Welcome Back Events, Community Service, And More!!!

This is the first issue in our second year of the new BLSA Alumni Newsletter. This quarter BLSA focused on welcoming the 1Ls and showing them they have a solid community to depend on in order to help them through their law school experience.

Every quarter BLSA members initiate and organize several public service events in an effort to enhance our involvement beyond the law school. We have also begun planning for the much anticipated Black History Month events.

Without our alumni many of these wonderful events would not be possible. In this issue we note the several alumni who hosted events or returned to the law school as speakers.

We tried to highlight as many of these events as possible—but unfortunately space constraints would not allow for full articles on everything!

Upcoming Events - MLK Week and Black History Month

Monday, January 16, 2006
Memorial Service with Keynote Speaker Valerie Jarrett, Executive Vice President of the Habitat Company and Trustee of the University
Noon - 1:00 pm
Rockefeller Memorial Chapel
1156 East 59th Street

Wednesday, February 1, 2006
BLSA General Body Meeting and Black History Month Kick-Off (hanging of Dickerson portrait)
12:15-1:30
The Law School

Friday, February 3, 2006
BLSA Wine Mess
4:00 - 6:00 pm
The Greene Lounge

Sunday, February 5, 2006
August Wilson’s Fences
7:30 pm
The Court Theater
5335 S. Ellis Ave.

Friday, February 17, 2006
The Chicago Renaissance Gala honoring Earl Dickerson (hosted by the Chicago Council of Black Law Students Associations)
6:00 pm: cocktails
7:00 pm: Dinner and program
The Grand Ballroom
6351 S. Cottage Grove Ave.

Thursday, February 23, 2006
BLSA Bar Review
Location TBD
Major Events—Fall 2005

IL Welcome BBQ Party

On Saturday, September 17th, BLSA members gathered together for good food and great conversation during the 2005 Welcome Back BBQ. The event, which was graciously coordinated by Betsy La-roche (Social Chair/Academic Chair), was held at the home of Vice President Darah Smith in Bronzeville, just north of Hyde Park. Over twenty members attended and brought along friends, not only to catch up on the goings-on of the summer with their classmates, but also to meet many of the new incoming 1Ls who had already arrived in town.

We told stories of our summers living in different parts of the country and our experiences as judicial clerks, summer clerks for law firms, and interns at government offices or non-profit organizations. Upper-classmen learned more about our phenomenal new class members and about their lives before law school. It was the perfect demonstration of the vibrant and diverse group of students that our BLSA chapter represents. However, with the new first years having just completed their first week of school and still a bit anxious of the road ahead, the main topic of conversation was the challenges that they would likely face during their first year at the University of Chicago Law School. Funny anecdotes, study tips, and advice on transitioning to graduate school and maintaining a balanced life were shared by everyone including Mr. Morris who offered guidance to all on life as a student but also on the legal world beyond graduation. We all left his home well fed and feeling much more prepared for our first (or our last) year as a law student.

Visit by Justice Dale Wainwright of the Texas Supreme Court

On September 30, 2005, the Earl B. Dickerson Chapter of the Black Law Students Association was honored to host our distinguished alumnus, Justice Dale Wainwright ('86), of the Texas Supreme Court. Justice Wainwright, who has recently joined the Law School’s Visiting Committee, met with students twice during his day-long visit. First, Justice Wainwright met with a small group of students in the Office of Career Services to discuss opportunities to clerk with the Texas Supreme Court in Austin, TX. Justice Wainwright is eager to recruit more University of Chicago graduates to fill clerkship positions in his chambers. Later that day, Justice Wainwright met with members of the Black Law Students Association. He reflected fondly on his experiences at the Law School and his tenure as president of the Black Law Students Association, and provided key insight on his judicial philosophies.

An Evening of Dinner and Dessert with Alumnus Kevin Morris and Family

Fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, greens, and candied yams - what better way to kick off the new school year than with a combination of mouthwatering food and wonderful company? On October 1, 2005, Mr. Kevin Morris, a University of Chicago Law School alumnus and an associate at the law firm of Kirkland and Ellis LLP, along with his family, provided just that as they warmly welcomed our BLSA members into their home. The turnout was exceptional with members of all three classes coming out to enjoy the feast and join in the camaraderie.

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The Earl B. Dickerson chapter of BLSA would like to thank Kirkland and Ellis LLP as the sponsor of this wonderful event along with Mr. and Mrs. Morris for an outstanding evening.
Alumni Mentoring Reception at Foley Lardner

One of BLSA’s priorities is to provide opportunities for its members to network with alumni. Each year, BLSA along with the Law School’s Alumni Relations office, coordinates our Alumni Mentoring Program where all 1Ls are assigned alumni mentors in order to help meet this goal. Traditionally, to kick off the program, a local law firm hosts a reception to introduce the mentees to their new mentors.

