

## Unsung Heroes

*The world is divided into people who do things and people who get the credit. Try, if you can, to belong to the first class. There's far less competition.*

—Dwight Morrow



by Joseph A. Condo 2000–2001 VSB President

There are a lot of lawyers who do things—good things, important things, things that benefit both the legal profession and the public—but few lawyers get no credit for it. Rather, most of us (and I include myself in this group) follow the dictum of Washington power-lawyer Robert Strauss, who says, “It ain’t braggin’ if you done it!”

Thankfully, though, there are people who are perfectly happy to make considerable contributions to their professions and their communities out of the spotlight, asking no more reward for their labors than the satisfaction of helping others, and doing so with excellence and class. Our profession and this organization benefit immensely from the efforts of people like this, and would be immeasurably diminished without them. And so this month I write in praise and recognition of some of these people. I do this with some trepidation: For every person I include, there are countless others left out. Still, it is important to pay tribute to even these few and, in doing so, to salute the many others like them who cannot be named.

Public funding of legal aid for the indigent has been shrinking for as long as anyone can remember. At the same time, powerful interests, threatened by the assertion of legal rights by some classes of the disadvantaged, have consistently pressured Congress and state legislatures to narrow the breadth of services that legal-aid lawyers can provide. So lawyers who practice public interest law, or who advocate for access to justice for the indigent, are engaged in a constant struggle. Virtually every day presents difficult challenges: identifying and hanging on to private sources of funding; trying to find ways to meet more indigent clients’ needs with less money; and staving off attempts to place limits on the types of cases legal-aid lawyers can take. It would be understandable if these people became weary, discouraged, and just plain burned out. I suppose many do. But **Mark Braley** is not one of them. He has quietly, but tenaciously, advocated the cause of the voiceless and powerless for years. Mark has served as executive director of the Legal Services Corporation of Virginia since 1992. He sat for several years on the board of Southside Legal Services before coming to LSCV, and has been an invaluable resource for the VSB Committee on Access to Legal Services since its creation. During the 2001 General Assembly session, Mark worked tirelessly—and successfully—along with Steve Colecchi, director of justice and peace for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, to oppose legislation that would have legally disempowered several particularly vulnerable classes of indigents. For Mark, this is only the latest in an endless series of battles like this. Some are won, some are lost, and still others

demand hard choices, but he soldiers on. All of us are beholden to Mark and to many others like him, who carry on this struggle—a quest for justice in one of its purest forms—undeterred by growing odds and frequent setbacks.

When Northern Virginia real estate lawyer **Susan Pesner** assumed the chair of the seemingly non-controversial Special Committee on Lawyer Malpractice Insurance last year, she could never have envisioned what she was getting into. In short order, her committee was confronted with the job of deciding whether or not to renew the state bar’s agreement to endorse a malpractice insurance carrier. Evaluating the performance and service of one carrier while carefully examining possible alternatives is a daunting enough task. Add to that the prospect of terminating a decade-and-a-half-long endorsement, negotiating termination terms with one carrier, and crafting a new agreement with another, and you have the potential for a major-league firestorm. In fact, things did get very hot, and more than a few of us would have wilted in that heat, but not Susan. With the help of our fine Executive Director, Tom Edmonds, and the support of a hard-working committee, she expertly and calmly negotiated this tricky terrain, in the face of intense pressure from several quarters. At the October meeting of Bar Council, along with Vice-chair Nina Ginsberg, Susan made a careful, eloquent and thoughtful presentation of the committee’s recommendation, and the reasons for it. The overwhelming margin by which Council adopted that recommendation was a tribute to the diligence, courage, and toughness that Susan brought to this undertaking. The bar is fortunate that Susan Pesner was at the helm of the committee when this challenge came along.

