

Just the Beginning Foundation Conference



U.S. District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee (left) of Alexandria converses with students who participated in a mock trial and So You Want to Be a Lawyer Program during the Just the Beginning Foundation Conference September 25-28 in Washington, D.C. The conference — titled Reaching Back, Lifting Up — drew ninety-five students from Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia; sixty federal judges from across the United States; and other judges, attorneys and law professors. Virginia State Bar President Manuel A. Capsalis participated in the conference by moderating a panel that talked about the legal profession to students at Herndon High School in Fairfax County. The VSB was a cosponsor of the conference. The Just the Beginning Foundation works to inspire young people and promote diversity in the legal profession.

Diversity on the Bench Recognized

The Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference held its annual Celebration of Women and Minorities in the Profession Bench-Bar Dinner November 10 in Richmond.

Photo 1: Jennifer L. McClellan (left), president of the YLC, congratulates Marilyn C. Goss, who this year was elected to a Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations judgeship.



Photo 2: Judges and bar leaders at the dinner included (first row) Uley Norris Damiani of Alexandria J&DR Court; (second row, left-right) event Co-chair Mollie C. Barton; Laura L. Dascher of Alleghany General District Court; Mary Grace O'Brien of Prince William Circuit Court; (third row) Cleo E. Powell, now of the Virginia Court of Appeals; Patricia Kelly of Spotsylvania J&DR Court; Marilyn C. Goss of Richmond J&DR Court; S. Bernard Goodwyn of the Supreme Court of Virginia; (top row) YLC President Jennifer L. McClellan; Jan L. Brodie of Fairfax Circuit Court; Jerrauld C. Jones of Norfolk Circuit Court; Nolan Boyd Dawkins of Alexandria Circuit Court; Penney S. Azcarate of Fairfax General District Court; VSB President Manuel A. Capsalis; and Marjorie T. Arrington of Chesapeake Circuit Court.



Afghanistan Asked, and Virginia Answered

Virginia lawyers responded quickly and enthusiastically to a U.S. Army lawyer's request for volunteers to help the new Afghan Bar Association advance the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Maj. Michael G. McGovern, who serves in the Army Judge Advocate General's Corps in Bagram, Afghanistan, wrote in October to Virginia State Bar President Manuel A. Capsalis—a fellow George Mason University alumnus—to ask his help recruiting lawyers for the project.

The VSB put the word out to members in its November 1 E-News and posted a story about the need on its website.

In a November 20 e-mail to the VSB, McGovern reported on the result:

The response from VSB attorneys has been overwhelmingly positive to date. Approximately forty-five attorneys have responded, and their backgrounds are extraordinarily diverse and rich in experience. ... I was oftentimes simply amazed at how productive and professionally involved the majority of the respondents have been during the course of their careers.

Four or five of these professionals mentioned that they could speak a bit of Dari or Pashtu. Some of them expressed a personal interest in this part of the world, others indicated that they had been to Afghanistan in either a personal or professional capacity and others were semi-retired and had spare time to donate to the project. Most are based in Virginia or [the District of Columbia], but other volunteers e-mailed from the West Coast and others still from Europe.

In any event, these forty-five individuals could most probably govern a country quite well based on their collective experience. ...

The [Afghan Bar Association (AfBA)] does not yet have the office equipment and tools (Internet or website) to communicate effectively with others outside of Afghanistan, or ... outside the roaming area of their personal cell phone coverage.

The U.S. Army has proposed an initiative to finance their basic office requirements (computers, telephones, Internet/website, etc.) under a program that supports projects that benefit the Afghan population. "Rule of Law" is one of the identified categories. In any event, the proposal is making its way through the funding process. The

Afghan Bar continued on page 54

New Survey Documents Struggle of Women Lawyers

Advice Offered to Firms for Recruitment, Retention

Women attorneys cannot rely on law firms to help them advance. Generally speaking, they must build their own practices and be prepared to move elsewhere as opportunities arise.

So indicates the National Association of Women Lawyers 2008 Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms. (<http://www.nawl.org/Assets/Documents/2008+Survey.pdf>)

The nationwide survey reports that "women continue to be markedly underrepresented in the upper levels of law firms," according to a press release from the association. (<http://www.vsb.org/site/news/item/nawl-third-annual-survey/>) "The majority of women who start as associates in firms do not reach the position of equity partners. [L]aw firm leaders, including governing committees and managing partners, are overwhelmingly male."

Men out-earn women lawyers at every stage of practice. Among equity partners, men earn on average more than \$87,000 a year more than women. Statistically, women are more likely to achieve equity partner status by making lateral moves than by rising through one firm's structure.

On the positive side, almost 97 percent of large firms have implemented women's initiatives, but it is too early to say whether these steps are effective, according to the release.

The survey was sent to the nation's two hundred largest law firms, a majority of which responded.

Based on its research, the association offers pointers to law firms for recruiting and retaining women attorneys. (<http://www.nawl.org/Assets/Summit+Report+2008.pdf>) Firms should broaden their selection criteria for leadership, sustain and nurture women partners, correct hidden bias and stereotypes, promote mentoring, encouraging network development, institute workplace flexibility, refine the compensation process, and help women lawyer with business development.

The association offers suggestions for how a firm can achieve these goals.

International Bar Association has provided a lawyer to help the AfBA establish itself in the Afghan professional community. ...

The AfBA stood up as an independent professional organization at the end of July 2008. Our office includes an Afghan attorney who contacted the AfBA president. The point was merely to identify our office and to offer our assistance to the AfBA Executive Committee. That phone call led to a series of meetings. ...

It was clear that these individuals were motivated and dedicated to developing the AfBA as a positive force for good governance in this country. It was also clear that they were starting from scratch and might benefit from the

experience of other professional attorneys.

The VSB was an obvious choice to look for experienced attorneys with an interest in volunteering to assist the AfBA as it organizes itself and its programs and qualifies its members for legal practice in Afghanistan. The [AfBA] Executive Committee and ... president have expressed a great interest in communicating with professional VSB attorneys as they grow their membership.

McGovern wrote to Capsalis on November 6, "My in-box keeps filling up with VSB attorneys who wish to assist in any capacity that they can — quite a load of talent you have in your organization! ... In all honesty, I should not be the least bit surprised, given that the response is totally consistent with the generosity of the American public as a whole. This

installation is filled with books, food, toiletries, and clothing items (socks) donated by the ordinary American citizen. Overwhelmingly generous when one thinks about it."

McGovern, who also is a Virginia lawyer, is on a twelve-month tour with the 101st Airborne Division in eastern Afghanistan. His job description includes "rule of law coordinator," and his office supports Afghan self-government.