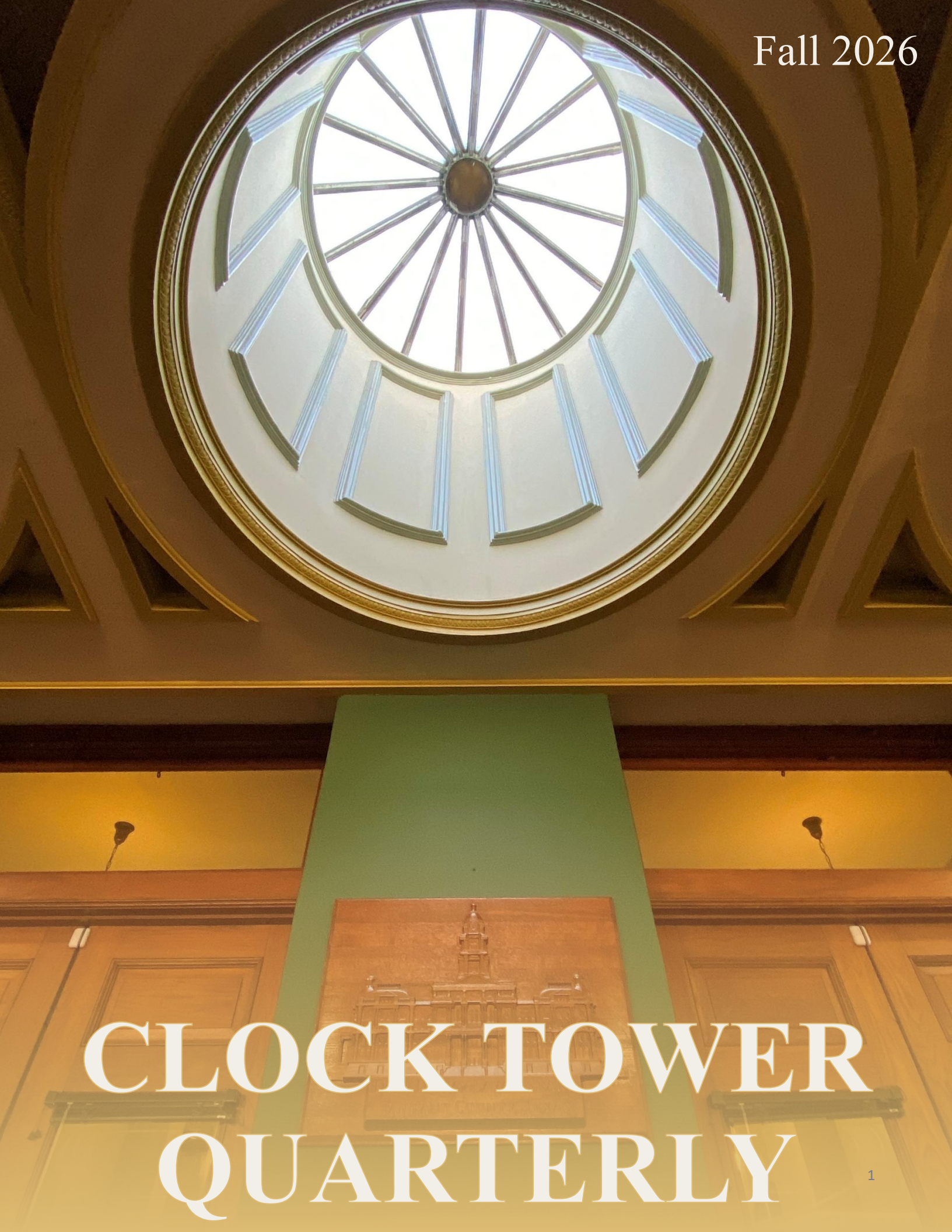


Fall 2026



CLOCKTOWER QUARTERLY

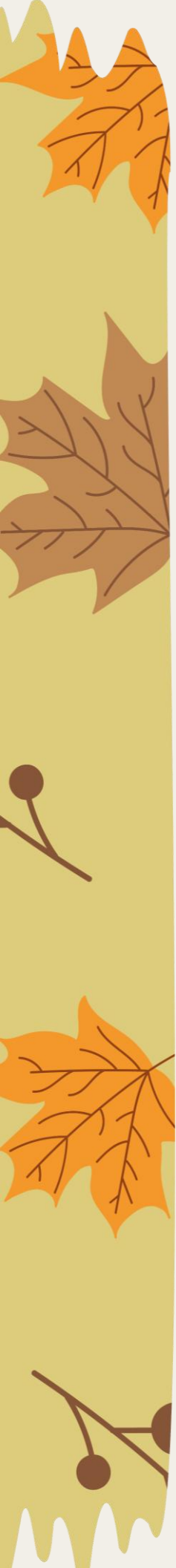


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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER

