical skills are particularly effective when united together, creating a synergistic platform to achieve the goals of the client.

Competence breeds confidence. A clear understanding and mastery of the facts is the cornerstone for building confidence. No substitute exists for thorough and thoughtful preparation. Formulating a strategy with the client and exploring the likely positions of the adversary will help generate a road map to resolution. Familiarity and a realistic appraisal of the situation is the foundation on which confidence can be built.

Creativity is often called for when solving problems. Learning to think “outside the box” enables one to find a solution to a problem where many others have fallen short. Engaging colleagues and associates in innovative thought results into new insights and perspectives that can be utilized in present and future negotiations. Creativity is often essential for two parties to reach a compromise, especially after a prolonged stalemate. Fresh ideas will increase effectiveness and engender the respect of your adversaries.

Communication, almost certainly, is the most important skill an advocate must master. It is essentially a two-way street where the ability to listen is paramount and so is the finesse required to send clear signals. Building rapport with the client, as well as with the adversary opens the lines of communication so that all parties have the best opportunity to build a solution amenable to everyone. Since the majority of communication is non-verbal, it is important to understand body language and to learn behavioral cues which in turn can lead to a strengthening of your position. The ultimate goal is to let every form of communication be purposeful, ever guiding the parties toward closure. After all, most conflicts could be resolved if both sides really knew what the other wanted to say.

The melding and development of these skills indicate a commitment to personal excellence. The exceptional advocate consistently and tirelessly forges ahead, honing acquired skills and developing new ones. Confidence stems from a diligent understanding of the facts. Creativity is born from imagination. Effective communication is an acquired skill. All three result from purposeful acts. So act as if what you do makes a difference. It really does.

Legal Spanish Workshop
By Brandi Palmer

Professor Luis C. Plata, a law professor at the Universidad del Norte, from Barranquilla, Colombia, led a Legal Spanish Workshop on October 21. He discussed Intellectual Property Law in Latin America. Stetson Law Professor Luz Nagle greeted Professor Plata during his visit to campus, along with Maria Herrera Melado, assistant director of International Programs at Stetson.

"Public Speaking" Winning Essay
By Subhan Farooqui

"If you were delivering a speech on leadership and persuasive public speaking skills, what advice would you give and why?"

I’ve never turned down a chance to speak publicly because giving a great speech is the closest I’ll ever get to being a charismatic dictator—commanding the adoration of a room thronged with eager listeners who hang on my every word. Since I have neither the temperament nor the work ethic to be an actual dictator, I resign myself to engaging in oratory.

The preceding sentiment illustrates two things that I strongly advocate when speaking publically: be a little humorous and embrace the effectiveness of a great speech or presentation. You don’t have to be Jerry Seinfeld, but an aura of levity is something an audience readily responds to as long as the subject matter is appropriate. Not only does it make stodgy subjects more palatable, but also laughter is instant feedback that gives you affirmation that the audience is listening. You can’t always tell from the front of a room if people truly understand something you’re saying, but you can hear laughter and see someone smile.

As for embracing the effectiveness of a great public speaking, I’m not merely referring to platitudes about people acknowledging that a strong speech is convincing but, rather, I’m focusing on how you should view yourself when you’re giving a public presentation. Appreciate the fact that you have a captive audience who wants/needs to be there to listen to you speak. Too often people go into a speech-making situation with a defeatist attitude like, “Man, I hope I don’t mess up or look stupid in front of everyone.” Replace that low ceiling with, “I hope people really enjoy their time today and are receptive to what I’m trying to say.” Don’t settle for adequate or competent; strive for excellent. Ok…so maybe I am speaking in platitudes a little bit. Sue me.

Additionally, I’ve found that effective public speaking often involves telling a story. A story or anecdote resonates with people because a) it provides an example rather than just theory and b) people like hearing stories. Having someone tell a story makes people nostalgic of sitting cross-legged on a rug during their formative years listening to a teacher or parent tell them about a cute pig who comes under the tutelage of a wise spider. You don’t have to spin some fine yarn, but give the people something they can relate to rather than just bullets on a PowerPoint.