

American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers - December 2023*Monthly Newsletter*[Click to View in Your Browser](#)

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J. Benjamin Stevens
AAML President

As the holidays twinkle around us, casting a warm glow on yet

resolve, fostered a sense of unity among our Fellows, and saw the Academy emerge stronger and more united than ever before. Your tireless efforts have laid a solid foundation upon which we will continue to build in the years to come.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to serve as your President this year, and I step into this new role with a heart brimming with hope. But this hope needs your fuel – your ideas, your voices, and your

successful family law attorney.

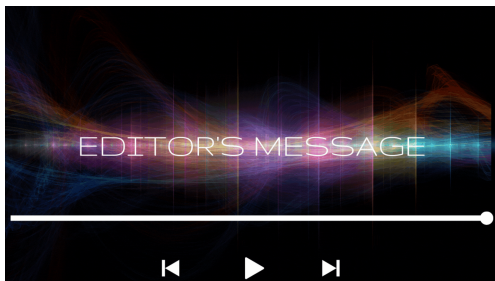
During this holiday season, let us take a moment to cherish the time spent with loved ones, to reflect on the blessings we share, and to extend a helping hand to those in need. I hope that each of us is reminded of the importance of the bonds that we enjoy with each other, both professionally and personally. I hope the holidays bring you many moments of joy, pockets of peace, and cherished memories with family and friends that you will cherish for years to

another year, I find myself feeling two distinct emotions: profound gratitude for the remarkable year we've shared under the exceptional leadership of President Brent Cashatt and unbridled hope for the possibilities that lie before the Academy in the coming year.

Brent, your dedication, vision, and commitment to our organization steered us through uncharted territories with unwavering

active participation. As I stated at the Dinner Dance in Chicago, "It's about you." I hope you will accept this invitation to work together to help the Academy reach even greater heights and for all of us to continue to set the standard for what it means to be a

come. Jenny and I extend our warmest wishes to you and your families during this special time of year.



[CLICK HERE](#) or Above
to play a message
from Newsletter Editor
[Rod Firoozye](#)



[CLICK HERE](#) or Above to view
December's Fireside Chat with Daniel Gray
Check all past FCs on YouTube!
[Fireside Chat Playlist](#)

THE EDITOR'S NOTE – DEC. 2023

By [Rod Firoozye](#), AAML Newsletter Editor

Welcome to our final Newsletter edition for 2023.

We aim to conclude 2023 on a high note, offering great videos, articles, and updates.

Before I provide a summary of what to expect this month, I'd like us all to acknowledge the excellent work done by Kiilu Davis and Natalia Wilson as the past co-editors of the AAML Newsletter.

In this month's edition, as many of you may be aware, our AAML Executive Director, Jill Pena, is bidding farewell and embarking on new adventures. I personally want to express my gratitude to Jill for her assistance and kindness. Please take a moment to watch the [video](#) from other Fellows expressing their appreciation for all the work Jill has done for the Academy.

Starting in January 2024, we will begin working with Smithbucklin to assist us in managing AAML.

This Month's Videos:

- Latest Fireside Chat: [Interview](#) with Daniel Gray.
- Richard West's latest [Tech Tip](#) video on Dictation Software.

- Don't forget to sign up for the latest AAML [webinar and Zoom meeting](#).

This Month's Articles:

- Melissa Kucinski's [article](#) regarding the key topics of the 8th Special Commission Meeting of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH).
- Julie Leveridge's [article](#) about New York Times Best Seller Gretchen Rubin's presentation at the AAML Annual Meeting in Chicago.
- Mark E. Sullivan's latest [article](#) about collecting back payments from military retirees.
- The AAML Foundation's [spotlight](#).

We also want to extend a warm welcome to all our New Fellows: Richard S. Diamond (NJ), Holly J. Draper (TX), Jillian French (TX), Amy A. Geistweidt (TX), Abigail Green (KY), John K. Karanian (VA), Deborah B. Koslin (GA), Katie K. Leonard (GA), Julie J. Nelson (UT), Marion K. Parsons (NC), Lindsey Rae Obenhaus (TX), Hannah C. Sommers (NE), Meagan K. Spomer (NE), Meredith L. Strauss (NY), Jennifer H. Sundt (NY), Robert T. Tsai (TX), Dennis G. Whelan (NE), and Alicia Franklin York (TX). If you happen to see them, please congratulate them on becoming Fellows!

Wishing you all Happy Holidays, and I look forward to seeing you next year!



Congratulations on your Retirement, Jill C. Peña! **We will miss you!**



Watch as some of our Fellows bid **Jill C. Peña** farewell after having served as the **AAML Director from 2019 until 2023**.