1st – 81st Anniversary of the Law Library opening

1st – Librarians at the Empowering Seniors Expo

1st – Family Law Workshop @ 10:00 am

5th – Connect with a Law Librarian Q&A Hour @ 2:00 pm

6th – Expunction & Nondisclosure Workshop @ 2:00 pm

8th – Proactive Retirement Planning Workshop @ 2:00 pm

13th – Commissioners Court

15th – Family Law Workshop @ 10:00 am

15th – Legal Literacy & Research Basics Workshop @ 2:00 pm

19th – Connect with a Law Librarian Q&A Hour @ 2:00 pm

22nd – Eviction Workshop @ 2:00 pm

30th – Trick-or-Treat at the Law Library



A decorative border surrounds the central text area. It features various autumn-themed elements: large brown and orange leaves, smaller green leaves, and a small grey raccoon with a white belly and tail tip in the upper right corner.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER

2nd – Connect with a Law Librarian Q&A Hour @ 2:00 pm

5th – Family Law Workshop @ 10:00 am

11th – Closed for Veterans Day

12th – Proactive Retirement Planning Workshop @ 2:00 pm

16th – Connect with a Law Librarian Q&A Hour @ 2:00 pm

17th – Commissioners Court

19th – Family Law Workshop @ 10:00 am

19th – Legal Literacy & Research Basics Workshop @ 2:00 pm

20th – Anniversary of Commissioners Court Resolution Creating the Law Library

26th & 27th – Closed for Thanksgiving



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

1st – Expunction & Nondisclosure Workshop @ 2:00 pm

3rd – Family Law Workshop @ 10:00 am

7th – Connect with a Law Librarian Q&A Hour @ 2:00 pm

8th – Commissioners Court

10th – Proactive Retirement Planning Workshop @ 2:00 pm

17th – Family Law Workshop @ 10:00 am

17th – Legal Literacy & Research Basics Workshop @ 2:00 pm

21st – Connect with a Law Librarian Q&A Hour @ 2:00 pm

24th & 25th – Closed for Christmas

Dell DeHay Law Library

LEGAL INFO WORKSHOPS

2026-2027

WORKSHOP

DATES

Expunction &
Nondisclosures

Every other month first Tuesday
2:00 – 3:00 PM

Family Law

First and third Thursday
10:00 – 11:00 AM

Proactive Retirement
Planning

Every second Thursday
2:00 – 3:00 PM

Legal Literacy &
Research Basics

Every third Thursday
2:00 – 3:00 PM

Evictions
(NOT APPEALS)

Every fourth Thursday
2:00 – 3:00 PM

Connect with a Law Librarian
Q&A Hour

Every first & third Monday
2:00 – 3:00 PM



Librarians and guest speakers cannot provide legal advice. Workshops are for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the advice of an attorney.

Capacity is limited to 20 participants, with admission based on the order in which participants arrive.

Countywide Announcements

Texas 90th Legislative Session Starting Soon

The Texas Legislature will soon convene at the State Capitol for its 90th regular session.

Some important dates to watch for:

- November 9, 2026 – Pre-Filing Begins
- January 12, 2027 – Opening Day
- March 12, 2027 – Last Day to File Bills
- May 31, 2027 – Session Ends; Veto Period Begins

To learn more about the legislative process, visit <https://tlc.texas.gov/publications#p-and-p-section>

