

Volunteer Commitment Drives YLC Programs



BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS ARTICLE, I will be immediate past president, and Jennifer L. McClellan will be at the helm of the Young Lawyers Conference (YLC). This is to the immense benefit of the conference, as McClellan—a delegate in the General Assembly—possesses a perfect mixture of enthusiasm, vision, and eminent good sense. The commonwealth's young attorneys will have a very good year under her leadership.

I knew Jennifer as a bar acquaintance for many years, and got to know her well by volunteering to chaperone students at the Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Pre-Law Institute, which Jennifer founded. Spending the night monitoring smart and rambunctious high school students, I observed Jennifer's commitment to the state's children first hand. I've watched her rise through the ranks of the conference and am convinced that she will make an excellent YLC president. No one in the conference has been more innovative in creating programs aimed at bolstering our ranks with minority attorneys than Jennifer. Her year as YLC president will coincide with Manuel A. Capsalis's year as Virginia State Bar president. Manny's commitment to minority issues is known; you couldn't create a better partnership if you tried.

I've had a ball this year. The YLC presidency takes considerable time, but as I've said before in these pages, the conference runs itself on the energy and commitment of its volunteers. I've never served on a board that gets as

much done, and I've never worked with this caliber of committee chairs in any other organization. I could have gone to Jamaica for a year and the conference would be none the worse. Our volunteers take their roles that seriously, even as they manage to have a lot of fun working hard.

I learned a lot about how the bar operates from my vantage point as an ex officio member of the VSB Council. Nothing has impressed me more this year than the work of Carter Glass IV and the VSB Judicial Selection Committee. The level of analysis the committee gives to nominees and the quality of its reviews are remarkable. Regardless of what happens in the legislature after the bar has its say, members of the bar should be very proud of this vetting process.

I also have been impressed with the work of Darrel Tillar Mason and the VSB Legal Malpractice Insurance Committee. Each time the committee reported to the VSB Council, the council came up with a new angle to study or a new request for information. Darrel always took those instructions graciously and went right back to work on this critically important issue.

Council members and the VSB Executive Committee bent over backwards to make me feel welcome, and they cheered and supported the conference at all times. I never once felt like an interloper in their meetings; they listened to young lawyer concerns with eager ears.

This reception had a great deal to do with Howard W. Martin Jr., who, by

the time you read this, also will have passed back into the land of billable hours. Howard was always warm and gracious to me and all members of the VSB Council. He presided over a year of significant change, from the end of Tom Edmonds's tenure and the start of Karen Gould's as VSB executive director, to a change in bar counsel, to a consideration of mandatory malpractice insurance and random trust audits, to budgetary belt-tightening. At the VSB Admission & Orientation Ceremony recently, Howard gave me a sly, quiet smile when I told him that I guessed he had no idea what he was in for this past year. A good leader adjusts the sails when the winds require, and Howard did. He also can run a meeting; I will always remember watching him churn through an agenda while giving everyone their due.

The bar is run by a talented, committed cadre of staff who make the lives of attorneys, especially bar volunteers, much easier. Our YLC liaison, Maureen D. Stengel, gave me the world on a silver platter, and with a smile. Assisted by the always gracious Catherine D. Huband, my friend and colleague Maureen has done more for the YLC than any individual I can recall in my ten years of involvement.

Elizabeth L. Keller, Valerie L. Breeden, Dawn Chase, and Rodney A. Coggin have all helped me immeasurably this year.

Our YLC board bids farewell to several members this year: Rita P. Davis,

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Maya M. Eckstein, Jacqueline McClenney Wallace, Kelly C. Ashby, and Joshua M. David. Each of these board members gave generously of their time and talents to the YLC, and each was extremely supportive of me this year. They have my undying gratitude.

My ten years with the YLC will officially end next June, and each year the conference has given me so much more than the effort I put in. I end my last article with a plea to all those who even remotely consider volunteering their time for this organization: Do it. You won't work with a better group of people anywhere, and I doubt you'd accomplish as much anywhere else. I've been privileged to serve as president this year and am grateful for the opportunity you gave me. ■