

THE VOICE OF ETHICS

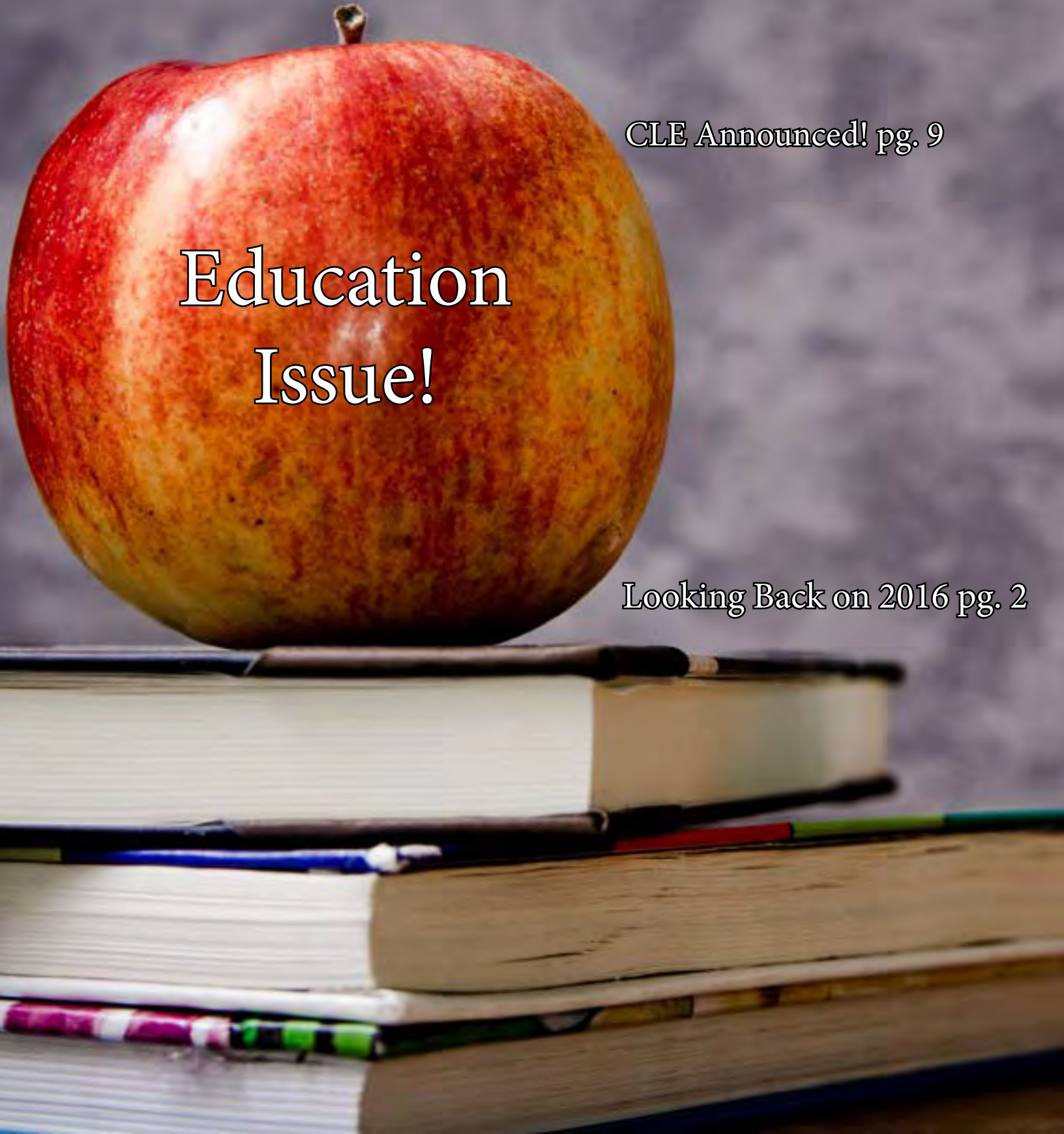
A Publication of the
Ohio Ethics Commission

Winter 2017 Edition

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The Ohio Ethics Commission Looks Back on 2016!

Advisory Opinions

The Ohio Ethics Commission recognizes that most public officials and employees want to comply with the law. The Commission encourages people to seek guidance and advice about potential conflicts of interest before acting on them. Understanding the law and receiving prompt and accurate guidance leads to fewer violations of the Ethics Law that protects both the person seeking guidance and the public as a whole.