To track bills and watch meetings, visit <https://capitol.texas.gov/Home.aspx>



Tarrant County Public Health

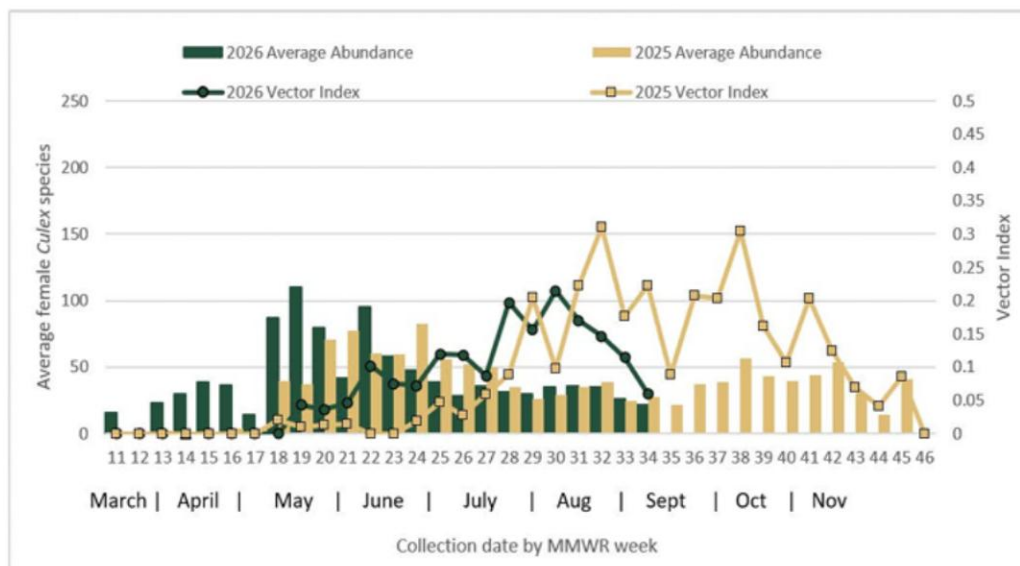
This month, we're proud to highlight the exceptional work of our Public Health Department. The Vector Control Division, led by Sabrina A. Vidaurri and Bethany L. Hambrick, continues to deliver outstanding results. Thanks to consistent larviciding efforts by Joseph T. Carr, Tarrant County is experiencing another year of sharply reduced mosquito activity.

Additional kudos go to the Workforce Team for their new training page, the clinical teams preparing for the eCW update, and the Informatics and IT staff who are making that transition seamless.

Appreciation also goes to the Environmental team for adapting to new mobile food vending rules and to the WIC teams for adapting to new program requirements.



Figure 1. Average Number of Female Culex Species Per Trap and Vector Index by Collection Date, Tarrant County, 2025-2026



Data Source: Tarrant County Public Health

Great work across the board!
Your dedication keeps our community strong and healthy.



Welcoming NEW BEGINNINGS.

Supporting Tarrant County Families.

The Tarrant County Clerk's Office Vital Records team is partnering with major hospital systems across Tarrant County to ensure new parents receive clear, accurate, and consistent information about obtaining their baby's birth certificate.



WORKING TOGETHER

By collaborating with birth registrars, we're helping families leave the hospital with the information they need.



Online Services

Easy access from home



Eight Locations

Vital Records offices across Tarrant County



Acceptable Identification

Know what to bring



Helpful Information for New Parents

Letter available in English and Spanish (with space for hospitals to add facility-specific information, Social Security guidance, or other resources)

Our goal is to reduce confusion, eliminate unnecessary hardships, and make it easier for families to obtain their baby's birth record.



Here for life's most important moments.



Mary Louise Nicholson
Tarrant County Clerk

Tarrant County Clerk's Office
countyclerk.tarrantcountytx.gov

PEOPLE ★ RECORDS ★ COMMUNITY
A STRONGER TARRANT COUNTY

Tarrant County Plaza Building

200 Taylor St, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76196
Phone: 817-884-1550

J.D. Johnson Northwest Subcourthouse

6713 Telephone Road, Suite 202
Lake Worth, Texas 76135
Phone: 817-884-1550

Southlake Town Hall

1400 Main, Suite 140
Southlake, Texas 76092
Phone: 817-884-1550

Charles F. Griffin Building

3212 Miller Avenue
Fort Worth, Texas 76105
Phone: 817-884-1550

Dionne Phillips Bagsby Southwest Subcourthouse

6551 Granbury Road, Suite 110
Fort Worth, Texas 76133
Phone: 817-884-1550

Arlington Subcourthouse

700 E. Abram St, Suite 101
Arlington, Texas 76010
Phone: 817-884-1550

Gary Fickes Northeast Subcourthouse

645 Grapevine Hwy, Suite 120
Hurst, Texas 76054
Phone: 817-884-1550

Mansfield Subcourthouse

100 E. Broad Street, Suite 102
Mansfield, Texas 76063
Phone: 817-884-1550

TARRANT COUNTY DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Promoting Constructive Dialogue and Fair Outcomes

Tarrant County Dispute Resolution (TCDR) continues its mission of helping community members navigate conflict with dignity and understanding. Whether the issue involves families, neighbors, businesses, or community groups, TCDR provides a neutral space where people can communicate openly and work toward practical solutions.

