



## **YOUNG LAWYERS CONFERENCE**

*Jimmy F. Robinson Jr., president*

Throughout the 2005–2006 bar year, the Young Lawyers Conference continued to make positive strides toward accomplishing the goals of the YLC. We worked diligently this year to make our theme—“*Bettering Our Community; Strengthening Our Profession*”—a reality.

**Voter Education Initiative:** Under the leadership of Jennifer L. McClellan and Jacqueline S. McClenney, the Young Lawyers Conference worked with the State Board of Elections for a second year to distribute a “Know Your Rights and Responsibilities” brochure to citizens across the commonwealth. The Young Lawyers Conference distributed more than thirty-two thousand brochures to civic organizations, churches, and chambers of commerce. Additional

pamphlets were distributed to fraternities, sororities, voting rights organizations and the Virginia Commonwealth University Black Caucus.

**Peer Mediation:** Under the leadership of Sona Rewari, peer mediation chair, the Young Lawyers Conference secured retired Judge Rosemarie P. Annunziata to be keynote speaker at the November 22, 2005, Northern Virginia Regional High School Peer Mediation Conference, which the YLC Peer Mediation Committee cosponsored. In addition, the YLC secured all panelists for a Mediation Beyond High School workshop that was conducted at the Peer Mediation Conference.

**Emergency Legal Services:** In collaboration with the entire Virginia State Bar and The Virginia Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, the YLC Emergency Legal Services Committee activated and undertook the following efforts:

- **Hurricane Katrina:** The Virginia Lawyer Referral Service began providing referrals related to Hurricane Katrina in September 2005. Virginia State Bar Emergency Legal Services cochairs Jeffrey H. Geiger and J. Barrett Lucy monitored this storm and Virginia's efforts to assist displaced citizens from Louisiana.
- **Training of Additional Volunteers:** As a result of the tremendous Virginia effort to assist in the worldwide support to the Gulf Coast and specifically to New Orleans, Louisiana, in conjunction with the Virginia State Bar and VBA, the YLC ELS Committee conducted multiple continuing legal education volunteer training sessions to add new volunteers to the rolls. More than seventy-five individuals were trained.

**Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Prelaw Institute:** The 2005 Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Prelaw Institute hosted twenty-five high school students at the University of Richmond July 18-22, 2005. We had a variety of students from various backgrounds. A fair number of students attended George Wythe and Huguenot high schools in Richmond. The week of activities included panels of government, private-practice and in-house counsel attorneys; mock law classes with UR law professors; and academic sessions to preparing students for college and the "real world." The students were treated to an interactive session with Judge Roger L. Gregory, followed by a tour of the Black History Museum and Cultural Center (featuring the *Brown v. Board of Education* exhibition). The week culminated in the Mock Trial Program where the students tried a case similar to those completed by first-year law students. For recreation, the students bowled, played Laser Quest, and attended a Richmond Braves baseball game.

**Professional Development Conference:** The fifth annual Professional Development Conference was held March 17-18, 2006, at the University of Virginia's Darden School in Charlottesville. This program provided Virginia's young lawyers with a forum to specifically address their professional and educational concerns, including substantive CLE programs and professional development seminars. This year's conference, "Do It Yourself: Your Career Building Tool Kit," was at arming young lawyers with the tools necessary to build a successful practice. Approximately forty-five individuals attended the PDC.

**Celebration Bench-Bar Dinner:** This year's Celebration Bench-Bar Dinner was held in Richmond on May 23, 2006, at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. First Lady Anne B. Holton was the keynote speaker. As always, the goal of the dinner was to create an informal, relaxed event for young lawyers to mingle with prominent members of the legal community. The dinner is also an opportunity to recognize and honor recently appointed or elevated female and minority members of the Virginia judiciary.

**Community Law Week:** The Young Lawyers Conference implemented its Community Law Week programs during May and early June. No Bills Night was implemented in Roanoke, Danville, and Northern Virginia.