The Commission's two staff Advisory Attorneys had a busy year in 2016! In fact, they responded to:

- 183 written requests for opinions;
- more than 3,200 e-mails from people seeking guidance (an increase of more than 1,000 emails from last year!); and
- more than 2,000 telephone inquiries seeking guidance.

The requests for advice and guidance came from all sectors of the state, including cities, counties, villages and townships. The most common issues the Advisory Attorneys addressed included questions regarding:

- Financial Disclosure requirements;
- Gifts;
- Nepotism;
- Private Outside Employment;
- Dual Service (holding two public positions simultaneously); and
- Revolving Door (post – employment).

The charts below represent the types of questions the Commission received in writing and the types of entities requesting written advice. All written requests were issued within 15 days of receiving the request!



You are welcome to seek similar guidance should you ever have questions under the Ohio Ethics Law. Get more information by visiting this [page](#).

Ethics Education

Like our Advisory Attorneys, the Education and Training staff at the Ohio Ethics Commission are committed to helping public officials and employees better understand and therefore comply with the law. To this end, the Commission provides numerous training options each year, in both classroom and electronic styles leading to a busy and productive 2016!

Eleven live webinars throughout the year attracted nearly 1,500 on-line learners. For those desiring a classroom training, the Commission presented 219 “live” training across the state attended by more than 17,000 people! If your office would be interested in having a speaker present a course regarding the Ethics Law in your office, please visit this [page](#) of our website for more information.

Finally, the redesigned [Ohio Ethics Commission website](#) was introduced in 2016. We think you will find the site even more “user-friendly” and navigable by smart phones and tablets. You will find Frequently Asked Questions under each section of the website (Advisory, Education, Investigations, etc.) and a plethora of helpful information to assist you in providing ethical and productive public service.

E-courses

In addition to our classroom trainings, thousands of public officials and employees took advantage of the online learning opportunities on the Commission’s web site for convenient and cost-effective training.

- The online courses include full courses that provide an overview of the entire Ethics Law:
 - Full course used by thousands of public employees and officials
 - More than 12,000 learners obtained Continuing Education Units (CEU) and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit through the e-course.
- The Commission also offered electronic “topic-specific” courses. These brief e-courses include topics such as gifts, nepotism, and conflicts of interest. These e-courses enhance understanding of specific provisions of Ethics Law that commonly generate questions
- New e-courses introduced in 2016 include:
 - The “Conference Question”
 - The Ohio Ethics Law and Job-Seeking Restrictions
 - The Ohio Ethics Law and Newly Elected Officer Holders: What Should You Know?



Investigations

The Ohio Ethics Commission is also statutorily charged with investigating alleged violations of the Ethics Law and refers cases supported by substantial evidence for prosecution or alternative resolution.

In 2016, there was a total of 172 cases investigated with Investigative Staff responding to 844 telephone investigative inquiries and processing 421 information requests or allegations of wrongdoing.

The Commission formally opened 74 new investigations in 2016 with 71 being closed, including settlement and censure cases. See below for more details regarding the types of violations and entities investigated.



- Entities investigated:
 - Cities/Villages – 39 percent of total investigative caseload
 - Townships – 12 percent of total investigative caseload
 - Public Schools – 16 percent of total investigative caseload
 - Charter Schools - 5 percent of total investigative caseload
 - Counties – 12 percent
 - Vendors - 4 percent of total investigative caseload
 - State Government – 5 percent of total investigative caseload
 - Public Universities - 8 percent of total investigative caseload
- Violations investigated:
 - Public Contracts (includes nepotism) – 49 percent
 - Conflicts of Interest (includes gifts) – 29 percent
 - Public Contract and Nepotism Combination – 10 percent

Financial Disclosure

Ohio's law requires many public officials and employees to file personal financial disclosure statements each year. The Commission administers the financial disclosure requirement for those officials and employees which included receiving more than 10,400 statements in 2016 with 82 percent of these filers using the Commission's on-line filing system.

If you are a new financial disclosure filer, please visit [this page](#) of our web site for more information regarding the requirements and how to use the on-line filing system.



The Ohio Ethics Commission continues to strive to provide excellent and convenient Ethics Education! The 2017 training schedule includes on-site and electronic training opportunities.

Visit <http://www.ethics.ohio.gov/education/sessions.shtml> or see below for information on the various options available to learn more about the law. Questions? Contact Susan Willeke at (614) 466- 7090 or susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov

On-Site Training

The Ohio Ethics Commission is often lauded for its interactive and interesting “live” ethics education sessions. These courses are conducted around the state and are especially coveted by those learners who prefer direct interaction and an opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue. These presentations are provided for state and local governments and vary from 30 minute keynote addresses to half-day sessions.