Understanding Mediation

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process guided by a trained, impartial mediator. Rather than making decisions or determining fault, the mediator supports productive conversation, helping participants identify the core issues, consider possible paths forward, and develop their own agreements.

Because the parties remain in control of the final outcome, mediation often results in solutions that feel more workable and lasting. The process is designed to reduce stress, minimize costs, and offer a more timely alternative to courtroom litigation.

Programs and Services Offered by TCDR

TCDR provides services tailored to meet a wide range of conflict-resolution needs, including:

- **Civil Mediation:** Addressing issues such as property concerns, consumer disputes, neighbor disagreements, and landlord–tenant matters.
- **Family Mediation:** Supporting families in discussions about parenting schedules, communication challenges, visitation issues, and other domestic concerns.
- **Court-Referred Mediation:** Working closely with local courts to provide efficient, neutral mediation options that help move cases toward early resolution.
- **Community Education and Outreach:** Offering informational sessions, presentations, and resources on conflict resolution skills and the benefits of mediation within the community.

Our Commitment to Tarrant County

TCDR is proud to offer accessible and affordable services delivered by skilled mediators dedicated to fostering respectful dialogue. Our goal is to ensure that every individual has the opportunity to resolve conflict in a safe and supportive setting. Through mediation, we help strengthen communication, rebuild trust, and encourage sustainable resolutions.



For more details about scheduling a mediation or learning about upcoming educational programs, the Tarrant County Dispute Resolution office is always available to assist. Visit:

<https://www.tarrantcountytexas.gov/disputeresolution>

Celebrating 30 Years of Service

After 30 years of dedicated service to Tarrant County and the Tarrant County Clerk's Office, Lissa Willis is retiring.

Over the years, Lissa became our unofficial "official photographer," always there to capture the special moments, celebrations, and memories of not just our team, but employees from various county departments along the way.

Lissa, thank you for 30 incredible years of service and for helping preserve so many special memories. We wish you all the happiness and wonderful adventures that retirement brings!

Congratulations, Lissa – YOU WILL BE MISSED!



81ST ANNIVERSARY OF LAW LIBRARY FORMAL OPENING ON OCTOBER 1ST 1945

August 21, 1921

Texas passed Articles 1498³/₄–1498³/₄g. These laws let a county's Commissioners Court set up a law library at the county seat if the county has a city of more than 160,000 people, with a budget cap of \$20,000.

November 20, 1944

Commissioners' Court passed resolution creating Tarrant County Law Library, effective December 1, 1944.

October 1, 1945

Library officially opened to the public.

George W. Steere County Librarian

George W. Steere, 1501 S. Lake, veteran attorney, and long time secretary of the Library Board, today became Tarrant County's first librarian.

He was appointed by Commissioners' Court, upon recommendation of the Fort Worth Bar Assn., to preside over the new county library which will soon be opened on the third floor of the County Courthouse.

Mr. Steere's salary will be \$175 monthly. Expenses of the library will be met with a \$1 filing fee for all civil county and district suits, except tax suits. The fee became effective Dec. 1, on orders of Commissioners' Court.



County Library To Open Sept. 1

The Tarrant County Library, to be located on the third floor of the County Courthouse, will be opened to the public about Sept. 1, it was stated today by George W. Steere, librarian.

A crew of workmen is renovating the quarters which formerly housed the second court of civil appeals library, which will be combined with the new library. Walls have been painted and a new floor and new lighting system are to be installed.

Two offices also have been built for the library.

"When we open we will have about 7,000 books, including those donated to the Fort Worth Bar Assn.," said Mr. Steere.

Copies of all wartime regulations instituted by the federal government will be obtained for the library.

All About the Family Justice Center

What is a Family Justice Center?

A family justice center (FJC) is the bringing together of a multi-agency network, under one roof, dedicated to providing coordinated services to victims of domestic violence and their children. The program is led by One Safe Place.

What happens when someone goes to the Family Justice Center?

1. Begin creating a safer situation for you and your family by speaking with the folks at the FJC so they can better understand your circumstances.
2. Staff at the FJC will assess your situation to determine your level of risk.
3. After the risk assessment, they will work with you to develop a plan that will provide short-term solutions to keep you and your family safe.
4. A service plan, or long-term plan, is created at the end. Staff at the FJC will be with you every step along the way so you are never alone in any of the process.

Do I need to make an appointment?

No! Simply call or walk-in to the main location on Hemphill or the satellite location in Grapevine to get help.

How can I contact the FJC?

