

# PACDL Again a Viable Organization



By Rebecca Hamilton

Mission Statement of PACDL: The Pinellas County Criminal Defense Lawyers Association promotes the competent defense of the accused through the exchange of information and ideas in pursuit of professionalism, integrity and fair play.

**M**any of you know, but some may not, that PACDL was jump started again in late 2010 with the help of the Florida Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (FACDL).

On September 30, 2010, local criminal defense attorneys and FACDL members Varinia Van Ness, Richard Hersch of Miami (former president of FACDL) and Brian Tannebaum (current president of FACDL) attended a PACDL party graciously hosted by longtime FACDL and PACDL member Denis DeVlaming at his Clearwater office. At this meeting, plans were hatched and support was garnered for a renewed commitment to the strength and mission of PACDL.

Soon thereafter, PACDL's new officers were elected: Marc Pelletier as President, Craig Whisenhunt as Vice President, Craig Epifanio as Treasurer, Seth Kerr as Secretary, and myself as Membership Chair, along with Veronica Burianek as Membership Co-Chair.

Since October, PACDL has held informative and engaging monthly meetings. In January 2011, Chief Judge J. Thomas McGrady, with Circuit Court Judge Philip Federico and County Court Judge James Pierce met with our members at Bascom's restaurant to have a casual and informative exchange on expectations from the Bench of the Criminal Defense Bar. In May, we headed to Tampa to enjoy a luncheon and tour of Turning Point, a private treatment facility for substance abuse. Each meeting provides PACDL members with updates in case law and

dialogues on important topics such as sentencing.



PACDL provided practical and necessary assistance in providing competent representation to our clients. A major logistical problem for defense lawyers practicing in Pinellas County appeared in early 2011. Sheriff Jim Coats had implemented a policy barring private criminal defense lawyers from visiting prospective clients in the Pinellas County Jail if they had not filed a Notice of Appearance. A policy that was well-intentioned and designed to protect inmates had the unintended consequence of interfering with the business of defense lawyers and the advocacy of inmates. After PACDL President Marc Pelletier met with the Sheriff Coats, the policy was quickly reversed.

PACDL meets the second Wednesday of every month. In June we are sharing motions that are particularly effective in

court on a variety of topics. At its August 10, 2011 lunch meeting, PACDL has invited former state criminal prosecutor, long time Florida Bar Disciplinary Counsel, and current Bar Professional Ethics Committee member Joseph Corsmeier to speak on important and current ethics issues and tips for criminal defense lawyers. Even more important is that PACDL has applied for 1 hour of Bar ethics CLE credit for the presentation!

As many of you know, Joe is well known as an ethics "go to" guy and as a speaker on ethics topics relating to ethical pitfalls and considerations for lawyers and criminal law practitioners. We expect Joe to have a lively and interactive presentation so be sure to bring your questions with you to the meeting!

PACDL is now on FACEBOOK and can be found at [www.PACDL.com](http://www.PACDL.com), where a list serve is in the works for members to exchange information.

If you are not a current member and would like an application, please contact Membership Chair Rebecca Hamilton at [Becky@hamiltonlawservices.com](mailto:Becky@hamiltonlawservices.com). Once a member, you will receive email reminders of meeting dates, times and topics. We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting!

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