

# Around the Bar

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**Bar Luncheon:  
Thursday, June 2**

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# attorney spotlight

BY CHRISTINA GIRAU

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MELISSA & BUDDY STOCKWELL

## Interview with LAP Director Joseph “Buddy” Stockwell III

After sailing the Americas from the Caribbean to Cape Cod and covering 18,793 nautical miles over five-and-a-half years, Joseph “Buddy” Stockwell III is embarking on a new adventure as the executive director for the Louisiana Lawyers’ Assistance Program (LAP).

As fate would have it, Stockwell first heard that Bill Leary – longtime executive director of LAP – soon would be retiring when Stockwell and his wife Melissa were in Ft. Lauderdale trying to sell their catamaran, Indigo Moon. Within weeks Stockwell had sold the boat and settled into his new life in Mandeville, officially assuming Leary’s position Jan. 1, 2011.

While on the open water, Stockwell learned many lessons that are applicable to his new position. He learned that even with an immense amount of planning there can be unforeseen surprises that change your daily routine. For example, Stockwell didn’t foresee finding a six-foot red-tailed boa constrictor sunbathing atop his bedroom cabin while anchored off the jungles of Panama. After photographing their new friend and making multiple attempts to move the snake (ending with success), Melissa immediately insisted that the task of “daily snake patrol” be added to her husband’s list of responsibilities.

In a less frightening event, Stockwell learned to interact with people from different cultures. After Stockwell saved one of their boats from sinking by using epoxy putty to plug a leak, the Stockwells were openly welcomed by the Kuna Indians located on the San Blas islands of Panama. As soon as they anchored off the island, boats of Kuna women and children boarded the Indigo Moon. The ship quickly turned into a marketplace where the Kuna women sold molas, a traditional textile art with colorful designs, while the children ran around the deck playing.

Another lesson Stockwell learned was that some things, like sailing, are tougher than one might think. “People back home sipping coffee and looking at gray winter days of snow and ice, all while reading dreadful local stories in their morning newspaper, prefer the cruising dream to appear as a Jimmy Buffett-inspired mirage, where there is no pressure and everything is warm and wonderful. It’s the grass is greener syndrome on steroids,” Stockwell said.

Working day and night aboard the Indigo Moon is an example of Stockwell’s strong work ethic. “The truth



In photos above: Joseph “Buddy” Stockwell III swims in the Caribbean; a sea turtle; and a sunbathing six-foot red-tailed boa constrictor.

is that daily life aboard a boat is extremely challenging and requires serious effort and industry to keep things floating, literally. We did not have anywhere near the idle time we envisioned,” Stockwell said. Doing simple tasks such as obtaining clean water and purchasing groceries were a hefty task in Third World countries. Day-to-day responsibilities, such as boat maintenance and repair, kept the couple busy. For more about the Stockwell’s adventures, see [www.indigomoon.us](http://www.indigomoon.us).

Stockwell has been an active member of the LSBA’s Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse for more than 15 years. Additionally, he currently holds more than 120 hours of accredited course work in substance abuse counseling and has been a part of the recovery community



Melissa and Buddy Stockwell are scuba diving near the island of Bonaire.

for more than 28 years. “In light of my background and extensive experience with LAP, the position was a perfect fit for me and vice versa,” Stockwell said.

LAP is an independent nonprofit corporation, and its mission is to serve the public, the bar and the profession by assisting, on a confidential basis, lawyers or judges whose professional impairment may stem from alcohol/drug abuse, gambling addiction, depression or any other mental health problems.



According to a recent Johns Hopkins study of 105 different professions, the legal profession suffers the highest rate of depression by far. Other studies have shown that 20 percent of lawyers and judges struggle with alcoholism and drug addiction – twice the rate of the general population.

“Louisiana LAP is part of a nationwide effort of programs across the nation to address the epidemic of depression, mental illness, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling addiction and other problems that beset our profession at alarming rates,” Stockwell said

All calls to LAP are confidential by law. For more information visit [www.louisianalap.com](http://www.louisianalap.com) or [www.lsba.org](http://www.lsba.org) or call (866) 354-9334. ■

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