

The Lynchburg Bar Association

Since its inception in 1915, the Lynchburg Bar Association has had a tradition rich in leadership. The bar hails three past VSB presidents (William Rosenberger, Jr., 1954–1955; W. Hutchings Overbey, 1970–1971; and R. Edwin Burnette, Jr., 1993–1994); it carries out community outreach efforts; and it strives to promote the relationships between citizens and the law. It now has 200 members.

Projects and Programs

Serving the city of Lynchburg, as well as the counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell and Nelson, the Lynchburg Bar Association has an active Family Law section that sponsors an annual all-day CLE on President's Day. Last year, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the juvenile court system, it held a dinner attended by Chief Justice Carrico of the Virginia Supreme Court and Chief Judge Fitzpatrick of the Court of Appeals.

An active Bench-Bar Committee regularly schedules meetings of local judges and attorneys to promote an understanding of each other and respective duties and responsibilities.

An annual Law Day luncheon is held each year where two awards are presented: The Liberty Bell Award, presented to a non-lawyer member of the community who contributed to the administration of justice, and the Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year Award. The 2000 recipient of the Liberty Bell Award was community activist Aubrey Barbour. Lynchburg attorney Betsy Phillips was the Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year.

In conjunction with Law Day, Lynchburg Bar attorneys have also visited schools to discuss the role of lawyers in society and have presented and discussed the *So You're 18* handbook to high school seniors.

The Lynchburg Bar Association provides speakers for local community organizations and supports the local United Way Lawyer Referral service by covering the cost of advertising in the phone book. Members also support the local Legal Aid program by donating their services.

A law library—housed in the downtown branch of the City of Lynchburg Library—is maintained by the bar, which contributes one dollar of recordation fees toward its maintenance.

Current Outreach

In a joint community outreach effort, the Lynchburg Bar Association began working with Lynchburg College in the spring of 1999, pledging 200 hours of attorney involvement.

A recipient of a DuPont Fund Grant to fund a program aiding in the revitalization of three inner city neighborhoods, Lynchburg

Current Officers of the Lynchburg Bar Association:

Gary M. Coates: President
Royston Jester, IV: President-elect
B. Leigh Drewry, Jr.: Secretary/Treasurer

College solicited the help of bar association members in working with students to address community development issues. According to past Lynchburg Bar Association President, Henry C. Devening, Lynchburg College identified and then built on assets already existing in three inner city communities. Originally, members of the bar association were asked to work with Lynchburg College students to teach them to conduct real estate title examinations in order to identify and preserve structures in danger of deteriorating because of uncertain ownership.

It was evident that the best approach was to identify owners and co-owners of such properties, and then work with them in preparing an estate plan to ensure that the properties would pass to persons able to maintain the properties.

The Lynchburg Bar Association endorsed the proposal at the grant writing stage. Since the grant was awarded, four attorneys have met with interested Lynchburg College students. Homeowners throughout the three targeted neighborhoods have been made aware of the opportunity to have a will prepared at no cost. Accordingly, each interested homeowner will be assigned to a student who conducts an extensive interview using a check list prepared by the attorneys. In turn, the student will then meet with an attorney to review the form. After all necessary information is obtained, the attorney will prepare a will and schedule a time for execution of the will.

“There is no timetable for the completion of this project,” Devening said. “Based on the response of the involved attorneys, I would foresee that the program may continue indefinitely, as long as the community expresses a need for assistance in this area.”

“Other bars have gravitated toward the Lynchburg Bar Association and merged to make the Lynchburg Bar Association a strong force, not just for the city of Lynchburg, but for central Virginia. It has had a distinguished roster of leaders, including Ed Burnette, Frank Morrison, Bill Rosenberger, W.H. Overbey, and Doug Robertson—to name a few. The public image of lawyers in the area has been strengthened due to the community outreach of the Lynchburg Bar.”

—The Hon. William W. Sweeney
*Retired Lynchburg Circuit Court
Judge and recipient of its Liberty
Bell Award*

“I am particularly proud of the Lynchburg Bar’s Pro Bono Referral Project . . . and the significant work that the Lynchburg Bar Association does for nonprofits such as United Way and other community organizations. It is known for its successes in educating the public about the role of the lawyers in the legal system.”

—R. Edwin “Ed” Burnette, Jr.
*President of the Virginia State Bar,
1993–94, President of the
Lynchburg Bar Association,
1991–92, and first recipient
of the Pro Bono Award presented
by the Lynchburg Bar Association
and the Virginia Legal Aid Society,
1992.*

The Special Committee on Access to Legal Services

*invites you to
mark your calendar for the*

11TH ANNUAL VSB PRO BONO CONFERENCE

Friday, May 18, 2001

**University of Richmond School of Law
Richmond, Virginia**

PRESENTATIONS ON:

- The Role of Independent Nonprofits in Meeting Emerging Legal Needs
- Status Update on the Joint VSB/VBA Commission on MDP
- Basic Court Services for the GAL
- Pro Bono Opportunities for Local Government and Corporate Counsel
- A Model Child Abuse & Neglect Program
- Restorative Justice and the Transitioning Client
- Post Divorce Litigation in High Conflict Families
- De Bene Esse Evidentiary Hearings

Look for details in future issues of the *Virginia Lawyer* and *Virginia Lawyer Register*.

www.vsb.org/probono