You can call them at **817-916-4323** or visit them in person at these locations:

Main Location: Mon.-Thursday
between 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. &
Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Located at 1100 Hemphill Street,
Fort Worth, TX 76104.

Satellite Location: GRACE in
Grapevine, Located at 837 E. Walnut
St., Grapevine, TX 76051. By
appointment only, our main number
is 817-916-4323.

Is this service right for me?

At this moment, you may feel overwhelmed, embarrassed or just plain scared. Any relationship may be considered abusive if one person tries to control another through isolation, fear or threats. Physical abuse, even once, is NEVER okay. If you are in a relationship where someone hits or is hurting you, you are not alone. Staff at the Family Justice Center is here to help you, without judgment.



What services are provided?

Counseling services, children's advocacy, drop-in childcare, food and clothing assistance, immigration services, job skills training, referral to law enforcement, legal assistance, parenting and relationship education, spiritual support, victim advocacy and case management and healthcare/wellness advocacy.

Who provides these services?

**Off-site partners*

Alliance for Hope International	MHMR Tarrant County
ACH Child and Family Services	New Day Services
Alliance for Children*	North Richland Hills Police Department*
Bedford Police Department*	One Safe Place
Benbrook Police Department*	Richland Hills Police Department*
Burleson Police Department*	River Oaks Police Department*
Catholic Charities	Southside Church of Christ*
Cheryl's Voice	Tarleton State University
Clayton Youth Enrichment	Tarrant Area Food Bank
Crazy 8 Ministries*	Tarrant County District Attorney's Office
Eules Police Department*	Texas A&M University School of Law
EmpathyHQ (Formerly Alliance Child & Family Solutions)	The Ladder Alliance
Flor Yoga Institute	The NET
Fort Worth Police Department	The Parenting Center
GRACE*	The Shaken Baby Alliance
Grapevine Police Department*	The Women's Center of Tarrant County*
Hagar's Heart	Unbound Now North Texas
Hairapy Center	Watauga Police Department*
Hurst Police Department*	Westover Hills Police Department*
Kennedale Police Department*	White Settlement Police Department*
Lake Worth Police Department*	
Legal Aid of Northwest Texas	
Mansfield Police Department*	
Methodist Justice Ministry	



Fireside Fiction: Law & Legal Themes in Classic Fall Literature

By: Amarainie Marquez

Fall is my favorite time of year! With the changing colors of the leaves, brisk late October air, spooky tones and pumpkin spice left and right, I can't think of a cozier time. But perhaps my favorite thing about fall is curling up with classic books and stories that reflect these fall themes alongside autumn's atmosphere of mystery, reflection and transition. In this issue, we're going to be spotlighting stories and titles that weave law or legal issues into their narratives in sometimes subtle but always interesting ways. Whether you love a full courthouse drama, a mysterious fall setting or just seeing how law quietly shapes the stories we love, this fall's literary picks offer a blend of all the things that make fall the best time of the year. We hope this feature inspires you to order that pumpkin spice latte, find a big ol' comfortable reading chair and explore the intersection of literature and law.

To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee

One of the most well-known case trial books in American literature and often lauded as a masterpiece, this Southern Gothic novel became an instant classic and won a Pulitzer only a year after its publication in 1960. Set in Alabama, it follows Scout, the 6-year-old child of Atticus Finch, a lawyer who undertakes a racially charged case that pulls into question everything from justice, evidence, fair trial proceedings and the impact these all have on the social equilibrium of a small, divided town. The quiet streets, simmering tensions and mysterious Boo Radley are just some elements that coincide with the reflective pace of the autumn season.

Dracula, Bram Stoker

A Gothic horror novel that has inspired countless renditions in popular culture, this classic epistolary novel has been in the public consciousness since its publication in 1897. The book starts with Jonathan Harker, a lawyer who must visit Count Dracula in Transylvania to assist him in purchasing a house in London. This spooky, perfect for fall novel also touches on other legal processes, like wills, property transfers, foreign travel documentation and more, that quietly shape the narrative.

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Washington Irving

This 1820 short story has been adapted several times into film, television, music, even theme parks and more. The spooky tone is set in superstitious Sleepy Hollow valley with strange tales and talk of a headless horseman. It follows the timid Ichabod Crane and the rivalry he has with Brom Bones surrounding the courtship of Katrina Van Tassel. This story explores more than just ghosts and marriage proposals, but also social norms, rumors and authority that function as a legal framework that the citizens of Tarrytown are all but bound to.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle

This collection of short stories, first published in 1892, star detective Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, who have been the subject of endless reprisals, spin-offs and adaptations to this day. The stories follow Holmes as he tries to identify and correct social injustices, making it a perfect cozy read for mystery enthusiasts. Holmes serves as the means to bring balance to a seemingly unjust world of privilege, class, power and the ways these intersect with law and legal processes.