These trainings are free to your agency; as a result, the Ethics Commission reserves travel for speeches with larger groups. If your office/agency is outside the Columbus area, we request a minimum of 75 attendees to conduct a live presentation. To schedule a speaker or to discuss other appropriate options, please contact Susan Willeke at the contact information above.

2017 E-Course: “The Ohio Ethics Law: It’s Everybody’s Business”

In the past several year, thousands of state and local government officials and employees have taken advantage of the cost – effective and interactive e-learning opportunities provided by the Ohio Ethics Commission. This year’s e-course, “The Ohio Ethics Law: It’s Everybody’s Business” provides an overview of the Ethics Law using new videos and interactive learning. It is now available on our website and is approximately 70 minutes long.

This e-course meets the annual training requirement for state officials and employees as outlined in the Governor’s Ethics Executive Order. We are also pleased to announce to attorneys that this year’s e-course was again approved for one general hour of self-study CLE!

Webinars

In 2016, the Commission conducted eleven live webinars with approximately 1,500 electronic “attendees” from all across Ohio. The webinars provide an overview of the Ohio Ethics Law and also meet the annual training requirement for state officials and employees.

The 2017 webinars will occur on the following dates:

This year's webinar dates are:

- Tuesday, February 28 – 1 pm
- Thursday, March 23 – 10 am
- Monday, April 10 – 11 am
- Friday, May 19 – 10 am
- Wednesday, June 14 – 1 pm
- Wednesday July 12 – 10 am
- Friday, August 18 – 11 am
- Tuesday, September 19 – 1 pm
- Thursday, October 19 – 11 am
- Friday, November 3 – 10 am
- Monday, December 18 – 11 am

Register at <http://www.ethics.ohio.gov/education/webinars.shtml>.

Ethics Education - Regional Sessions

Some agencies may not be able to host a training session but still prefer a “live” classroom setting. To meet this need, the Ethics Commission schedules classes around the state that are open to all public officials and employees who would like to know more about the Ohio Ethics Law. All state, county, city, township, and village officials and employees are welcome to attend!

For state officials and employees, these classes fulfill your Ethics Law training requirement under the Governor's Executive Order. As an added bonus for public practice attorneys, we have requested from the Ohio Supreme Court 1.5 general CLE hours.

Please join us for these free and interactive discussions on the Ohio Ethics Law! Visit <https://disclosure.ethics.ohio.gov/Registration/ClassList/Index/1> for session details and registration information.

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| • Friday, April 28 – 10 am | Perrysburg |
| • Thursday, May 4 – 10 am | Columbus |
| • Thursday, June 22 – 10 am | Warrensville Heights |
| • Thursday, October 5 – 10 am | Cincinnati |
| • Friday, October 13 – 10 am | Columbus |
| • Thursday, December 14 – 10 am | Columbus |

Topic-Specific E-Courses – Taking Small Bites of the Ohio Ethics Law!

Several years ago, the Ohio Ethics Commission introduced “topic-specific” e-courses to our web site. The intent of these brief online courses was to allow public offices and agencies to compactly study specific areas of the Ethics Law.

These courses are approximately 15 minutes long and many agencies have used them at staff meetings to supplement their knowledge of the Ethics Law in short and palatable timeframes. For example, there are several agencies that show one short e-course at each staff meeting. By the end of the year, the staff has learned a great deal of information about the Ethics Law without feeling overwhelmed by information.

The brief e-courses currently available on our [website](#) include:

- The “Conference Question”
- The Ohio Ethics Law and Gifts
- The Ohio Ethics Law and Job – Seeking Restrictions
- The Ohio Ethics Law and Nepotism
- The Ohio Ethics Law and New Elected Office Holders: What Should You Know?
- The Ohio Ethics Law and Post-Employment
- The Ohio Ethics Law and the Private Sector
- The Ohio Ethics Law and Sales to Public Agencies
- The Ohio Ethics Law and Conflicts of Interest
- The Ohio Ethics Law and Public Contracts

While viewing just once course does not meet the annual training requirement for state officials and employees per the Governor’s Executive Order, viewing numerous courses over the course of the year (in a staff meeting setting where attendance is recorded by your agency) can be an interesting and time-effective way to better understand the Ethics Law and meet training requirements.