**Minority Prelaw Conference:** Each year the YLC hosts the Minority Prelaw Conference to encourage minority undergraduate students to consider the legal profession as a career. This year's program was held February 25, 2006. The committee chairs, Tomika N. Stevens and Samantha Ahuja, and committee members Ronke H. Hughes and Reginald M. Skinner successfully expanded the program by having several new events, including a Friday night reception with a keynote speaker. The program was held at a new venue, the George Mason School of Law in Arlington. Many sponsors, law firms, law schools and conference participants attended the Friday reception and the U.S. District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee of the Eastern District of Virginia was the keynote speaker. Panelists on Saturday included VSB President Phillip V. Anderson. This was the biggest and best-attended Prelaw Conference, with approximately one hundred students in attendance.

**Wills For Heroes:** Wills for Heroes was successfully implemented in Cumberland County and Norfolk. CLE programs to train volunteers and client education sessions were held prior to the will signings. At the will signings, session, YLC volunteers prepared wills, powers of attorney and advance medical directives for more than forty first responders.

**VSB Annual Meeting:** The Young Lawyers Conference sponsored this year's Annual Meeting showcase program—"A Roberts and Alito High Court: The Effect of Long-Standing Precedent and Developing Areas of Law." The panel presentation addressed significant developments that have taken place in the composition of the United States Supreme Court with the appointments of Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justice Samuel Alito. The panelists included Tony Mauro of the *Legal Times* publication.

**Admission and Orientation Ceremony:** The Young Lawyers Conference welcomed more than 300 new Virginia attorneys at our June 2006 Admission and Orientation Ceremony and more than 850 new admittees at our Fall Admission and Orientation ceremony in October 2005. After each program, the Supreme Court convened in the Richmond Convention Center and bestowed the duties and responsibilities of our profession upon Virginia's newest lawyers.

**First Day in Practice Seminar:** This year's program took place on November 1, 2005, following the fall Admission and Orientation Ceremony. More than 162 attended. The YLC continues to work with the VSB General Practice Section to put on this program.

**Juvenile Justice/Youth Rights Handbook:** This handbook is being championed by Lesley A. Pate. It will be published in the fall 2006 by the YLC in conjunction with the Just Children Program of the Legal Aid Justice Center in Charlottesville. The handbook, spearheaded by Andrew K. Block, will describe the rights of juveniles in schools, police custody and courts. The handbook is a guide for students, parents and school personnel who wish to protect their own rights and respect the rights of others.

**We the Jury: A View from the Box:** The We the Jury program took place April 28, 2006, at the University of Richmond Law School's Moot Courtroom. The program was divided into two forty-five-minute segments on the history of the jury system and timely topics such as large punitive damage awards in products liability cases; the "CSI effect" (the imagined need for DNA evidence to convict an accused); jury nullification; and jury note taking. Panelists include: The Judge Margaret P. Spencer, Judge Richard D. Taylor, Michael N. Herring, Carolyn V. Grady, Thomas M. Wolf, Claire G. Cardwell and citizen jurors. The second portion of the program was a town-hall format moderated by Shawri King Casey. This program was an opportunity to inform the public about the importance of jury service, as well as a chance for previous jurors to inform attorneys and judges about positives and negatives from the jury box. Juniors and seniors from area high schools and the general public were invitees.

**Immigrant Outreach:** This year the Immigrant Outreach program provided information to attorneys and judges regarding deportation and implications of arrests, charges and criminal convictions to immigrants. The program has been a success for the past three years and has received positive feedback from attorneys and courts in Northern Virginia. This year we expanded the program to include a Model Hearing Program, developed to improve the quality of advocacy for immigrants before the court, as well as increase levels of pro bono representation. The program allowed participants to acquire hands-on immigration training and a broad understanding of immigration law, in exchange for a limited commitment.

**Docket Call:** The YLC publishes a quarterly newsletter for young lawyers under the editorial leadership of Christopher E. Gatewood. The *Docket Call* reports on legal issues, career issues and bar activities and is an important tool for the YLC to publish its many activities and recruit volunteers.