On November 3, 2005, the Chicago office of Foley & Lardner LLP hosted the reception. The evening, which included the theme “A Tasting of the Vine,” brought BLSA members, alumni, and legal professionals together for an evening of fellowship and networking while experiencing an array of exceptional wine and food pairings. The evening began with casual conversation as guests gathered while later on Foley & Lardner partner, Jeanne Gillis (’94), said a few words to the group.

The Alumni Mentoring Program is one of BLSA’s most important. It allows 1Ls to meet alumni while at the same time introducing them to the Chicago legal landscape. BLSA members have truly benefited from the program. We hope that as our organization continues to grow, more of our alumni will become involved to form new connections and lasting relationships.

Community Service Projects

Collegiate Scholars Program "Shadow Day" at the Law School

"The Collegiate Scholars Program (CSP) is a three-year enrichment program offered by the University of Chicago specifically for Chicago Public Schools students. Ninth-graders who have distinguished themselves through their academic achievements and contributions to school and community are invited to apply." In an effort to increase our involvement with the community, BLSA believes that CSP is a great opportunity to make such an impact.

The students took a tour of the Law School, attended a Civil Procedure class with Professor Buss and a lunch question and answer session. On the lunch panel were four attorneys from the law firm of Wildman Harrold, Professor Buss, and Michael Machen director of Financial Aid.

Book Drive

BSLA hosted a Thanksgiving Book Drive to benefit a local elementary school in Hyde Park.

Leo High Scholars Program

Leo High School is an all boys Catholic high school on the southside. Third year Keely Stewart participates as a mentor in the Leo Scholars Program. The program creates a senior honors seminar that is designed to help prepare the top students in the school to go to the best college that they can attend. The class has three aspects. First, the subject matter is law. Keely helps teach basic legal principles in a discussion setting. “I believe this setting is college-like and will help prepare the students for similar styles,” he explains. Second, there is a college prep aspect in which mentors “keep track of the students’ grades, ACT scores, and overall college admission process. We provide advice and seek to push them to apply to the best school they can attend.” Keely generally reviews personal statements, resumes, applications, etc, and keeps the students on task to apply early. Finally, the program has been able to provide book scholarships for a few students in the class.

Speakers Wanted

If you or a colleague would be interested in speaking at the Law School, either to BLSA or to the general student body, please contact the BLSA Vice President Darah Smith (darahsmith@uchicago.edu) or the Alumni Chair, Amani Farid (afraid@uchicago.edu). The presentation of topics and ideas, especially as they relate to African-Americans, is one of our top priorities, and we can’t wait to hear from you!
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE JOURNAL MEMBERS

Congratulations to all the BLSA members who joined a University of Chicago law journal. This is a very prestigious honor and we are extremely proud of their accomplishment.

Ricardo Bernard (2L) ~ Chicago Journal of International Law
Carshae Davis (2L) ~ Chicago Journal of International Law
Sharon Fairley-Rogers (3L) ~ Legal Forum (2nd year)
Betsy Laroche (2L) ~ Legal Forum
Darah Smith (2L) ~ Law Review

WELCOME Incoming 2005-2006 1L BLSA MEMBERS

The newest additions to the black law student community come to the University of Chicago with a wide variety of interests, ambitions, and accomplishments. Their experiences include professional careers, advanced degrees, working on presidential campaigns, and competing in collegiate athletics. We look forward to all that they have to offer The Law School community and society at large.

Euler Bropleh
Sandy Hook, CT
Emory University '04
University of St Andrews (UK) '05
MS in International Strategy and Economics

Shani Fregia
Seattle, WA
Stanford University '05

Ebba Gebisa
West Lafayette, IN
University of Wisconsin '05

Brittany Hamelers
Lynn, MA
Howard University '04

Nicholas Harper-Smith
Oakland, CA
Wheaton College (MA) '05

Jessica Lewis
Minneapolis, MN
University of Wisconsin '98
University of Washington '05
Ph. D in Molecular Cellular Biology

Matthew McCarthy
Miami, FL
Florida State University '02

Candace McKinley
Hampton, VA
Yale University '03

Veronica Root
Arlington, TX
Georgetown University '05

L. David Russell
Los Angeles, CA
Columbia University '02

Joshua Sellers
Syracuse, NY
University of Michigan '01
University of Chicago '05
MA Political Science (Working toward Ph. D)

Sherrod Thaxton
Sacramento, CA
University of California, Davis '97
Emory University '00
Ph. D in Sociology

Shermon Williams
Newport News, VA
Yale University '04
Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government '05
MA in Public Administration

DON’T FORGET!

We still need everyone to send in accomplishments and events relating to you or other U of C Alumni—we would like to feature this information in an Alumni Highlights section. We also welcome any other suggestions and comments you may have for the newsletter. Please send all comments, suggestions, and/or information to BLSA Alumni Chair, Amani Farid at afraid@uchicago.edu. Thanks!