A few years ago, Virginia Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Lacy, then chair of the Section on Education of Lawyers, had a wonderful idea. She proposed that the Section and the Committee on Professionalism present a program at all the law schools in Virginia, modeled on our highly successful professionalism course. I was then chair of the Professionalism Committee, and when Justice Lacy approached me with this suggestion, we could see substantial obstacles that would have to be surmounted, not the least of which would be persuading the law schools to make room in an already crowded schedule for a program offered by the practicing bar. We had a great stroke of good fortune when U.S. Magistrate Judge **Waugh Crigler**, of Charlottesville, happily embraced the project. Enthusiastic, passionate, tireless, patient, persistent—these words just begin to describe Judge Crigler and his approach to the law-school

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professionalism program. With patience and diplomacy, he gradually overcame the resistance of the academic community. He worked to develop a blueprint for the program, persuaded the best among former professionalism-course faculty to serve as speakers and workshop leaders, and planned and conducted the faculty training. In the spring of 1999, pilot presentations were offered at T.C. Williams and Washington & Lee Law Schools, and this year programs are being offered at George Mason, Regent, and the University of Virginia. The faculty is different for each session, but Judge Crigler serves as moderator of every one. Earlier this year we voted to make this a permanent program of the Virginia State Bar. Justice Lacy's vision would never have become a reality without Waugh Crigler's passion, and his recognition that the effort to raise the level of civility and professionalism in the bar must begin at the same place and time that a legal career truly begins—the first year of law school.

My final “honoree” is actually a group of people, most of whom are not lawyers. It is the **Staff of the Virginia State Bar**. This is what I said about them in my installation remarks last June:

*To a one, they are utterly devoted to the work of this organization, and we volunteers are absolutely dependent on them. They stand by while we take credit for their work and ideas, they glory in our successes, and they do their best to minimize and clean up after our failures.*

During almost 30 years in practice, and more than half that time in bar activities, I've worked with and dealt with many law-office and bar association staffs. The VSB staff is, quite simply, the best. I have rarely seen the equal of their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to the mission of this organization. I doubt that many of you ever have cause to consider the breadth and complexity of the activities of a state bar of this size (at 23,000 active members, one of the five or six largest mandatory bars in the country). On the facing page is an introduction to our senior staff, and a description of some of the numerous functions and tasks—some relatively small, others immense, all challenging and important—that are all in a day's (or a year's) work for them and for the other staff members listed below. They work long hours and, because of the unique demands of an organization like this, often on evenings and weekends. Several staff members have multiple responsibilities that require uncommon organizational and “multi-tasking” skills. They like their work, and it shows. Not surprisingly for employees of a state agency, many are probably making a financial sacrifice to work for the state bar rather than in the private sector. But the good ones tend to stay with us, and do their jobs with enthusiasm and distinction, not seeming to mind that their sacrifices and superb work seldom get the notice and credit they deserve. Instead, their top priority is to do whatever it takes to help our volunteer leadership achieve their goals and advance the bar's mission. It's hard to imagine what the Virginia State Bar would look like if we didn't have people of the high calibre we have on our staff, who care as much as they obviously do about the quality of their work and the success of the organization. One thing is certain: we would be a far less effective organization without them.

These are just a few of “Unsung Heroes” who, by their selfless and largely unheralded efforts, contribute to the excellence for which the Virginia State Bar and the legal profession in the Commonwealth are well known. Typically, these individuals

would probably minimize the scope and impact of what they do. They would tell you that it's insignificant—and, after all, only what we're all expected to do. Of course, their contributions are anything but small, but to quote Henry David Thoreau, “*It doesn't matter how small the beginning may seem to be; what is once done well is done forever.*” ☞

### Virginia State Bar Senior Staff

**Tom Edmonds** is Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer. Tom manages and supervises the bar staff and its facilities; advises the leadership on policy, meeting agendas, and issues facing the organized bar; carries on necessary communications with the Supreme Court, the General Assembly, and the other statewide bars; and manages the countless other tasks required for the day-to-day operation of an organization of our size. Like many other staff members, in addition to his other duties, Tom also acts as liaison to several of our committees. Our volunteer leadership know we can depend on Tom for counsel and guidance on every aspect of our leadership roles, and he is exceptionally adept at not only staying informed about current issues that affect the bar and its mission, but also anticipating new challenges that are just emerging or about to emerge.