The Woman in White, Wilkie Collins

Another detective fiction, this 1860 mystery novel follows multiple narrators, a reflection of how court trials include multiple witnesses and perspectives. This novel opens with an eerie, ghost-like encounter on a moonlit road with a lost woman in all white and is subsequently filled with tons of legal complications involving marriage law, property rights, identity and the legal implications of institutional confinement, highlighting the power of legal processes and its impact on justice.

Bleak House, Charles Dickens

At the center of this 1850s novel is an incredibly long-running case that nods at the sometimes-slow way bureaucracy can unfold. The text explores procedural delays, the human cost of litigation and the ways legal systems can both support and exhaust their constituents. Alongside these legal themes are foggy streets, a hefty dose of mystery and various entanglements that make it an ideal fall read.

The Canterville Ghost, Oscar Wilde

A classic ghost story that fits perfectly with the rest of our autumn reads, this short story about a haunted mansion comes with conversation about property rights, contracts and the expectations therein, as well as resident (ghostly or otherwise) rights. This is a more lighthearted and humorous pick that showcases the way the supernatural can coincide with legal matters as a perfect pairing for fall.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson

This 1886 Gothic horror novella opens with a lawyer investigating a series of strange happenings between his old friend, Dr. Jekyll, and a mysterious murderer named Mr. Hyde. It touches on legal questions like evidence, criminal responsibility, testimony and justice. The eerie atmosphere makes this an ideal fall read, alongside the ways law can uncover secrets and can help make sense of the often chaotic and confusing world around us.



8 Ways to Avoid Probate

This article is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the advice of an attorney

Estate laws can change and individual situations vary. Consider consulting a licensed attorney with a specialization in estate planning for advice specific to your circumstances.

Probate is the court-supervised process of distributing assets after death and validating the will (if there is one). People usually try to avoid it as much as possible due to the process being time consuming, costly, lacking privacy and tendency to create family conflict via confusion or lack of clarity about the decedent's last wishes.

Set Up Payable on Death Accounts

Notify your bank of whom you want to inherit the money or certificate of deposit in an account as the Payable on Death Beneficiary. The beneficiary does not have access to anything until after your death, but once you pass away, they automatically obtain access to the accounts without the need for probate.

Name a Beneficiary for Your Retirement Accounts

When you create or enroll in a 401K, the forms will ask you to name a beneficiary and sometimes also an alternate. fill this out!

With 401Ks, your spouse is entitled to inherit all the money in the account unless they sign a written waiver consenting to your choice of another beneficiary. If you divorce, be sure to change your beneficiary designation on the forms – don't rely on the divorce decree. "A surviving spouse who is the sole beneficiary has more flexibility about what to do with the money than do other beneficiaries" (Randolph 44).

Name a Beneficiary for Your Stocks & Bonds

Ask your broker for beneficiary forms. After your death, they can claim the securities without probate but have no rights to the stock as long as you are alive.

Texas is a community property state, so your spouse may own half of whatever securities you own, even if you hold them in your name only, if you bought securities with money that you earned while married.

Name a Beneficiary for Your Vehicles

Complete the *Beneficiary Designation for a Motor Vehicle form* from the Texas DMV to designate your beneficiary. Complete the *Application for Texas Title* to add the beneficiary's name to the car title. Take both to the tax assessor-collector's office. That's it!

Name a Beneficiary for Your Real Estate

Consider utilizing a *Transfer on Death Deed*, which names beneficiaries to inherit your property automatically upon your death without the need for probate. While you are alive, you remain in full control of the property and are free to sell it, borrow against it or change your mind and revoke the deed at any time.

Hold Property in Joint Ownership

In Texas, holding property as "Joint tenancy with right of survivorship" and "Tenancy by the entirety (married couples only)" are methods that avoid probate.

In Joint tenancy with right of survivorship, property automatically passes to the surviving owner when the other dies. Without this, when one owner dies, their share of the property goes to their heirs instead of the other owner.

Create a Living Trust

Living trusts are created when you're alive, not via your will. Holding assets in a trust has no legal consequences while you're alive, because you control the trust. You can end or change it at any time. After your death, property is easily transferred to whoever you chose, without the need for probate, by your chosen executor.

