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## **Texas Access to Justice Commission and Foundation Recognize Major Contributors to Texas Legal Aid Efforts**

### *Award Recipients Announced at Texas Access to Justice Foundation 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala*

AUSTIN, Texas — The [Texas Access to Justice Commission](#) hosted a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala benefiting the [Texas Access to Justice Foundation](#) on Wednesday, May 27, at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in Austin. The Texas Access to Justice Foundation is the primary funding source for legal aid programs throughout the state. Proceeds from the event, which will be used to fund legal aid services for poor Texans, totaled \$300,000.

The gala featured presentations honoring two people who have made a lasting contribution to access to justice in Texas. Houston lawyer James B. Sales, the outgoing chair of the Texas Access to Justice Commission, was presented the Harold F. Kleinman Award by Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Wallace B. Jefferson. Emily Jones of Austin, the former executive director of the Texas Access to Justice Commission, was presented the inaugural Emily C. Jones Lifetime Achievement Award by James B. Sales.

The Kleinman award is named after the first Foundation chair, Harold F. Kleinman. As Chief Justice Jefferson presented the award to Sales, he noted how Sales, a former Marine, had met with the entire Court to get its commitment to the task of bolstering legal aid—and got, Jefferson said, a “yes, sir” from each.

“You epitomize everything that is noble about our profession,” he told Sales. “To answer the question you constantly ask of yourself: Have you performed the job admirably? Have you changed the lives of Texans in desperate need of legal assistance? To that, I simply answer, ‘Yes, sir!’”

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As James Sales presented the first-ever Emily C. Jones Lifetime Achievement Award to its namesake, he said that the award recognizes an outstanding individual whose extraordinary spirit and demonstrated commitment to legal services has improved our society and inspired others. “Emily Jones is one of a kind. Her dedication to helping to ensure that poor Texans have the same access to the legal system as others who are more fortunate is legendary. In her own inimitable way, Emily has made a giant impact on so many people’s lives for the better. This award is a small token of the admiration and gratitude that we all feel for this great Texan.”

In addition, three Texas attorneys, Jeff Rasansky of Dallas, Michael C. Smith of Marshall, and Jeremi K. Young of Amarillo received the Cy Pres: Impact on Justice Award in recognition of a recent award of cy pres funds totaling \$230,160 to help bolster legal aid in Texas. The three attorneys settled a federal case and played an instrumental role in awarding the resulting cy pres funds to the Texas Access to Justice Foundation. Cy pres awards are residual funds from a class action or other proceeding that cannot be distributed to class members or the intended beneficiaries for a variety of reasons.

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation and Commission have launched a statewide campaign to seek cy pres awards to help impact funding for legal aid for the most vulnerable Texans. The recent award will serve to jumpstart the campaign in Texas.

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*The **Texas Access to Justice Commission** was created in 2001 by the Supreme Court of Texas to develop and implement policy initiatives designed to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil legal matters for low-income Texans. The Commission has created several initiatives to increase resources and awareness of legal aid. For more information, please visit [www.TexasATJ.org](http://www.TexasATJ.org).*

*The **Texas Access to Justice Foundation** ([www.teajf.org](http://www.teajf.org)), created by the Supreme Court of Texas in 1984, is the primary state-based funding source for the provision of civil legal aid in Texas. The organization is committed to the vision that all Texans will have equal access to justice, regardless of their income. The Foundation administers a variety of funding sources, which are earmarked to assist nonprofit organizations in providing legal aid to approximately 100,000 Texans each year.*