

# The Message and the Media

Virginia Is for Good Lawyers Gives VSB Its First Experience with Social Media

by Dawn Chase

One-quarter through his presidential year, Coach Jon D. Huddleston has left the dugout to drum up some infield chatter from the members of the Virginia State Bar.

So how's it going, Coach? "I think the message that we're trying to convey is going very well," said Huddleston, whose free time is devoted to youth sports when he's not in the office and who has the smiling enthusiasm required for working with kids.

That message is the *Virginia Is for Good Lawyers* campaign, a multimedia collection of Virginia lawyers' stories about the passions that drive them in their lives — professionally and in their communities.

## The Message

In the video most recently posted at VSB.org and the bar's YouTube channel, Loudoun County Circuit Judge Thomas D. Horne and attorney Rhonda Wilson Paice of Leesburg describe the Leadership in the Law Summer Camp sponsored for high school rising seniors by the Loudoun County Bar Association.

Horne sums up his philosophy:

Whether it's picking up trash, or whether it's working on law camp, or whether it's working with youth sports, or whether it's doing something with respect to the legal profession, ... as members of the bar we owe a responsibility to other people in the community to reach out, to be able to help, to lead, to encourage, invite participation, and do all that we can to really show that we as lawyers are not only leaders in the community — not only do we have an honored profession — but ... we have a vital and considered interest in everything that goes on in the community.

That's just the kind of message Huddleston was hoping to elicit when he assumed the VSB presidency in June and launched the campaign with *The Big Picture* video project and *Reflections*, an essay collection posted at VSB.org.

The essays contributed by Virginia lawyers are introspective, funny, and touching.

In one, Jack W. "JB" Burtch of Richmond leads the reader through his own professional history, which started with big-firm work in labor and employment.

Independence has always been an important value for me. When I didn't find enough of it in the large firm, I joined a small firm. Even though some labor and employment clients came with me, I found myself doing other types of legal work, including some family law. I soon realized that while I actually enjoyed the stylized combat of labor-management disputes, participating in the process of separating children from their parents was more than I could handle. Likewise, representing a client in a dispute over who was liable for a boxcar of damaged widgets engaged no part of my legal curiosity.

James W. Korman of Arlington provokes laughs as he writes of his first case — as a teenager, defending a fellow summer camper who "had broken sixty plates, forty at one time in a massive kitchen cart tip-over maneuver." He begins:

I was always good at arguing. And I enjoyed it. If I wanted to, even when I was a kid, I could switch sides and argue the other side of any dispute. Some of my masterpieces you may

have heard about: Bill Russell is better than Wilt Chamberlain; Willie Mays is better than Mickey Mantle; my Mom is prettier than yours; and, of course, the never-to-be-forgotten: there is no way Stanley Bagan could tackle Jim Brown.

(Who is Stanley Bagan? Read the essay at <http://atlanticwire.theatlantic.com/read-more.php?id=988>.)

And Judge Pamela L. Brooks of Loudoun County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court describes how her paying job meshes with her volunteer work with Loudoun Girls Little League Softball and Central Loudoun Little League:

I am fortunate to have these opportunities to work with children in a positive environment. It strengthens me when I go back into court and meet the many children and young adults who never got the chance to be part of a team and too infrequently see that adults care about them and the choices they make.

Huddleston says he is delighted with the breadth of the essays and the passion they reveal for community.

Meanwhile, Huddleston has a President's Blog — *Raising the Bar* — to which he has posted four entries thus far. His goal in part is to promote lawyers' contributions to *Virginia Is for Good Lawyers*. In August, he wrote:

The act of communicating our thought for others solidifies them for us, and it can be a transformative process, as those who write briefs, pleadings, and motions well know.

On the VSB's Twitter channel, Huddleston tweets summaries of news and announcements posted at the bar's official website, VSB.org, and encourages followers to view contributions to *Virginia Is for Good Lawyers*. And sometimes he just chats. The September 9 tweet:

Happy 09/09/09, everyone. Having a great week: kids back to school, busy practice, and meeting with/for VA's good lawyers as VSB president.

Huddleston also contributes the traditional president's column to *Virginia Lawyer*.

**The Media**

Huddleston's project has presented the VSB with its first experience in several social media — video, blogging, and Twitter. A Virginia State Bar Facebook page might also be developed during his presidency.

With each video, Huddleston's performance is smoother. "I'm getting better," he said. "I'm a little bit more comfortable talking to the camera." He also has learned to be "more concise with the lead-ins and teasers."

Bar videographer Madonna G. Dersch also is gaining skill at directing, recording, and editing interviews for "The Big Picture."

Huddleston says that Twitter and the blog reinforce the messages of the video and the essays, and the news items posted at VSB.org, mailed to the entire bar in the monthly E-News, and published in *Virginia Lawyer* magazine. He calls the interweaving of the media a "cross-pollination."

The social media expand the reach of other bar communications, and they are more timely, Huddleston said. The project started with his desire to shine a light on lawyers for their nonlegal contributions to the community. But the essay contributors and video interviewees are broadening the focus.

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**The Virginia State Bar's story is being told on several channels now. They are:**

***Virginia Is for Good Lawyers***

President Jon D. Huddleston's project to memorialize the community work of lawyers across the state.