You can create one by preparing and signing a document called a "Declaration of Trust" or "Instrument of Trust." Then you name your inheritors and alternate beneficiaries, in case something happens to your inheritors and makes them unable to accept your assets. Then you transfer your assets and property (real estate, stocks, bank accounts) to the trustee, who is you. After you die, the person you named to be the "successor trustee" will take over as trustee and will transfer property to the trust beneficiaries.

You may still wish to create a will for guardianship of minor children and any property you forgot or acquire, however.

Take Advantage of Special Procedures for Small Estates

You can claim property with affidavits and skip the need for court. In Texas, this is called the "Small Estate Affidavit." To qualify as a small estate, the estate must be \$75,000 or less. The affidavit is signed by all heirs and two disinterested witnesses. The deceased must have died intestate (without a will). It can only be used to transfer homestead, no other real estate. A probate judge must approve the affidavit.

Make Gifts

If you do not own something when you die, it doesn't have to go through probate. Making gifts before you pass lowers probate costs as well and if you give away enough, you can qualify for small estate affidavits. For those concerned with gift and estate tax: this is really only an issue for about .02% of estates. If during your lifetime, you give away more than \$15 million in taxable gifts or if after your death you leave behind more than \$15 million, then you'd need to worry about estate tax. Otherwise, this is not an issue you need to consider.

A thoughtful estate plan can bring clarity, reduce stress for loved ones, and ensure that your wishes are honored without unnecessary court involvement. By taking advantage of beneficiary designations, joint ownership options, living trusts, and other probate-avoidance tools, you can make the transfer of your assets smoother and more private. Everyone's circumstances are different, so consider reviewing your plans regularly and consulting with a qualified estate planning attorney to determine which strategies are best suited to your needs and goals.





“THAT’S NOT MY NAME?!”

Name Change Resources & Why It Is Becoming More Common

By: C.K. Hardy

In recent years, the law library has seen an increase in the number of name change questions, and patrons needing forms for a court ordered name change. This is likely due to several factors such as

- **Digital verification:** As financial, medical, and government systems rely more heavily on digital identity verification, having consistent documents and records has become increasingly important. For example, when a birth certificate and driver's license do not match.
- **Family transitions:** Marriage, divorce, blended families, adoption, and guardianship cases commonly trigger name change needs. A name change is commonly included in most final orders for divorce or a part of the marriage process, but there is a limited amount of time to ensure a name is changed.
- **Personal identity:** More Texans are pursuing name changes to align with their gender or cultural identity.
- **Safety and privacy:** In some cases, people seek name changes to protect themselves from harassment or to maintain privacy. If this is the case be sure to check out our research guide on [sealing court records](#).

Whether someone is updating a name after marriage or divorce, changing a child’s name, or seeking a court ordered change for personal or safety reasons, Texas offers clear procedures. Although, navigating them can feel daunting. Fortunately, organizations like law libraries and Texas Law Help provide step by step guidance that helps Texans complete the process efficiently. These institutions help Texans understand the legal requirements, gather needed documents, and update key identity records.





And remember, it is your responsibility to have your official documents changed to show your new name. Here are some important records to consider updating.

- **Banking/Retirement/Investment Accounts:** May vary per institution.
- **Birth Certificate:** You can also change your name on your birth certificate if you choose, but it is not required. If you wish to change your birth certificate, you will need to get an *Application to Amend Certificate of Birth* from the Texas Vital Statistics Unit.
- **Diploma:** May vary per institution.
- **Driver's License or State Identification Card:** To change your driver's license or state identification card, you must take a certified copy of the order changing your name to a Texas Department of Public Safety office. For more information, contact the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).
- **Email Address/Social Media/Resume Etc.**
- **Employer:** Contact your HR department for specific requirements.
- **Passport:** To change your name on your passport, notify the U.S. State Department.
- **Pet's Name at the Veterinarian's Office:** They may not need a court ordered name change, but they are family.
- **Property Deeds and Titles:** Check out our research guide for property [Deeds](#) or check with your County Tax Assessor-Collector Office for vehicle titles.
- **Social Security Card:** To change your social security card, take or mail a certified copy of the order changing your name to your local social security office. For more information visit: U.S. Social Security Administration.
- **Voter Registration Card:** To change your name on your voter registration card, notify your County Voter Registrar in writing. For more information, contact the Texas Secretary of State.

