

CONFERENCE OF LOCAL BAR ASSOCIATIONS

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The 2004–2005 year proved to be another hardworking, rewarding year for the Conference of Local Bar Associations (CLBA).

On March 7, 2005, in Richmond, and again on March 18 in Abingdon, the CLBA presented the twentieth annual Bar Leaders Institute (BLI), offering a full day of training and networking for bar leaders. Thanks to Barbara O. Allen and Paulette J. Davidson of the Virginia State Bar, the BLIs showcased activities of the local and specialty bars in Virginia. These included programs such as blood drives, food distribution to the needy, mentoring for students from elementary through law schools, fund-raisers for charitable causes, scholarships, youth courts, summer law camps, pro bono assistance with wills for first responders, voter registration drives, and educational pamphlets and videos about the legal system. We also learned about programs offered by local and specialty bars to further understanding, professionalism and collegiality within the profession—as well as with the judiciary and elected officials. Programs included bench-bar conferences, continuing legal education programs and public forums.

The BLI in Abingdon was presented in coordination with the Supreme Court of Virginia’s Solo & Small-Firm Practitioner Forum. It offered a unique opportunity for bench and bar to gather for a day of training, education and camaraderie. It was an honor to be a part of such an important event. Of particular note were the efforts of Justice Cynthia D. Kinser and Chief Justice Leroy R. Hassell Sr.

The CLBA and the Supreme Court will present the BLI and the Solo & Small-Firm Practitioner Forum elsewhere in the commonwealth. There will be full-day forums in Harrisonburg and in Fredricksburg. The CLBA also looks forward to presenting the twenty-first annual BLIs in March 2006 in Richmond and Abingdon.

This bar year proved to be a banner year for *So You’re 18*, the seminal publication of the CLBA. This is a handbook on legal rights and responsibilities of citizens reaching the age of majority, and it is printed in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. This year we distributed more than ten thousand copies throughout the state, and many others were downloaded from the Virginia State Bar Web site. Recipients included courts, counselors, social service departments, schools, bar associations, lawyers, law firms, police departments and parole offices. *So You’re 18* will be updated and available for distribution at the start of each school year.

This year, the CLBA assumed responsibility for *Legally Informed*, a publication provided by the VSB that details public service and pro bono activities offered by local and statewide specialty bars in Virginia. This indispensable source of information was recently updated and revised.

At the VSB Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach, the CLBA held its annual meeting, which included the twentieth annual Awards of Merit competition to recognize outstanding projects and programs of local and specialty bar associations. We also presented the tenth annual Local Bar Leader of the Year Award, which recognizes extraordinary dedication and service to the bench, bar and public. An impressive array of projects and programs was recognized, and the meeting was a great opportunity to gather with the best in the legal profession.

