

Spotlight on the YLC

## Shawn A. Copeland: 2000 R. Edwin Burnette, Jr. Young Lawyer of the Year

by Lori Elliott Guzman



This year's recipient of the R. Edwin Burnette, Jr. Young Lawyer of the Year Award is Shawn A. Copeland, a litigator from Richmond, Virginia. Leadership and service have been hallmarks of Copeland's endeavors throughout his life as well as in his career. He exemplifies the standards of honor, integrity and professionalism to which all lawyers should strive.

Copeland grew up in West Virginia. He attended Washington & Lee University where he was a Division III All-American swimmer for two years. He then worked for Senator John D. Rockefeller, IV. He returned to Washington & Lee for law school, served as president of the Student Bar Association and president of the Christian Legal Society.

Following a clerkship with the Honorable B. Waugh Crigler, of the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Copeland became an associate at Hunton & Williams in Richmond. His practice

focuses on civil litigation, including product liability and toxic tort claims. In addition, Copeland serves on an advisory committee to the firm's Associate's Committee.

Copeland is chair of the YLC Emergency Legal Services Committee, where he works to improve the responsiveness of the bar to the public.

Due to Copeland's leadership, the Emergency Legal Services Response Plan provided no-cost legal services, on short notice, to victims of natural disasters in Virginia. The Response Plan was activated in early September, 1999 to assist victims of the tornadoes in Hampton. Two weeks later, more than 100 Virginia attorneys assisted victims of the floods caused by Hurricane Floyd. Working with Steve Otero—his VBA counterpart—Copeland devoted untold hours to the relief effort. He monitored weather reports, regularly conferred with state and federal agencies, activated the Response Plan, called for and managed volunteers, publicized the availability of free emergency legal services, and led Emergency Legal Services Training Programs in Richmond and Norfolk. He worked at Disaster Recovery Centers in Hampton, Newport News and Franklin.

Copeland is on the Board of, and is Legal Counsel to, the East District Initiative in Richmond's Church Hill—one of the most economically challenged areas of the city. He represents individuals on a pro bono basis. He serves them with humor, humility, and respect.

Copeland said he was honored to be receiving such an award in the footsteps of Ed Burnette. No doubt, future recipients will be honored to be included on a roster with Shawn Copeland. ☺