**Mary Yancey Spencer** is Deputy Executive Director, our second-in-command. She is responsible for managing the bar in Tom's absence, and also skillfully monitors the General Assembly's consideration of legislation affecting the bar. Mary Yancey oversees the Communications and Public Service Group, which includes Access to Legal Services, the Publications and Public Information Department (responsible for editing and publishing all of our magazines and section publications) and Local Bar Relations/Lawyer Referral. She also supervises the Office of the Clerk of the Disciplinary System.

**Susan Busch** is Assistant Executive Director for Administration. We are a state agency, with an annual budget of more than eight million dollars, and Susan manages the demanding task of preparing a budget and managing our fiscal affairs, with oversight from both our volunteer leadership and the Virginia General Assembly. Susan and her department are responsible for all expenditures and disbursement requests, including innumerable staff and volunteer expense-reimbursement vouchers. Susan also supervises our Information Technology and Human Resources/Facilities Departments.

**Elizabeth (“Bet”) Keller** is Assistant Executive Director for Bar Services. Her largest (but by no means her only) responsibility is planning the VSB's annual meeting, a five-day marathon of committee, section and leadership meetings, receptions, breakfasts, luncheons, banquets, CLE seminars, and leisure and sports activities, spread out in three or four hotels. Bet and her staff also oversee arrangements for meals and facilities for three meetings each bar year of the Executive Committee and Bar Council, and three separate meetings of the Executive Committee; and juggle countless committee meetings—most requiring lunches or refreshments—among the bar's handful of available meeting rooms. Finally, Bet's staff plans each of the mandatory professionalism courses held six times each bar year, in five different locations. This entails coordinating the scheduling of some fifteen faculty members, arranging an accessible meeting site with several “breakout” rooms, and providing a sit-down luncheon for 100 to 300 attendees. Her staff also maintains the bar's MCLE and membership records.

**Barbara Williams**, our Bar Counsel, heads the professional regulation department. Her office processes approximately three thousand complaints a year. Most of these have no merit, or fall outside the bar's jurisdiction, but each year there are hundreds that require investigation, and many are serious enough to warrant hearings before either a district committee or the VSB Disciplinary Board. In addition to supervising the lawyers and investigators who process complaints, Barbara carries her own caseload as well. She is also liaison to the Committee on Lawyer Discipline, which oversees the disciplinary system, and manages the selection by Bar Council of the lawyers and lay persons who serve on the district committees across the state. And, as if they didn't have their hands full with professional regulation, Barbara's office is increasingly required to hire and oversee receivers to protect the clients of lawyers who die, are disbarred, or abandon their small practices without having made arrangements for the winding up of the practice.

## VSB Staff

### EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Judith A. McBride (Judy)—Executive Assistant

#### Clerk of the Disciplinary System

Barbara Sayers Lanier—Clerk  
 Vivian R. Byrd—Deputy Clerk  
 Melissa A. Harlan—Lead Assistant Clerk  
 Allison M. Brown—Assistant Clerk  
 Lesley K. David—Assistant Clerk  
 Talaya I. Glenn—Assistant Clerk  
 Tonya R. Whitt —Assistant Clerk

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Laura A. Rice—Fiscal Officer  
 Susan B. Johnson—Senior Fiscal Assistant  
 Jean E. Oakley—Fiscal Assistant

#### Information Technology

William H. Dickinson (Bill)—Director  
 Joan V. McLaughlin—Senior Programmer/Analyst  
 Charles S. Troy—Programmer  
 Michael E. Kisiel—User Support/Network Administrator  
 Debra C. Isley—Word Processing Lead Specialist

