

Giving Back and the Pursuit of Happiness

Good Lawyers Are Good for Virginia

by Frank Overton Brown Jr.

Virginia State Bar President

Jon D. Huddleston has shined the bright light of public recognition on the good deeds of Virginia lawyers.

He has done so through his coordinated initiatives, including “The Big Picture” video project, which promotes the image of the citizen lawyer by telling the stories of lawyers who contribute to their communities;

“Reflections,” a collection of essays written by or about Virginia lawyers; and “Raising the Bar,” his president’s blog.

Public recognition of good deeds not only engenders appreciation and raises public awareness; it also acts as a catalyst to generate more good deeds.

“Overwhelmingly, ours is a profession that gives back to the community,” President Huddleston said.

Law is a service profession. As part of this service, giving back to the community and the profession is something that Virginia lawyers have done for generations. Sometimes, giving back has been done by lawyers acting alone, but more often giving back has been done by lawyers who act in an official or professional capacity. Sometimes giving back has been done in direct, personal ways that improve the lives of individuals or small communities, such as John M. Oakey Jr. providing pro bono services, the late Professor Robert E. Shepherd Jr. working on behalf of juvenile justice, Phyllis C. Katz helping cancer patients, Robert B. “Chip” Delano leading youths in the Boy Scouts of America, Professor Lynne Marie Kohm teaching law students and new lawyers, the Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association collecting tons of food for the needy, Peter W. Buchbauer feeding the hungry, and

lawyers across the state giving legal assistance to the poor every day. Sometimes giving back improves not just the life of one individual or small community, but benefits the entire commonwealth. Examples are teaching the law (George Wythe, who, at the College of William and Mary, held the first chair in law in America and taught Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, James Monroe, Edmund Randolph, and Henry Clay); the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the University of Virginia (Jefferson); the Constitution of the United States with its Bill of Rights (James Madison, who was well-read in the law, but was not admitted to the bar); *Brown v. Board of Education* (Oliver W. Hill Sr., among others); the Community Foundation (<http://www.tcfritchmond.org/page2482.cfm>) (Fielding L. Williams Sr.); the Virginia Constitution of 1971 (A. E. Dick Howard); the American Jury Initiative (Robert J. Grey Jr., past president of the American Bar Association); the Virginia Holocaust Museum (Jay M. Weinberg); a lifetime of service to family, church, community, and the bar (Ken McFarlane Smith); Senior Citizens Law Day (William T. Wilson); Virginia and National Healthcare Decisions days (Nathan A. Kottkamp). All of us, as members of communities and of the profession, have been the beneficiaries of these acts.

We need only to look in this issue of *Virginia Lawyer* to find more evidence of giving back to the community and the profession — the Honorable Wayne L. Bell’s remembrance of the late George M. Warren Jr., who served thirty-seven years in elected offices in Virginia and helped to establish the Children’s Advocacy Center in Bristol; John M. Oakey Jr.’s article about pro bono service; and Jack W. Burtch’s essay on the importance of our remembering to counsel clients.

On January 21, 2010, in cooperation with the Virginia State Bar Senior Lawyers Conference and Richmond TRIAD, my son Matthew R.O.

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Jimmy F. Robinson Jr. (left photo) talks about age discrimination to an audience of 350 at Richmond's First Baptist Church during a January 21 Senior Citizens Law Day program. Photos by Susan Brown.

Brown and I coordinated a Senior Citizens Law Day Program at First Baptist Church, where Matthew is a deacon. Three hundred fifty senior citizens attended the program. Each of the attendees received valuable educational materials, including a copy of the *Senior Citizens Handbook* and a pocket copy of the United States Constitution. The following gave generously of their time and knowledge in speaking on these topics: "Getting Your Affairs in Order," by Frank O. Brown Jr. of Frank O. Brown Jr. PC.; "Protecting Yourself Against Crime," by Officer Alice Snell of the City of Richmond Police Department; "Protecting Yourself against Scams, Fraud, and Identity Theft," by Ben C. Garrett III of the Virginia Department for the Aging; "Advance Directives and Knowing Your Rights as a Hospital Patient," by Nathan A. Kottkamp of McGuire Woods LLP; "Medicaid — Knowing Your Rights," by Paula L. Peaden of Parker, Pollard, Wilton & Peaden PC; "Knowing Your Rights as a Nursing Home Resident," by Carolyn C. Lavecchia of Williamson & Lavecchia LC; "Seniors' Health Issues: Preserving Your Health," by Dr. Terry L. Whipple of American Self; and "Avoiding Age Discrimination: Knowing Your Rights," by Jimmy F. Robinson Jr. of Troutman Sanders LLP.

A senior citizen who attended the program wrote: "What a wonderful afternoon yesterday. I feel like I was given \$10,000 worth of advice for free! Great speakers, information, sharing, (and) practical advice, and I learned many new things. I appreciate so much all the hard work that went into getting such excellent presenters. So much practical information that will be so useful to everyone and their families. Today, I am making a

summary that I can hand out to family and friends. This will be far-reaching."

The Senior Citizens Law Day Program was developed by William T. Wilson, who coordinated the first program in Covington, under the auspices of the Alleghany-Bath-Highland Bar Association. Since then, Senior Citizens Law Day programs have been held across the state.

Albert Schweitzer said, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve." This quote encapsulates the concept of "servant leadership," which is firmly embedded in the legal profession. Robert K. Greenleaf, author of *The Power of Servant Leadership*, wrote, "The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

Reinforcement of the power of servant-leadership thrives under the light being shined by current VSB President Jon D. Huddleston. We thank him for his support and encouragement of our giving back to the community and the profession. Giving back to the community is good for us and for the profession. It is part of our pursuit of happiness.

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