

SENIOR LAWYERS COMMITTEE: Legal Education and Networking

By JUDY L. NEY

Networking, continuing legal education (CLE), and lunch: what is there not to like about the benefits of this committee? The Senior Lawyers Committee of the Houston Bar Association was formed in the 1997-1998 bar year. That year, a survey was sent to all HBA members over the age of 60 asking if they would be interested in joining a senior lawyers group, and if interested, what kinds of activities they would like to see the group participate in. Based on the survey responses, the HBA decided that the group would have quarterly meetings aimed at networking, and gaining CLE.

In 2011, the committee lowered the age limit to 50+ years. There are 4,727 HBA members in this category with active emails and each received an invitation to the luncheons. However, the meetings are open to all HBA members and everyone is welcome to attend.

The CLE programs are held at Brennan's Restaurant on the edge of downtown and the convenient location encourages attendance as well as the excellent traditional southern/Cajun style food. The cost is \$45.00 and that does not deter attendance. Where else can one get turtle soup and bananas foster at a legal luncheon?

During the 2015-2016 bar year, Norma Trusch and Kelly Frels co-chaired and



Ellen Yarrell and Trey Yates, who presented "How Science & the Supreme Court Have Changed Your World," with 2015-2016 Senior Lawyer Committee Co-Chairs Norma Trusch and Kelly Frels.

with their committee planned stellar presentations which included:

- "How Science & the Supreme Court Have Changed Your World," presented by Ellen Yarrell & Trey Yates;
- "The Dementia Epidemic and the Law," presented by Molly Abshire & Mary McFaden;
- "Senior Lawyers: Success to Significance," presented by Jimmy Brill & Allan K. DuBois; and
- "A Perspective of State Leadership in Austin," presented by Harvey J. Kronberg.


Over 100 people attended the presentation on dementia, with an average of 80 attendees at the remaining presentations.

The committee's success, according to Trusch, is because, "The Senior Lawyers Committee has provided a forum and a venue for more seasoned attorneys

to meet and renew old friendships while learning about leading-edge topics in the law, in the State, and in the world. The quarterly luncheons at Brennan's are always well attended, a tribute to the efforts of an actively involved committee and the Houston Bar Association staff."

More important than just food and CLE, the luncheons provide time to network with fellow "senior" lawyers. Some

attendees are interested in the material presented, some lawyers want to catch up with friends while others are actively rain-making. The combined legal knowledge and Houston legal history represented at the meetings are phenomenal. Plus, with the new State Bar requirement of maintaining yearly MCLE credits for emeritus members (members who are 70 years of age or older), these meetings provide a way to help meet the CLE requirement.

The success of the meetings, as judged by the attendance, can be attributed to the speakers, interesting topics, convenient location and invites sent out by the committee. Thank you to the HBA for including the legal needs of our senior lawyers. 

Judy L. Ney is a Hearing Officer with the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation. She is a member of The Houston Lawyer editorial board.