Jill has clearly had a positive impact on the Academy and will certainly be missed. If you haven't already, be sure to drop her a note before the end of the year (jill@aaml.org).

[CLICK HERE](#) or on the [GRAPHIC](#) to [PLAY the FULL VIDEO](#)

We Welcome the Following New Fellows to the Academy!

[Richard S. Diamond](#)
Short Hills, NJ

[Holly J. Draper](#)
McKinney, TX

[Jillian French](#)
Austin, TX

[Amy A. Geistweidt](#)
San Antonio, TX

[Abigail Green](#)
Louisville, KY

[John K. Karanian](#)
Richmond, VA

[Deborah B. Koslin](#)
Atlanta, GA

[Katie K. Leonard](#)
Marietta, GA

[Julie J. Nelson](#)
Millcreek, UT

[Marion K. Parsons](#)
Ashville, NC

[Lindsey Rae Obenhaus](#)
Dallas, TX

[Hannah C. Sommers](#)
Omaha, NE

[Meagan K. Spomer](#)
Omaha, NE

[Meredith L. Strauss](#)
New York, NY

[Jennifer H. Sundt](#)
New York, NY

[Robert T. Tsai](#)
Houston, TX

[Dennis G. Whelan](#)
Omaha, NE

[Alicia Franklin York](#)
Houston, TX



[AAML BOOKSTORE](#)

As you know, when a New Fellow joins the Academy, they receive a complimentary copy of each of the AAML's publications.

In the graphic below, one of AAML's New Fellows from Houston, Texas, [Tasha Wilson](#), gladly accepts her copy of the Divorce Manual handbook from Past AAML President (also from Houston), [Susan Myres](#).

The [AAML Bookstore](#) has a wide variety of publications for you and your client's needs for purchase, and is open to the public. All publications are available for online purchase with a few being offered as free download.

For instance, the [Divorce Manual: A Client Handbook](#) was thoughtfully designed by AAML Fellows, Jurists, Mental Health and Financial professionals, to assist your client's in understanding the *whole* divorce process. During this unsettling time in their life, this book serves as a reference and enlightens them on what to expect in court, along with offering best practices for ensuring you and your client can work together effectively to produce the desired outcome. This handbook is a must-have in your library!

[Pick up your copy\(s\) today](#). Prices start at \$10 and discounts are offered for purchases in larger quantities. As Susan mentions in the graphic below, free personalization is offered on 100+ copies.



Still Time to Renew

Your 2024 AAML Member Dues

Scan the Code to the Left or

[**CLICK HERE**](#)

Note: Login is Required



Deadline to Renew is:
December 31, 2023.



Tech Tips Videos

The AAML Law Practice Management & Technology Committee's Tech Tip for December is brought to you by [Richard D. West](#) who shares information on a dictation software program he has used for 20+ years. Check out this and all of the videos this committee has been providing you since 2021. [Click Here](#) for all Tech Tips to Date (Login Required to View All)

[CLICK HERE](#) OR ABOVE
 TO WATCH THE VIDEO



Webinar - Complimentary to ALL

3 Secrets to Successfully Leading Change Within Your Law Practice

December 12, 2023

12:00pm-1:00pm Central

REGISTER

Implementing new and better ways of working within your practice requires accepting the reality that change is difficult for many people. Join us as [Speaker, Terry Kozlowski](#) and [Moderator, Nancy Chausow Shafer](#) present this session which includes three secrets to help you manage the emotional responses that may arise with your people when faced with the request to change. Change includes new or different processes, launching new software or making any other tactical improvements for better client service, upgraded efficiency, or increased profitability. If you are asking or plan to ask people to operate differently from their current comfort zones, you will benefit from this session.

**Zoom Meeting***Complimentary to AAML Fellows***Drinks and Diversity****December 13, 2023****7:00pm-8:30pm (CT)**[REGISTER - Login Required](#)

Moderators, AAML Fellows [Cassie Chin](#) and [Natalia Wilson](#) will lead an open discussion with members of the judiciary from Northeastern states. Join us as [Hon. Rossie D. Alston, Jr.](#), [Hon. Tamra Walker](#), and [Hon. Steven M. Wellner](#) speak about how cultural competencies impact their rulings. We are offering a peek behind the robe to gain more insight on what jurists consider when they rule, if they consider the impact of their rulings on those who hear them when rendered, and if the public at large plays a role in the consideration of cultural nuances that are present in the appointment of professionals.

