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2010 SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

2010 SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW SPEAKERS

Sarah Bellinger



Sarah Bellinger is an attorney and Equal Justice Works (EJW) Fellow at Advocacy, Incorporated (AI) in Houston, Texas. AI is a disability rights nonprofit organization and member of the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) network that was created by Congress in 1975. As an attorney at AI, Sarah focuses exclusively on special education issues. She provides counsel and advice, as well as direct representation to students with disabilities who attend schools in Harris and the surrounding counties. As an EJW Fellow, Sarah is responsible for the Special Education Clinic, which is composed of private attorneys who provide advice and representation to students in need of special education services. These attorneys meet regularly with parents to educate them about substantive topics within special education law, practical advocacy tips, and methods of resolving disputes under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Additionally, Sarah provides trainings to parents and advocates in the community.

A graduate of the Tulane School of Social Work, Sarah entered law school with experience in working with children with disabilities. Specifically, she had worked with children in foster care and the Texas Youth Commission who needed special education services. As a law clerk, she worked on policy issues at the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in Austin, Texas. She joined AI as a law clerk in the summer of 2008, working on a variety of disability rights issues, and later transitioned into her role as a special education attorney and EJW Fellow in September of 2009. She is licensed to practice law in the State of Texas.

Sarah received a Bachelor of Arts from Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, magna cum laude (2003), a Masters in Social Work from Tulane School of Social Work (2004), and a Juris Doctor from the College of William & Mary School of Law in Williamsburg, Virginia (2009).

Currently, Sarah is a member of the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), Texas Bar Association (TBA), and Houston Young Lawyer's Association (HYLA).

Adam Blumberg



Adam Blumberg is a Financial Services Professional with Strategic Financial Group in Houston, Texas. He helps young professionals, business owners and families with special needs with asset protection, wealth accumulation, and tax strategies, using a comprehensive financial planning approach.

Adam has a certification in Special Needs Financial Planning from the American College, and discovered the desire to help families with special needs after seeing the work his wife does as a teacher at the Parish School. Previously, he worked for Intel Corp., and started and ran his own company before coming to his career calling.

Adam has a BBS in Finance and Honors Business from The University of Texas at Austin. He is a lifelong Houstonian, and lives in Houston with his wife, Camila, and their two dogs.

Edward N. Goldsbury



Mr. Goldsbury is a Certified Public Accountant with over 30 years of experience. He is a Director at Pannell Kerr Forster of Texas, P.C. where he has been since 1986. Mr. Goldsbury specializes in international taxation, including in-bound and out-bound activities, investments and multi-national planning and coordination and mergers and acquisitions; international individual taxation including US

international estate and gift planning; and tax and business consultation for medium to large, privately-owned and publicly-held companies including wholesale and distribution, leasing, importing, construction, software development, real estate and service businesses.

Mr. Goldsbury has additional experience in advising national service partnership with over 150 partners across the United States regarding tax planning and compliance, and providing tax planning services for a foreign-owned U.S. holding company with over twenty corporate acquisitions. He also has significant experience preparing, filing and representing clients before the I.R.S. in connection with numerous accounting method change requests and examination proceedings.

Mr. Goldsbury has a Masters of Professional Accounting Program with emphasis on Taxation from University of Texas and is a member of several organizations and committees including PKF North America Network International Business Development Committee; PKF National Tax Committee; American Institute of Certified Public Accountants; Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants; Houston Chapter of Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants; Greater Houston Partnership; former member of Editorial Advisory Board for *Tax Advisor*; Board of Directors President for The Parish School; Christ Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Elder, Sunday School teacher, Capital Campaign Committee Chair, Long-term Planning Committee Chair; and Nottingham Forest Civic Association Board.

Mr. Goldsbury has been a frequent speaker on international tax topics and issues at venues including: Houston CPA Society International Tax and Business Conference, Houston International Tax Forum, PKF International Tax Conference, and PKF North America Annual Conference. He has authored or co-authored articles on: Tax; International tax; Business subjects; and Tax treatment of school tuition and fees paid for the benefit of children with learning disabilities and differences.

Gabriella Marshall-Mackin



Gabriella Marshall-Mackin is a mom of quadruplet 11 year old girls and a 9 year old boy. Her daughter Alessandra, who is one of the quadruplets, was Gabriella's introduction into the world of special education and special needs. Alessandra is a liver transplant recipient, is profoundly deaf, and has a

number of other conditions which label her as medically needy. She was trache dependant for five years, was on a ventilator for most of her 1st year, and had a g-button for four years. She is also the youngest profoundly deaf student to mainstream out of Houston ISD's deaf education program in the 2nd grade, and is now fully mainstreamed and fully verbal at KIPP Sharpstown Middle School in the 5th grade with her sisters. Gabriella has learned through personal experience how to craft real IEP goals, and how to successfully negotiate the public school system. Gabriella is employed full time as a claims investigator for a large insurance company, is married, and so does not have a lot of time for advocacy, but does it when she can because it is her passion.

Mara Purcell



Mara Purcell is a graduate of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles where she received a Bachelor of Arts in both Print Journalism and Gender Studies. Ms. Purcell earned her Doctor of Jurisprudence from University of Houston Law Center. She was admitted to practice law in Texas in November of 2007.