***The Big Picture (video)***

Interviews with lawyers and on legal topics.  
<http://www.vsb.org/site/about/va-good-lawyers/> and  
<http://www.youtube.com/virginiastatebar>

***Reflections (essays)***

Lawyers ponder about what led them to law, the professional paths they have traveled, and community activities that help them right some of the wrongs they see through their practices.  
<http://www.vsb.org/site/about/va-good-lawyers/>

**Twitter**

Huddleston's channel for tweeting *Virginia Is for Good Lawyers* contributions, and for receiving tweets that others think he'll find interesting.  
<http://twitter.com/VA4GoodLawyers>

**Blog**

Another vehicle for highlighting Huddleston's project, official VSB business, and general legal chat.  
<http://www.vsb.org/site/blog/>

**Official VSB Communications**

**VSb.org — Latest News and Meetings and Events**

Need-to-know postings about upcoming events and news items of importance to Virginia lawyers.  
<http://www.vsb.org/>

**E-News**

A monthly e-mail to alert VSB members to important events. Each E-News is posted in the Latest News section at <http://www.vsb.org/>

***Virginia Lawyer***

A printed magazine that includes bar news and substantive law articles produced by VSB sections. It is mailed to all VSB members. Archived at <http://www.vsb.org/site/publications/vlawyer/>

***Virginia Lawyer Register***

A printed and online publication of record that reports Virginia disciplinary actions and governance matters before the Supreme Court of Virginia, the General Assembly, the VSB Council, and VSB committees. The printed magazine, an index, is archived with links to full disciplinary orders and governance proposals.  
<http://www.vsb.org/site/publications/register/>

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The project has taken on the collective personalities of the contributors.

Huddleston observes that the social media have fewer filters than the bar's official means of communicating. Information in *Virginia Lawyer* and VSB.org news postings undergo fact-checking, editing, and analysis of relevance to VSB members and the VSB's mission.

The social media, while more timely and spontaneous, do not go through this process. Huddleston said, "You have to be very careful about what you're putting out there." His tweets and blog postings largely are "announcement-oriented, news-oriented," and refer to links on the VSB website that have gone through the agency information filters.

He has promoted Fastcase — the VSB's legal research service for members — and the Young Lawyers Conference's Professional Development Seminar, and he has reminded Virginia lawyers that a

payee notification proposal is on the table to require insurance companies to notify liability claimants when the companies issue a settlement check for \$5,000 or more.

Another part of Huddleston's technical learning curve has been management of the time required to tape videos, tweet, post to the blog, and review and respond to any responses he might receive. He goes through his mental list of deadlines: "The blog needs some attention. I owe Caryn Persinger a President's Column. We have a taping schedule coming up. ... You catch as catch can." He joked that he spent a couple of weeks practicing law recently.

Clearly, one of his satisfactions as president will be knowing that the VSB "placed in cyberspace" retired justice Harry L. Carrico's remarks at a Professionalism Seminar and Jay M. Ipson of the Virginia Holocaust Museum talking about the Nuremberg Trial exhibit there.

So on many days Jon Huddleston will be out in the field soliciting contributions for his project. Or you might find him in cyberspace promoting bar businesses.

VSB Executive Director Karen A. Gould is watching Huddleston's project with interest.

"In publicizing his *Virginia Is for Good Lawyers* campaign, Jon is giving the Virginia State Bar its first experience with the new social media," she said "We're learning how such venues as Twitter and blogs can help the bar communicate to its members and the public. We are also learning what media are best suited for different types of messages — bar governance matters versus public image campaigns such as Jon's, for example.

"Jon's efforts will help us understand the panoply of communication tools that exist. We'll be evaluating those tools and assessing what will work for our mission."

FORTIETH ANNUAL

# CRIMINAL LAW SEMINAR

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FEBRUARY 12, 2010  
Williamsburg Marriott, Williamsburg

Video Replays in Several Locations  
MCLE Credits (including ethics credit) Pending

VIRGINIA STATE BAR  
AND VIRGINIA CLE

— CALL FOR NOMINATIONS —

## HARRY L. CARRICO PROFESSIONALISM AWARD

The Harry L. Carrico Professionalism Award was established in 1991 by the Section on Criminal Law of the Virginia State Bar to recognize an individual (judge, defense attorney, prosecutor, clerk or other citizen) who has made a singular and unique contribution to the improvement of the criminal justice system in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Nominations must be received no later than December 4, 2009.

For more information visit  
<http://www.vsb.org/site/sections/criminal/view/Professionalism-Award/>

# VSB Disciplinary Conference Brings Professional Regulation Volunteers to Richmond

The Virginia State Bar's Twenty-ninth Annual Disciplinary Conference, held in Richmond July 16–17, 2009, brought together volunteers who sit on district disciplinary committees, the Disciplinary Board, and the Committee on Lawyer Discipline (COLD).

Photo 1: For the first time, the conference also invited defense attorneys to serve on a discussion panel. James C. Roberts (left) and Michael L. Rigsby presented the respondent's perspective on the disciplinary process.



Photo 2: Kimberley Slayton White, the 2009–10 COLD chair, handed out awards to district committee members who have completed their terms.



Photo 3: William H. Monroe Jr., 2009–10 chair of the Disciplinary Board, recognized outgoing board members.



Photo 4: VSB President Jon D. Huddleston with Disciplinary Board member Sandra L. Havrilak.



## Mandatory Continuing Legal Education MCLE DEADLINE: October 31, 2009

Failure to complete twelve CLE hours, including two hours in ethics/professionalism, by October 31, 2009, will result in a \$100 noncompliance fee. (See the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 19.)

**Check and certify your MCLE record online through the Member Login at <http://www.vsb.org>.** If you do not have access to the Internet you may contact the MCLE Department at (804) 775-0577 to request that a copy of your transcript be mailed.