*Webinar - 90 mins CLE***Unveiling the Unconscious: Exploring Implicit Bias in Expert Cross****January 24, 2024****12:00pm-1:30pm Central**[REGISTER - Log in for Fellow Rate](#)

This webinar is offered by the Race, Ethnic and Religious Considerations in Family Law Committee. It will focus on the art of conducting a cross-examination of an expert witness, with a particular focus on identifying areas of bias. Discover how to develop targeted questions that expose potential bias and that challenge the expert's credibility. We will share practical tips to structure your questions to elicit valuable information while maintaining control of the examination. Most helpful in the webinar will be insight offered by a member the judiciary on what is important to the court in looking at bias as well as information from a seasoned custody evaluator on how to avoid the pitfalls of personal and cognitive biases. This is a must attend event for the family lawyer who wishes to learn how to effectively present evidence of bias to the court, including through expert testimony, cross-examination, and supporting documents.

**UPCOMING NATIONAL
EVENTS/MEETINGS**

[Webinar - 3 Secrets to Successfully Leading Change Within
Your Law Practice](#)

**UPCOMING CHAPTER
EVENTS/MEETINGS**

[AAML-CO - Advanced Family Law Conference
Denver, CO
December 1, 2023](#)

[December 12, 2023](#)[12:00pm - 1:00pm CT](#)[Drinks and Diversity](#)[December 13, 2023](#)[7:00pm - 8:30pm CT](#)[Webinar - Unveiling the Unconscious: Exploring Implicit](#)[Bias in Expert Cross](#)[January 24, 2024](#)[12:00pm - 1:00pm CT](#)[AAML National Executive Committee Meeting](#)[January 26-27, 2024](#)[Oklahoma City, OK](#)[2024 AAML Midyear Meeting](#)[March 11-15, 2024](#)[Playa del Carmen, Mexico](#)[Click to View More](#)[AAML-SoCal 32nd Annual Institute of Trial Advocacy](#)[Santa Monica, CA](#)[January 12-15, 2024](#)[AAML-VA - Dangerous Intersections with Family Law](#)[Richmond, VA](#)[January 16, 2024](#)[AAML-FL 2024 Marital & Family Law Review Course](#)[Bonnet Creek, Orlando](#)[January 26-27, 2024](#)[Click to View More](#)

The Ohio Chapter's 35th Annual
Harold R. Kemp Family Law Symposium was held
on
October 9, 2023.

Attending this year was 2023 AAML Foundation President, [Brian Vertz](#), who joined Ohio AAML Chapter President, [Wijdan Jreisat](#), in welcoming more than 313 lawyers from around the State of Ohio to the Symposium both in-person and virtually. The Symposium featured CLE presentations from [Matthew Dodd](#) on cross-examination and depositions. Sharon Klein on...

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On November 16, 2023, [Natalia Wilson](#) (DC Chapter President), [Cassandra Chin](#) (VA Chapter President), and [Julie Cillo](#) (VA Chapter President elect) spoke to a group of law students at American



Raquel Skinner, Assistant Director for Employer Relations at American University-Washington College of Law pictured with AAML Fellows, Julie Cillo, Cassandra Chin and Natalia Wilson.



The 8th Special Commission Meeting and the Practical Operation of the Hague Abduction Convention
by [Melissa Kucinski](#)

Melissa is an international family law expert based in Washington, D.C. She served as Head of Delegation for the

The [Hague Conference on Private International Law](#) (HCCH), the organization that put forth several international family law treaties, hosted its 8th Special Commission Meeting from October 10-17, 2023 to discuss two of its bodies of work: the [Hague Abduction Convention](#) and the [Hague Child Protection Convention](#). The Special Commission Meeting brought together Contracting States and observer organizations to discuss existing practices for these two treaties.

Ultimately, the approximately one week worth of discussions arrived at [conclusions and recommendations](#) that will improve the operation of these international instruments. The meetings also provided a venue for government officials, judges, and a few select practitioners to meet one-on-one to share information and generate ideas for additional work in this field.

What were the Key Topics Discussed at the 8th Special Commission?

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University Washington College of Law about the AAML Scholars Program and the practice of family law generally. We had a wonderful turnout and an engaging discussion with what we hope are future family law attorneys.

The AAML Scholar's program is a paid legal apprenticeship program with an AAML Fellow offered to select qualified minority law students during the summer which allows the law students to receive weekly education programs by experts in family law and obtain first-hand experience in family law. For further information about this program please contact Gary Rosen (email: grozen@gertzrosen.com).

*International Law Institute to the
8th Special Commission Meeting.*



**What Personality Tendency are
You?**

by [Julie Leveridge](#)

The AAML welcomed dynamic speaker, Gretchen Rubin, on the first day of CLE at the 2023 Annual Meeting in Chicago. This type of speaker was certainly a departure from the norm.

