

Conference addresses child endangerment and sexual abuse

The Wilbanks Child Endangerment and Sexual Exploitation Clinic, the first of its kind in the nation, held its inaugural conference during January, shortly after just one year in existence.

The daylong conference brought together legal experts, psychologists and child advocacy leaders from across the country to discuss important issues related to child sexual abuse and those professionals who assist them. The discussions centered on the intersection of civil, criminal and juvenile courts in child sexual abuse cases; trauma/compassion fatigue for those representing child sexual abuse survivors; and understanding the psychology of child sexual abuse and using experts effectively.

Ross Cheit, a Brown University professor and author of *Witch-Hunt Narrative: Politics, Psychology, and the Sexual Abuse of Children* (Oxford University Press) delivered the keynote address.

Additionally, the documentary film “Off the Record: Justice Denied to Child Sex Abuse Survivors” had its debut showing as part of the conference, which also included a question and answer session with filmmakers Valerie Gibson and Neil Jaffee.

According to Gibson, “Off the Record” removes the veil on the covert injustices suffered by adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse who seek legal redress against their perpetrators. “Many of the unfair aspects of survivor cases occur ‘off the record,’” she said. “These are matters that take place outside the courtroom, the case docket sheet and the public eye.”

The film features two criminal prosecutions where lesser charges were plead, and one civil case where the case was dismissed “without any adjudication of the perpetrators’ liability.”

Other speakers included: Marlan B. Wilbanks, a 1986 Georgia Law alumnus who provided initial funding for the nation’s first



experiential learning opportunity dedicated solely to the assistance of survivors of child sexual abuse; Dr. Julie Medlin, founder of the Medlin Treatment Center and an expert in child sexual abuse; Peter Janci, a partner with the law firm Crew Janci, who spoke on investigating and uncovering institutional abuse drawing upon his experience of representing more than 100 survivors of sexual abuse; and Paul Mones, a nationally recognized advocate for survivors of child abuse who over the course of his 30-plus year career has obtained tens of millions of dollars in verdicts and settlements for his clients from entities such as the Boy Scouts of America.

Present at the conference were Marlan Wilbanks (J.D.’86), who provided initial funding for the clinic, and his wife Diane, who are both pictured with the Wilbanks CEASE Clinic team. Appearing in the photo are: (l. to r.) Clinic Director Emma Hetherington (J.D.’11), third-year student Trevor Buhr, Diane Wilbanks, undergraduate intern Ashmal Ali, Marlan Wilbanks, Administrative Associate Sarah Ehlers, second-year student Hallie Willis, second-year student Shannon Wormald, Postgraduate Fellow Meredith Gardial (J.D.’16) and third-year student Robert Poole.

Rutledge honored for establishment of clinic

At the Wilbanks CEASE Clinic Conference, law school Dean Peter B. “Bo” Rutledge was presented with the VOICE OF GRATITUDE Award on behalf of survivors of child sexual abuse by VOICE Today.

Rutledge was praised for the law school’s effort to start a legal clinic dedicated to representing survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation by the nonprofit, which advocates for the prevention of child sexual abuse and offers recovery programs and services to victims across the state and nation.