#### Human Resources/Facilities

Diane F. Anderson—Director  
 Lena K. Powell (Kitty)—Assistant  
 Robert L. Scott, Sr.(Scotty)—Mail Clerk  
 Ruth B. Turner—Receptionist

### BAR SERVICES

Theresa B. Patrick (Terry)—Meetings/Projects Coordinator  
 Maureen D. Stengel—Administrator of Professionalism and Young  
 Lawyer Programs  
 Dolly C. Shaffner—Senior Administrative Assistant, Bar Services

#### Membership

Diana L. Balch—Director  
 Martha S. Swink—Senior Staff Assistant, Membership  
 Cynthia B. Williams—Administrative Assistant, CRESPA  
 Alicia A. Parker—Administrative Assistant, Membership  
 D. Nicole Carroll—Staff Assistant

#### Mandatory Continuing Legal Education

Gale M. Cartwright—Director  
 Ellen Hill—Senior Staff Assistant, MCLE  
 Diane L. Farmer—Admin. Assistant, MCLE  
 Sandra H. Clarke (Sandy)—Staff Assistant, MCLE

### COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Patricia A. Sliger (Pat)—Executive Secretary  
 Maureen K. Petrini—Director, Access to Legal Services  
 Paulette J. Davidson—Senior Administrative Assistant,  
 Communications/Public Service  
 Joy D. Staples—Senior Administrative Assistant,  
 Communications/Public Service

#### Publications/Public Information

Rodney A. Coggin (Rod)—Director  
 Caryn B. Persinger—Publications Manager/Webmaster  
 Cheryl L. Pavkov—Desktop Publishing Specialist  
 Jennifer A. Sparger—Public Information Coordinator

#### Virginia Lawyer Referral Service/Local Bar Relations

Barbara O. Allen—Director, Local Bar Relations/Lawyer Referral  
 Victoria L. Meadows—Senior Lawyer Referral Assistant  
 Toni B. Dunson—Lawyer Referral Assistant  
 Erin M. Weston—Lawyer Referral Assistant

### PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

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 Gwendolyn S. Evans (Gwen)—Executive Secretary  
 Richard E. Slaney (Rich)—Assistant Bar Counsel  
 Paul D. Georgiadis—Assistant Bar Counsel  
 Evelyn W. Willis—Legal Secretary  
 Edward L. Davis (Ned)—Assistant Bar Counsel  
 Charlotte P. Hodges—Assistant Bar Counsel  
 Valerie L. Breeden—Legal Secretary  
 James M. McCauley (Jim)—Ethics Counsel  
 Leslie A.T. Haley—Assistant Ethics Counsel  
 Mary K. Hart—Assistant Ethics Counsel  
 Anne P. Michie—Assistant Ethics Counsel  
 Laurie C. Fuller—Legal Assistant/Ethics

Noel D. Sengel—Asst. Bar Counsel Sr./Alexandria  
 Seth M. Guggenheim—Assistant Bar Counsel/Alexandria  
 Claude V. Worrell, II—Assistant Bar Counsel/Alexandria  
 Susan E. Neill—Legal Assistant/Litigation/Alexandria  
 Patricia J. Gerber (Pat)—Legal Secretary/Office Admin./Alexandria

Jane A. Fletcher—Intake Counsel  
 Mary W. Martelino—Assistant Intake Counsel  
 Michelle L. Townsend—Legal Assistant/Intake

David Abrams—Investigator/Richmond  
 Peter A. Kepler (Pete)—Investigator/Richmond  
 Cam Moffatt —Investigator/Richmond  
 A. E. Rhodenizer, Jr. (Gene)—Investigator/Central  
 James R. Dooley, Jr. (Jim)—Investigator/NVA  
 James W. Henderson (Jim)—Investigator/NVA  
 Robert K. Smith (Ken)—Investigator/NVA  
 Ronald Pohrivchak (Ron)—Investigator/Tidewater  
 Eugene L. Reagan (Gene)—Investigator/Tidewater  
 Clyde K. Venable (Ken)—Investigator/Roanoke