

Conference of Local Bar Associations

by Gifford Ray Hampshire, Chair



Local Bars Reduce Stress And Promote Dignity

IN THE OCTOBER 2009 *Virginia Lawyer*, I wrote about how local bar programs satisfy the idealism that inspired many of us to choose our profession. I also wrote about how local bar programs reduce stress by balancing the demands of practice with public service. Local bar associations also help reduce the stress of practice through social interaction outside the adversarial context of a particular case. And social interaction promotes dignity and civility.

During my term as president of the Prince William County Bar Association in 2001, I reviewed the bar association's organizational documents. The minutes of the organizational meeting on July 25, 1941, showed that seven lawyers met to adopt a "constitution" of the new association. Article II of the constitution reflected that the mission of the association was to "maintain the honor and dignity of the practice of law, and increase its usefulness in promoting the due administration of justice, and the mutual improvement and social intercourse of its members."

It is as true today as it was in 1941 that the stress of practice is reduced and the profession bettered when lawyers meet at bar-sponsored continuing legal education (CLE) programs, lunches or even at informal gatherings at the end of the day. At these events lawyers relax and younger lawyers learn from elders about the professionalism and the practice of law in the commu-

nity. The relationships that are made and strengthened in these get-togethers help resolve subsequent legal matters — rather than through counterproductive, blistering letters or unnecessary motions. In this low-key way, local bar associations promote the honor and dignity of the practice of law and encourage civility in the administration of justice, while also reducing stress associated with the practice of law.

The Conference of Local Bar Associations (CLBA) assists local bars in planning programs. The CLBA Executive Committee is planning its next Solo and Small-Firm Practitioner Forum on March 8, 2010, at the University of Richmond School of Law. Topics will include ethics, law office management, and technology. The CLBA also is currently planning its next Bar Leaders Institute (BLI), designed to prepare future or aspiring

will be presented at the VSB Annual Meeting in June 2010. Past projects that received Awards of Merit have included volunteering at local shelters, participation in "no bills" nights, various CLE programs, mentoring programs, law camps, essay contests, blood and food drives, and many others. The CLBA website, <http://www.vsb.org/site/conferences/clba/>, has details about CLBA awards, programming, and resources. Look on the website for ideas for programs that will both provide a public service opportunity and promote professionalism and civility. Once you have designed and executed your program, be sure to submit it for consideration for an Award of Merit. Nomination information for Awards of Merit will be available in the spring of 2010.

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bar leaders to plan local programs. More information will be published at VSB.org and a future edition of *Virginia Lawyer*.

The CLBA also encourages local bar association social programs through its Awards of Merit. The twenty-fifth annual Awards of Merit