

## **Faculty Biographies**

### **Ashley Stearns**

Has built a law practice that focuses on all aspects of estate planning ranging end-to-end from living trusts to complex wills to decedent estate administration. Stearns started her professional career while still in college as a legislative intern to Tennessee State Representative John Hood. Later, while attending law school, she worked as a law clerk with the late Tennessee State Representative W. Kent Coleman in his estate planning law practice in Murfreesboro. Eventually, this working relationship blossomed into the law firm of Coleman & Stearns. The firm, located in Murfreesboro, is uniquely focused on all facets of estate planning, probate, business and real estate transactions, as well as related tax law.

### **Judge Carma McGee**

Currently serves on the Tennessee Court of Appeals for the Western Section. Prior to this, she was a Chancellor for the Twenty Fourth Judicial District. Judge McGee was in private practice for 15 years, later serving as a City judge in Savannah, North Carolina; and a Trainer for the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts. She holds degrees from Union University and the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law.

### **Judge Christopher Craft**

Is a criminal court judge for the Shelby County Criminal Court Division VIII in the Thirtieth Judicial District of Tennessee, where he has served since 1994. Prior to this, he was a private practitioner; later serving as an Assistant District Attorney; and Senior Trial Prosecutor in Major Violators Unit. Judge Craft received his undergraduate degree from University of Memphis and his law degree from University of Memphis Law School. His post graduate work consists of Vanderbilt University - 1969-1972 and Memphis Theological Seminary - 1979-1980.

### **Dan Norwood**

Has over thirty years of experience representing individuals in cases involving race, sex, age, national origin, religious or disability discrimination; retaliatory discharge for engaging in protected activities such as whistle blowing, making a workers' compensation claim, or protesting unlawful discrimination; and breach of contract. Norwood has been recognized for

his many successes in suing government and discriminating employers and has provided counsel and advice to numerous executives and professionals on employment contracts, non-competition agreements, and the negotiation of better separation/severance pay agreements.

### **Karl Warden**

Is an experienced and accomplished lawyer who's been recognized many times for his estate planning work, specifically with wills & trusts. He's been awarded a four-time National Presenter distinction from the National Business Institute and a Continuing Legal Education Excellence Award from the Nashville Bar Association. Warden earned his BA in anthropology from Vanderbilt University; West Virginia University College of Law and his LLM from George Washington University.

### **Judge Rhynette Hurd**

Is a Circuit Court Judge in Shelby Co. Prior to becoming a judge, she served as a Law Clerk to Judge Bailey Brown - U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit; was an Associate with Armstrong, Allen, Gentry, et al.; Chief Counsel at International Paper Company; Assistant General Counsel at Accredo Health, Inc.; Vice President, Corporate Counsel at Sedgwick Claims Management Service, Inc.; and is a Founder/Mediator of Blair Ridder Hurd PLLC. Judge Hurd holds degrees from Mount Holyoke College, B.A; Harvard Graduate School of Education, M.A.T.; George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, Ph.D. and Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, J.D.

### **Tiffany Johnson**

Majored in Literature and worked as an English teacher before following in her father's footsteps to become an attorney. After practicing personal injury law at a national firm, she soon found her niche and ventured out on her own as a freelance brief writer. Johnson offers CLE seminars on legal research and writing, document design, and effective argumentation. She also teaches Torts and Legal Writing and coordinates the undergraduate Legal Studies program at the University of Memphis.

### **Judge W. Mark Ward**

Is a Criminal Court Judge for the Thirtieth District Criminal Court, Division IX, where he has served since 2004. Prior to this, he was private practitioner, an Assistant Public Defender of Shelby County and an Adjunct Instructor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

at the University of Memphis. Ward litigated the high-profile case of *Rogers v. Tennessee*, which he argued before the United States Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. Judge Ward currently teaches criminal procedure as an Adjunct Instructor at the School of Law at the University of Memphis. He received a Bachelor Degree in Law Enforcement and a Master of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Memphis, and is a graduate of the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law.