The Commission is currently creating a new e-course entitled: “The Ohio Ethics Law: Travel, Meals, and Lodging.” Do you have other topics you’d like to suggest? If so, email susan.willeke@ethics.ohio.gov with your thoughts and ideas!



Continuing Legal Education Courses Announced!

The Ohio Ethics Commission is once again sponsoring three Continuing Legal Education (CLE) sessions in conjunction with the Ohio Board of Professional Conduct. These free classes are designed for public practice attorneys and have been approved by the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Continuing Legal Education for 2.50 total CLE hours of attorney professional conduct instruction.

For the past several years, the Ethics Commission has conducted two CLE classes in Columbus and another class in “rotating” cities around Ohio. This year, we will be in Northwest Ohio and hope that many public practice attorneys in the Toledo area will be able to join us!

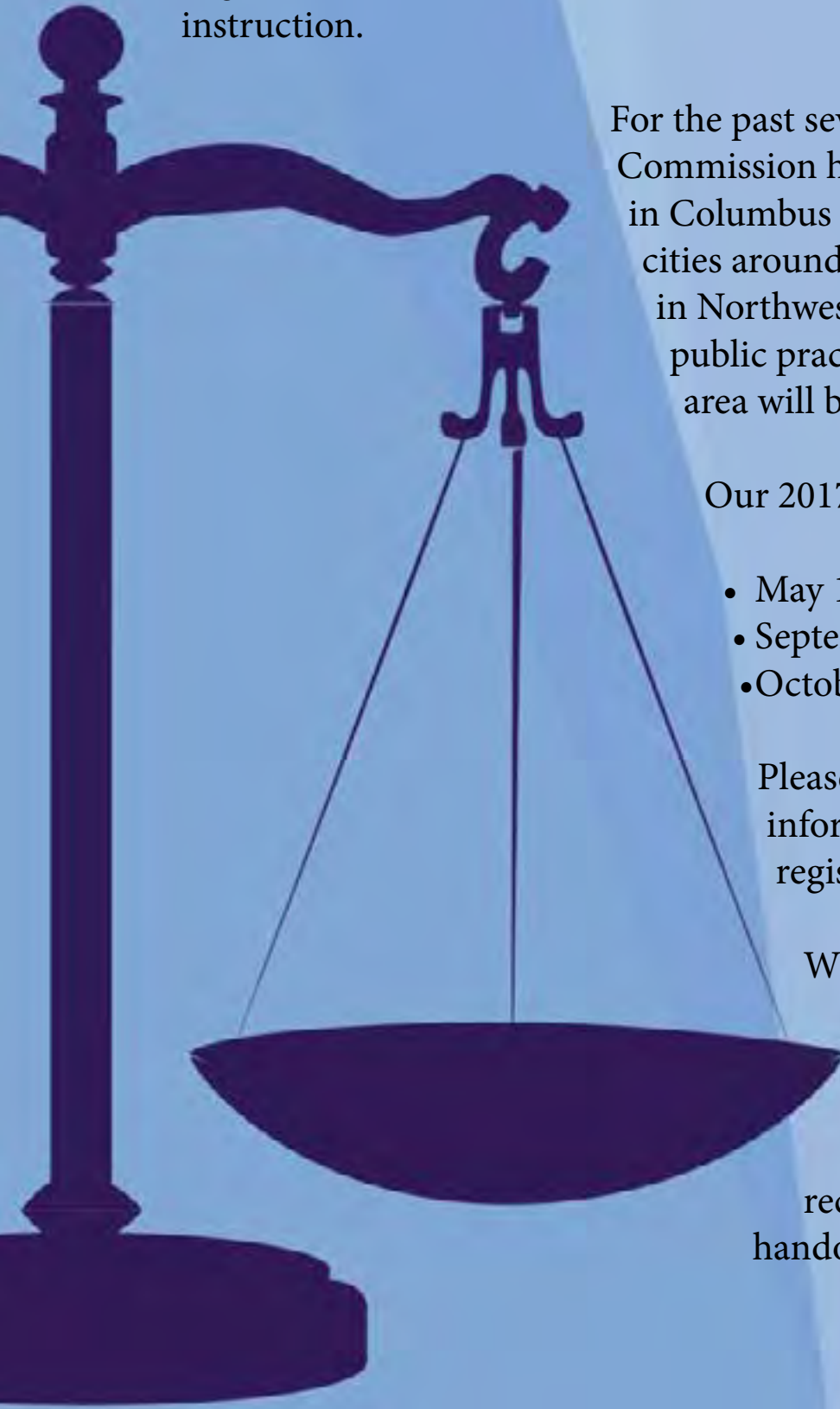
Our 2017 dates at locations are:

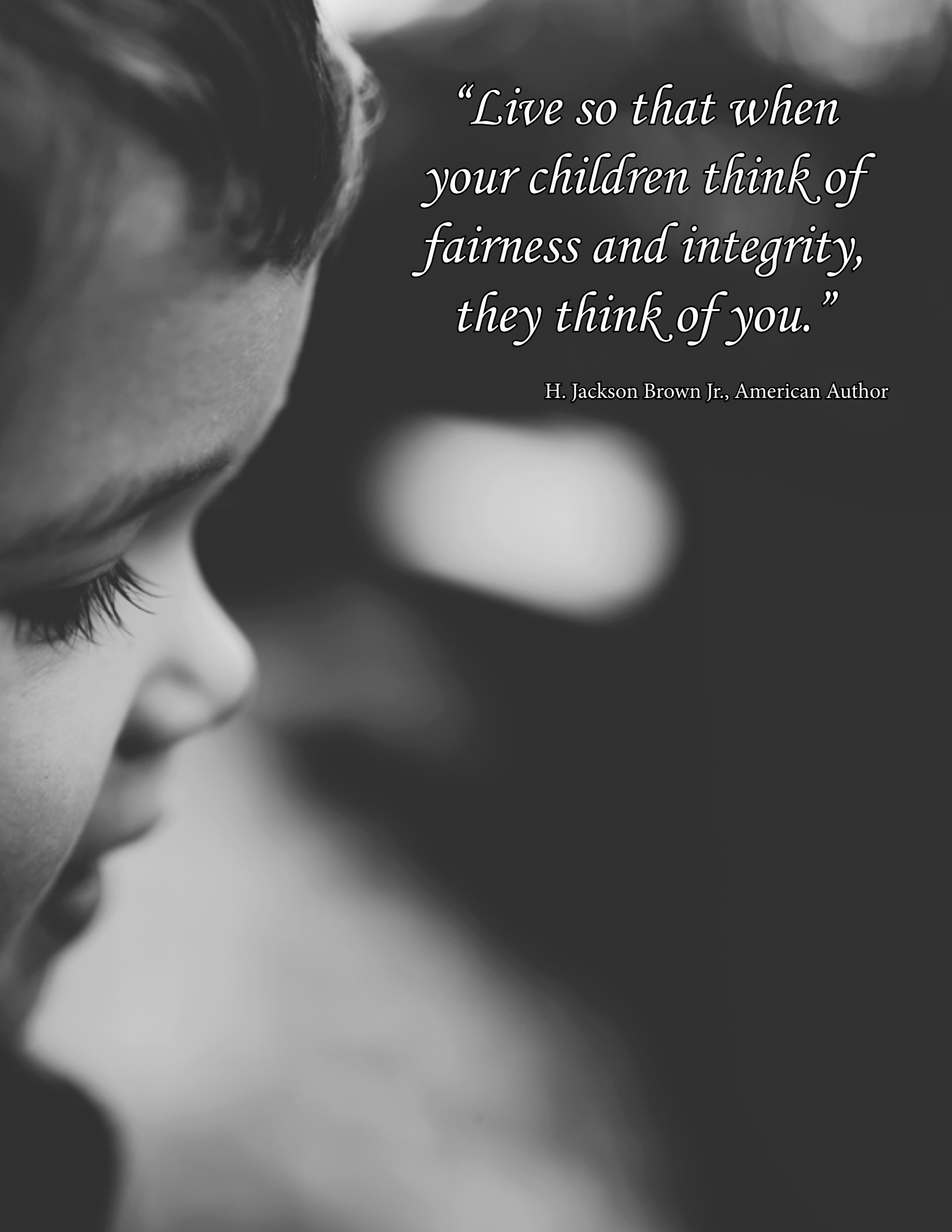
- May 16 9 am Columbus
- September 25 9 am Toledo
- October 31 9 am Columbus

Please [click here](#) for more information on dates, locations, and registration information.

When you electronically register, you will receive an automatic confirmation email.

Approximately one week before the class, you will receive a reminder email with handouts.





*“Live so that when
your children think of
fairness and integrity,
they think of you.”*

H. Jackson Brown Jr., American Author



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Questions? Concerns? Need more information? Contact us!