Gretchen Rubin, a Yale Law School graduate, who practiced law at a prestigious D.C. law firm and was a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, transitioned to become an author on the topics of human behavior, happiness and personality tendencies. She is also the author of a Number 1 New York Times bestselling book *The Happiness Project*.

Her latest book, *Life in Five Senses*, was provided to all the AAML Annual meeting attendees.

Ms. Rubin's presentation not only sparked questions among the attendees as to what personality tendency they were, but also what personality tendency do we believe others are and how can this be useful in our practices.

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**Military Pension Division: Back
Payments**

by [Mark E. Sullivan](#)

*Author of the **The Military Divorce
Handbook***

Former spouses are sometimes faced with the problem of collecting back payments from the military retiree as part of division of the pension. Usually this comes up when the military member retires and gives no

general settlement is executed but no one pays attention to obtaining a military pension division order to forward to the retired pay center for garnishment till much later. The problem may arise when the retiree gets improper advice from his or her attorney, or when an application to the retired pay center for pension garnishment is rejected. Even if the member retires and notifies the former spouse promptly, there will usually be a gap of several months when payments are not being made by the

government. What should be done when there are arrears under a general judgment or property settlement, or when there are simply back payments which must be accounted for? What about pension-share payments as taxable income for the spouse/former spouse or for the military retiree?

**Tax Overview and Payments to the
Former Spouse**

The starting point is tax awareness. In general, payments associated with the division of deferred compensation incident to divorce are treated as...

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notice to the former spouse, or
when a



New Special Grants Announced and 2023-2024 Grant Recipients

It is with both pleasure and sadness that the AAML Foundation Board of Directors added two more named grants to honor two very special AAML Fellows and Lifetime Members: Donn Fullenweider, one of the Foundation's founders, who passed away in April, 2023 and Judge Anne Lamkin Durward, AAML Foundation President, who passed away unexpectedly in May, 2023.

The Foundation Board could not think of any better way to honor their legacy than by bestowing special grants in their names that would live on forever.

The Donn C. Fullenweider Grant is bestowed upon an agency that provides legal services and/or educates lawyers. This year's recipient is DC Affordable Law Firm in Washington, DC. DCALF is the only nonprofit legal service provider in the District of Columbia that provides direct legal representation in family law, probate and immigration matters to the more than 125,000

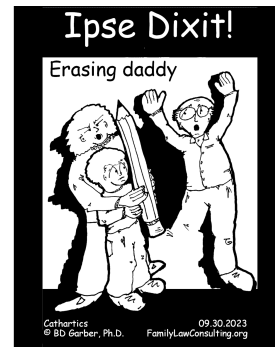
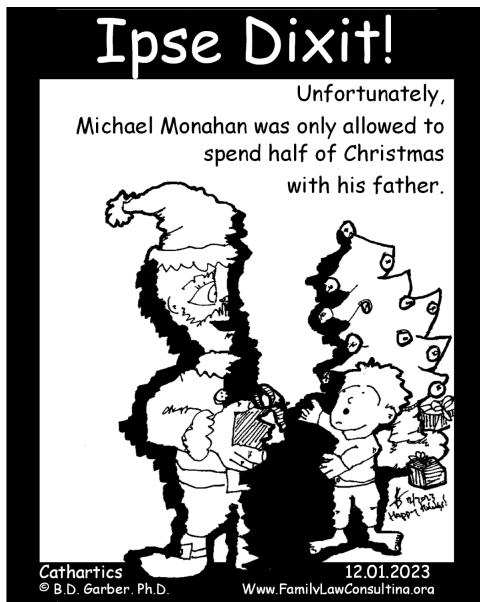
residences from modest-income households. The need for their services has never been greater and the Foundation is honored to support them with the Donn C. Fullenweider inaugural grant.

The Honorable Anne Lamkin Durward Access to Justice Grant is awarded to a grantee committed to overcoming language barriers for low-income domestic relations and family court litigants through direct, pro bono representation, interpretation services for court proceedings, informational/educational sessions and/or counseling services to indigent family law clients.

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Check out last month's cartoon [HERE](#).



Ipsse Dixit! is a monthly cartoon created by Co-conspirators: [Dana E. Prescott](#) and [Ben Garber, PhD](#). [Click to View Past Cartoon Creations](#) and have a laugh.



If They Could Talk is your animal companions' section.

This month, Rebekah Frye shares Spike's (November Newsletter), brothers, Tucker & Buddy at Tucker's 1st Birthday. Have a [Look at the Gallery](#) to see this and past newsletter submissions. Send us your furry and non-furry animal's photos and we will post them in an upcoming edition of the monthly newsletter! Please send to: mary@aaml.org



Editor:
[Rod Firoozye](#)
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[Mary Dietel](#)



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