TL;DR - Quick Links

- **[TexasLawHelp — Adult Name Change](#)** Shows adults how to change their names, with free forms and steps.
- **[TexasLawHelp — Child Name Change](#)** Helps parents or guardians change a child's name. Includes a step-by-step guide and forms.
- **[Texas State Law Library — Name Change FAQs](#)** Answers common questions about name changes in Texas and points you to more help.
- **[Adult Name Change Research Guide \(PDF\)](#)** A handy guide with the rules and links to sample forms for adults.
- **[Texas DPS — Change Your Driver License Info](#)** Tells you how to update your name on your Texas driver license or ID card.
- **[TxDMV — Titles & Registration](#)** Shows how to update the name on your car title and registration. Forms and office links included.
- **[Texas Vital Statistics — Marriage/Divorce Records](#)** Order certified records you may need when changing your name after marriage or divorce.
- **[Texas Vital Statistics — Birth Records & Corrections](#)** Provides forms and instructions for correcting or updating birth certificates after a court order.



PUMPKIN, SPICE, AND EVERYTHING NOT SO NICE

By: C.K. Hardy

When autumn arrives, most people think of cozy sweaters, warm drinks, and pumpkins living peaceful lives as porch décor. But in the legal world, these gourds sometimes end up at the center of cases that are anything but pumpkin-spice pleasant. Below is a sampling of real cases where pumpkins rolled straight into the courtroom.

THE STATE OF KANSAS V. MORRISON

Nothing says “autumn ambiance” like learning to bake a pumpkin pie, unless that lesson is merely a pretext for criminal conduct. In this case, the defendant used the excuse to learn how to make a pumpkin pie to lure the victim to his home to assault her.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA V. *PUMPKIN SEED*

With a name fit for a harvest festival, Mr. Pumpkin Seed appealed his conviction by challenging rulings under Federal Rule of Evidence 412. He argued that details of the victim’s past sexual activity should have been admitted. The court, however, was not persuaded and held firm that the rules protect certain areas from unnecessary intrusion.

VERMONT MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY V. DALZELL

This one was an insurance case where the son of the defendants intentionally dropped a pumpkin on the highway to scare motorists and ultimately caused an injury. The case sought to determine if the insurance company could be held liable.

LAKEVIEW FARMS, LTD. V. DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, STATE OF OREGON, AND WASHINGTON COUNTY ASSESSOR

Pumpkin patch season brings hayrides, wheelbarrows, and photo ops, but does it bring tax exemptions? Lakeview Farms argued that their boats and trains ferrying visitors to the pumpkin patch were farm equipment. The Tax Court concluded these were more fall festival attractions and not "used to cultivate farmland or to raise animals.”

BRIDGMAN V. SAFEWAY STORES, INC.

Pumpkins do not always stay where shoppers expect them. In this California case, a customer was injured when pumpkins fell from a display. She challenged the jury instructions. Although the instructions were imperfect, the court found no miscarriage of justice. Sometimes the real hazard of a self-service pumpkin bin is simply gravity doing its job.

STATE OF LOUISIANA V. BROWN

In perhaps the most dramatic use of a pumpkin in legal history, the defendant allegedly hid poison inside a pumpkin being cooked. The trial court allowed hearsay and barred a defense witness, resulting in a conviction. The Louisiana Supreme Court reversed, sending the case back for a do-over, called a trial de novo.

LONG V. SMITH FOOD KING STORE, AND CREAM O'WEBER DAIRY

A classic slip-and-fall with an autumn twist: the plaintiff slipped on a piece of pumpkin pie offered as a complimentary store sample. The court concluded that the store had acted reasonably and could not have foreseen every rogue bit of dessert that might escape a customer’s plate. Pumpkin pie is delightful, but apparently also deceptively slippery.



DELL DEHAY LAW LIBRARY

Hours:

Monday-Friday, 8:00am-4:00pm

Note: Public computers automatically shut down at 4:00pm

Phone Number:

817-884-1481

Email:

lawlibrary@tarrantcountytexas.gov

Physical Address:

100 W. Weatherford St., Suite 420

Fort Worth, TX 76196

Website:

<https://www.tarrantcountytexas.gov/en/law-library.html>

CONNECT WITH A LAW LIBRARIAN

Although not required, we recommend scheduling a one-on-one appointment with a Law Librarian for in-depth research questions to ensure we can give your request the time and attention it deserves.

Note: Librarians cannot provide legal advice, which includes choosing specific forms, applying facts to the law, telling you what to do in your case, or performing any tasks that would be considered the practice of law. However, we can help you find information and legal resources to support your research.

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