

Reach Out!

*“There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder or pity or love or dread,
that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day ... or for
many years or stretching cycles of years.”*

—Walt Whitman



Lori M. Elliott, 2002–2003 Young Lawyers Conference President

Given the events that have occurred over the past 12 months and the critical introspection in which individuals across the world were engaged, a trend toward isolationism would have been understandable. However, lawyers in Virginia, particularly those in the YLC, continued to reach out. I am honored for the opportunity to lead an organization committed to inclusiveness, diversity, equality and justice.

Late last summer, my predecessor and friend, O’Kelly McWilliams, asked the YLC to support a tolerance initiative. He proposed that the YLC teach tolerance to children in the third grade, modeled after a program that was developed by the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division.

Third-graders are at an age when children begin to form lifelong values. In the third grade, children learn to bully and tease the child with braces, the child with glasses or the child with a different skin color or religion. This is the age when differences can create lifelong schisms. Thanks to the young lawyers’ program in Virginia schools, children learned how to respect, rather than scorn, differences to feel that they belong—to boost self-esteem and to be tolerant.

On another front, the YLC, in partnership with the Millennium Diversity Initiative and the University of Richmond’s T.C. Williams School of Law, created and launched the first Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Pre-Law Institute. The institute introduced the legal profession to high school students from diverse backgrounds. Never one to dream small, the institute’s committee chair, Jennifer McClellan, envisioned mock trials, courtroom visits, lectures and interactive events, such as a Richmond Braves baseball game, laser tag and lunch with a judge. The committee recruited chaperones, faculty and judges for one hot, boisterous and immensely rewarding week in July.

In August, the YLC received ABA awards, including first place for its *Docket Call* newsletter, and special recognition for its immigrant outreach and peer mediation programs.

While we encourage young lawyers’ participation in our activities and programs, we also value our role as a resource to our members. Two years ago, we launched the Professional Development Conference, which included both CLE and non-CLE programming

tailored to improving the legal experience of lawyers in their first decade of practice. The PDC featured excellent speakers and programming—such as emerging trends in the law, managing your law practice, rainmaking, partnership considerations and malpractice avoidance.

On reflection, I got involved with the YLC to work with people who were serving others and satisfying unmet legal needs in their communities. Today, I am proud to see and hear from the wide range of young lawyers across Virginia who continue to spend countless hours battling social injustice, seeking legal reform, fighting for the underdog and making a difference. In the coming year, let the YLC know how we can help you. Assistance may come in the form of volunteers, program ideas and funding, other, or it may be the YLC supporting you and cheering your successes.

For those of you who are not involved, but desire to help and serve, the YLC offers you outstanding opportunities to serve the bar and the public. It also affords you the opportunity to meet other young lawyers from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, who are seeking the same goals of our profession—to help, to serve and to reach out.

While the phrase “no man is an island” may be over-used, the sentiment is true. There are any number of ways to reach out: Our Senior Citizens Handbook has been translated to Spanish; we are developing new programs relating to immigrant outreach; assisting victims of domestic violence to achieve safety remains one our highest priorities; and we continue our efforts to increase the diversity of our profession

If you are no longer a young lawyer, I encourage you to support the YLC, to support our programs and to support young lawyers who participate in the YLC.

Finally, the YLC board and I hope to meet many young lawyers across the Commonwealth this year. We are planning receptions at locations to be announced in conjunction with our meetings throughout the year. I encourage you to attend the receptions and look forward both to meeting and working with many of you this year.