

## Projects Renewed and Initiatives Launched for New Conference Year



### M. Janet Palmer, 2005–2006 Conference of Local Bar Associations Chair

It seems as though I have barely recuperated from the success of the 2004–2005 bar year and it's already time for the Conference of Local Bar Associations to begin the 2005–2006 bar year. Immediate Past Chair Manny Capsalis—and, for that matter, all previous chairs—have left enormous shoes to fill. They have certainly left their personal blueprints on projects that have become signature programs and publications of the conference.

The conference's hallmark will continue to be the Bar Leaders Institute (BLI). The BLIs, which are usually held in two locations in March, will continue to offer a day of leadership training, networking and continuing legal education opportunities for current bar leaders as well as those interested in a leadership track. I encourage the current bar leaders to register a prospective new bar leader for one of the BLIs. I guarantee that when that person returns to your local or specialty bar, he or she will have enthusiasm, knowledge and skills to become an active and vital member.

The *So You're 18* booklet will be distributed again to schools, social service agencies, libraries and community organizations. It has already been revised to reflect current law, with over ten thousand copies in English and Spanish distributed during the 2004–2005 bar year. We expect to surpass that in the coming year. The conference will change the distribution date from spring to early fall so the information will be available to high school students earlier in the school year. The conference anticipates that many students will receive the booklet at driver's license ceremonies, with the courts as an active partner.

I am looking forward to new projects that the conference is starting or improving. *Legally Informed* has been updated and provides a sampling of the projects and community services programs sponsored by local and specialty bars. The conference hopes that the book will continue to be used to remind the public and the legal community that lawyers do more than practice law. For example, following Hurricane Katrina, local and specialty bars are providing aid to the storm-ravaged areas of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. Lawyers provide ser-

vices that ensure Virginians can receive legal information and access, during not only national disasters, but local crises as well. I invite all local and specialty bars to submit their public service projects to *Legally Informed* to serve as a source of inspiration for all bars and the community.

The conference will continue to sponsor and operate the fee dispute program. This program, as a result of a task force study, is being revamped to clarify its focus, provide more user-friendly materials and encourage participation by attorneys and the public. Currently, twelve communities have committees. Our goal is to have a committee in each circuit.

We are discussing working with the Senior Lawyer's Conference to sponsor Senior Citizens Law Day programs. These events will center on information in the *Senior Citizens Handbook*.

The Local Government Attorneys of Virginia joined the CLBA's ranks at our annual meeting in June. We welcome this worthy organization and the energy its members bring.

We are proud to continue to partner with the Supreme Court of Virginia in sponsoring a series of solo and small-firm practitioner forums to be held across the state. The pilot forum was held in Abingdon in conjunction with the BLI in March 2005. The second forum, held September 12 in Harrisonburg, was filled to capacity, with more than three hundred participants. Future locations are being discussed, with the goal of providing a full day of office management training to more than one thousand attorneys statewide. ☪