Ms. Purcell is a board member of the Disability and Elder Law Attorneys Association and a member of the Houston Bar Association, Council of Parents, Advocates and Attorneys, the Association of Women Attorneys and the Houston Young Lawyers Association.

While Ms. Purcell practices primarily in the areas of special education law and guardianship law, her firm of Purcell & Saucedo, PLLC also advises client in probate and estate planning matters.

Dustin Rynders



Dustin Rynders is an attorney and Policy Specialist at Advocacy, Incorporated, (AI), a disability rights nonprofit and member of the federally authorized Protection and Advocacy (P&A) network. Dustin's work includes client representation and policy advocacy around election, juvenile justice, and special education issues.

Dustin has worked in the public interest civil rights community for 9 years. Prior to law school, Dustin worked in public policy at the Alliance for Justice in Washington, DC. As a law clerk, Dustin worked on disability access cases at the Texas Civil Rights Project and housing and employment discrimination cases at the HIV Project of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago.

Dustin joined Advocacy, Incorporated in October 2005, initially helping survivors of Hurricane Katrina with disabilities navigate public benefits and disaster assistance programs. Dustin was awarded a two year Equal Justice Works Fellowship that allowed him to establish a project out of AI's Houston office providing advice, direct representation, and policy advocacy on school-to-prison pipeline issues. Upon the conclusion of his fellowship, Dustin accepted a position as a policy specialist in AI's Austin office. Dustin conducted trainings and provided technical assistance to county election officials, legislators, and individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access. Additionally, Dustin led AI's efforts to respond to instances of voter rights violations based on disabilities.

Most recently, Dustin has returned to AI's Houston office to begin a new project providing *ad litem* representation to long-term foster children with disabilities living in Texas Youth Commission or State Supported Living Center institutions, formerly known as "State Schools." Additionally, Dustin continues to provide support to AI's lead policy specialists on education and juvenile justice issues.

Dustin is licensed to practice in the State of Texas and has been admitted in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas. Dustin received a Bachelor of Arts from Pepperdine University, cum laude (2001), a M.P.Aff. from the L.B.J. School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas (2003), and a J.D. from The University of Houston Law Center (2006).

Jeff Sell



Jeff Sell has been blessed with four children, Natalie (17), Ben and Joe (15 year-old twins with autism), and Gracie (13).

Jeff is the Vice President, Public Policy for the Autism Society (formerly “ASA”). He has served as the 1st Vice Chairman of ASA's Board of Directors, Chairman of ASA's Government Relation Committee and Director of Chapters & Membership. Jeff presently serves on the Professional Advisory Boards of New York Families for Autistic Children (NYFAC) and, he is the Vice President of the World Autism Organization (WAO).

Jeff graduated from Lamar University with a BS in Political Science and earned his Juris Doctorate degree from South Texas College of Law. In addition to being a member of several professional societies and organizations, Jeff serves on the Board of Directors for the Houston Trial Lawyers Association and was a founding partner of Patterson & Sell, L.L.P. in Houston, Texas. He is a certified mediator and a co-founder of the Vaccine Injury Alliance and he is presently serving as Public Liaison Counsel on the Petitioner’s Steering Committee for the Autism Omnibus case pending in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in Washington, DC.

Kristin K. Tassin



Kristin Tassin is a Director and Co-Founder of Father’s Joy, a charitable organization that provides positive support and information to families and prospective families of children with disabilities, and is Managing Member of Dry & Tassin, P.L.L.C. Ms. Tassin has been an attorney for over 13 years, specializing in intellectual property litigation and special education law and advocacy.

In 2003, after her first daughter, Abigail, was born with Down syndrome, Ms. Tassin and her husband, Shannon, founded Father’s Joy in an effort to offer positive support and information to families. Ms. Tassin provides legal clinics, CLE presentations, and advocacy and education workshops for parents, attorneys, medical professionals and educators in the areas of special education law and advocacy, delivery of diagnoses, inclusive education and the IEP process.

Ms. Tassin has a B.S. in Quantitative Business Analysis – Computer Science and a J.D., both from Louisiana State University. She is licensed in Texas and Louisiana and is a member of many professional organizations, including the Houston Bar Association, Houston Intellectual Property Law Association, Houston Young Lawyers Association, Texas Women Lawyers Association, Professional Women’s Fellowship, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), and is a graduate of Texas Partners in Policymaking. Ms. Tassin has authored and co-authored several publications related to her workshops and produced a DVD in association with Greater Clear Lake Families Exploring Down Syndrome entitled *Living with Down syndrome: Turning Fear into Hope*.

Karen O'Connell Taylor, PhD, LCSW



Dr. Karen Taylor is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Private Practitioner in the Town and Country area of Houston, and former Disabilities Counselor and Academic Advisor for the Houston Community College System – Northwest. She attended Houston Community College, University of St. Thomas, and the University of Houston; and has been a College Professor for nine years. Dr. Taylor has presented this information for Katy ISD family to Family Conference and for Parent U, a SBISD conference in the past few years.

Dr. Taylor currently teaches Sociology at Houston Community College Southwest, is a board certified LMSW Supervisor, is a past Advisory Board member of the Center for the Healing of Racism, parent of an adult who had disabilities in school; and she works with many organizations throughout Houston and surrounding areas. She is the Grandmother of 2 young boys, and has extensive experience with many types of clinical disorders and congenital problems with children and adolescents as well as adults.