

# Children & Family Law Center

The Washburn Law Children and Family Law Center offered law students a variety of opportunities to learn about and become involved in family law activities. In March, Washburn's Children and Family Law Center explored public policy issues relating to families and children. Professor Lynette Petty coordinated and moderated a program entitled "Privatization of Child Welfare: Reflections on Change and Prospects for the Future." National and state experts joined with Kansas judges, administrators and lawmakers to explore the reasons and ramifications of privatization. Madelyn Freundlich, the Policy Director at Children's Rights, Inc. in New York City, was the keynote speaker. Being both a social worker and a lawyer who worked as General Counsel for the Child Welfare League of America, she discussed what was happening at the national level, focusing on the impact of welfare reform on foster care and adoption. Dr. Nancy McCarthy Snyder from Wichita spoke on the research she has been doing on policy, management, finance and contract issues related to privatization of child welfare in Kansas. Other presenters included Sarah Sargent, an attorney with the Kansas Children's Service League; Roberta Sue McKenna '75, Assistant Director of Child Welfare for the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services; The Honorable Dan Mitchell '73, Shawnee County District Court Judge; The Honorable Jean Shepard, Douglas County District Court Judge; Kevin Cook '99, a criminal defense attorney who has served as a guardian ad litem in Shawnee County since 2000; Sheri Love, President of Permanency Division for Kaw Valley Center Behavioral Health Care; and Mike Patrick, Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer for The Farm, Inc.

Continuing the tradition started last year of inviting alumni and other distinguished guests to make lunch hour presentations, the Center started in January by having Linda Pease, Topeka CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) program, speak to the Family Law Student Society about upcoming opportunities for law students to get involved with CASA training. Several Washburn Law students currently serve as CASAs in Shawnee County.



Professor Linda Elrod



The Center hopes to encourage additional training for CASA in the fall.

In February, Professor Nancy Maxwell spoke to the Family Law Student Society about the process of harmonization of family law that is occurring in the European Union. Her article about the United States experience with harmonization of family law was published in *Perspectives on the Unification and Harmonization of the Family Law In Europe* in 2003.

In early March, The Honorable Dan Mitchell '73 spoke about the importance of the juvenile court and the roles of the judges, lawyers and CASAs in helping children in need of care and juvenile offenders. Later that month, Antwau Jones and Rhonda Lomas explained their New Beginnings Foundation to house and help foster children. Law students learned how to set up a non-profit foster care facility.

Family Law Student Society members had three opportunities in April to learn about different aspects of family law. Ian Sumner, Visiting Scholar from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, explained the European approach to same sex relationships. He discussed distinctions being made in the European Union countries between civil unions, registered partnerships and same sex marriages. Another speaker, Dr. Bud Dale, a licensed psychologist and custody evaluator, formerly with Menninger Foundation, discussed the role of psychologists in high conflict cases. He presented the mental health professional's view of the "best interests of the child."



On April 21st, Douglas Fincher '98 talked about the complexities of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and preemption issues. He provided students and faculty with a comprehensive overview on the use of Qualified Domestic Relations Orders (QDROs) in divorce cases.

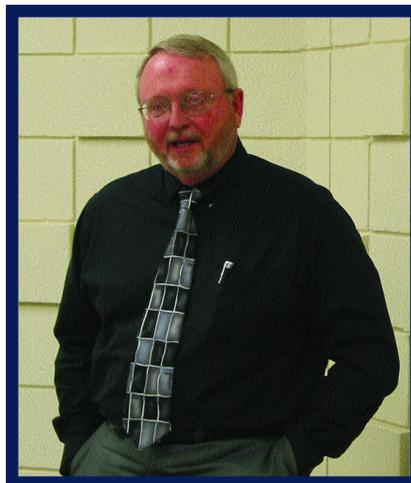
The Children and Family Law Center cosponsored several continuing legal education programs that students had the opportunity to attend. Nine students participated in a program the Center cosponsored with the Heartland Mediator's Association on The Cutting Edge of Child of Family Mediation on February 21st in Topeka. Professor Linda Elrod presented on "Mediating Family Law Cases Using the new Kansas Child Support Guidelines - Administrative Order # 180." Other topics included parent-adolescent mediation, working with case managers and mediating cases with the elderly.

The Children and Family Law Center cosponsored with the Wichita Bar Association a well-attended program on High Conflict Custody Cases in early January. Lynn Ward '90 of Morris, Laing et al. served as moderator. Professor Linda Elrod defined high conflict and discussed approaches being taken across the country for either reducing the conflict or dealing with high conflict litigants. Professor Sheila Reynolds explored the ethical issues that arise for lawyers representing high conflict clients. Dr. Bernard Mayer, the Center for Dispute Resolution in Denver, revealed varying approaches for mediating with high conflict families; Dr. Bud Bryant, a Wichita clinical psychologist, talked about parental alienation issues; and Larry Rute '73, Associates in

Dispute Resolution, explained the current move nationally toward collaborative law.

In March, the Children and Family Law Center again took the lead in trying to introduce collaborative law concepts to Kansas lawyers. Working with the Family Law Section of the Kansas Trial Lawyers' Association, the Center cosponsored a two-day Collaborative Law training March 25-26th. Sherri Goren Slovin, a family lawyer from Cincinnati, Ohio, who has practiced for over twenty years and is one of the main trainers around the country, conducted the training which consisted of lectures, role plays, ethics and simulations. Twenty-one lawyers, two law professors and one law student participated in the two-day training.

The Washburn Law Clinic continues to offer students "hands on" experience with family law cases and live clients. In addition, more than fifteen students served as staff for the



**The Honorable Daniel L. Mitchell '73**

*Family Law Quarterly*, a publication of the American Bar Association Family Law Section, which is edited at Washburn. The fall semester will bring more activities for the Family Law Student Society and the Center as it sponsors the annual Family Law Institute and provides increasing opportunities for alumni, faculty and student interactions.

To learn more about the Center or to volunteer to mentor students with a focus on the family law area of practice, please contact Director, Professor Linda Elrod, at [linda.elrod@washburn.edu](mailto:linda.elrod@washburn.edu).