

REPORTS OF THE SECTIONS

SENIOR LAWYERS CONFERENCE

Patricia A. Barton, chair

The Senior Lawyers Conference has finished its third year and its chair has been a member of the Virginia State Bar council and Executive Committee for one year. In October our membership was 8,161; by June, the membership had risen to 10,600. Our Web site is one of the most successful in the bar, with thousands of “hits” each month and from eight hundred to a thousand downloads of our *Senior Citizens Handbook* each month.

With the assistance of the Young Lawyers Conference, the *Senior Citizens Handbook* was revised and its tenth printing was finished before the annual meeting of the VSB in June. An initial printing of 2,500 was supplemented by 7,500. Board members intend to distribute copies to all hospitals in the state and to many adult and nursing homes. The handbook will also be available upon request from the VSB for three dollars. The SLC board has requested assistance from the Young Lawyers Conference in translating the handbook into Spanish.

The conference also joined with the young lawyers to draft a change in the Rules of the Supreme Court to add an emeritus status of membership, so that retired lawyers might assist low-income persons through local legal aid societies and firms of similar nature under the supervision of staff attorneys. The volunteer seniors must comply with continuing legal education requirements, but would not have to pay VSB dues. Malpractice insurance policies of the sponsoring law firms would cover these attorneys. The Supreme Court approved the rule in August.

This past year the SLC departed from its Web site-only printing of its quarterly newsletter and sent its spring issue by mail to all members of the conference. It was so well received that the board is considering mailing two issues next year.

The winter 2004 issue of *Experience*, the publication of the American Bar Association’s Senior Lawyers Division, featured an article, “In Furtherance of Civility,” by SLC board members C. Glasgow Butts and G. Marshall Mundy.

For the first time, two seminars at the June annual meeting were co-sponsored by the conference: “Talking with Clients about Charitable Giving: A Primer on Private Foundations, Community Foundations and Supporting Organizations,” in cooperation with the Trusts and Estates Practice Section, and “Do You Know Where Your Parents Are? Quality of Care Litigation Involving Nursing Homes and Hospitals,” in cooperation with the Health Law Section. Both seminars featured panel discussions with SLC board members.

In the fall, a folder promoting “National Health Care Decisions Week,” a program co-sponsored by the ABA, was distributed to local bar associations. It contained forms relating to organ donations, advance medical directives and other matters relating to end-of-life and other critical health decisions. The ABA offered fifty dollars to each group that planned a public informational meeting to educate the public on these important documents. It is estimated that only 38 percent of Virginians have wills with accompanying powers of attorney and advance medical directives.

The VSB has formed a task force to study solo and small-firm practitioners’ lack of planning for winding up their practices upon disability or death. The task force, which includes SLC board members Patricia A. Barton and Frank Brown, is drafting a *Receivership Handbook*.

The SLC again sponsored a luncheon at the VSB annual meeting for attorneys who were admitted to practice fifty or more years ago. Virginia Supreme Court Chief Justice Leroy R. Hassell Sr. greeted them and their families, as did the president of the bar, David P. Bobzien, and the immediate past president, Jeannie P. Dahnk.

The board continues to encourage their members to offer their services on a pro bono basis to local persons who cannot afford to hire an attorney.

