On behalf of the more than 9,000 young lawyers admitted
to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia,
congratulations and welcome to the Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference! You have achieved a feat that not
many accomplish, and that is successfully passing the bar exam and
becoming a licensed Virginia lawyer. With this accomplishment
comes great responsibility, great expectations, and the potential
for great rewards. The Young Lawyers Conference, or the YLC,
want to help ensure you successfully enter the practice of law and
excel as a new, Virginia lawyer.

First, what is the YLC? The YLC is the mandatory bar
conference for all Virginia lawyers under the age of thirty-six, or
who have been admitted to their first bar for less than three years.
The YLC is a conference of the Virginia State Bar (VSB), the
regulatory agency governing all practicing lawyers in Virginia.
But the YLC is much more than just a group of young lawyers, or
a mandatory conference to which you will belong. The YLC is an
opportunity for professional and leadership growth as well as an
opportunity to help the greater Virginia community.

The YLC can enhance your professional growth as a young
lawyer. The YLC provides a multitude of programs designed to
strengthen your skills as a new lawyer, including our Professional
Development Conference, a day-long CLE program designed for
the development of skills and subject-matter topics most commonly
faced by young lawyers; our Practice Tips Series, online practical
essays written by lawyers designed to analyze specific subject-
matter areas of the law; or, the Professional Development Series,
an online library of podcasts covering substantive legal topics
facing young lawyers. Professionally, the YLC offers a multitude of
programs to develop and enhance your skills as a new practitioner,
while focusing on areas of law most commonly encountered by
young lawyers.

The YLC is an opportunity for leadership growth. As a young
lawyer, you have the mental ability to study hard and perform well.
You probably have held multiple leadership positions throughout
your life whether as a captain of a sports team or as a class officer.
The YLC offers the chance to build your leadership skills and
abilities through programs such as the Non-Profit Board Match,
where a young lawyer assists and provides leadership to a local
non-profit organization. There are many opportunities available
from volunteering, including serving as a program chair for one
of our programs, or as a district representative in your judicial
district. These vacancies are frequently posted on the YLC website
and give you the opportunity to champion a cause, or to even create
new programs to address arising legal needs.

The YLC is an opportunity to help those in your community.
The YLC has a number of programs designed to address the
legal needs and issues facing Virginia communities. From
the Oliver Hill & Samuel Tucker Pre-Law Institute, a week-
long intensive legal program for high school students, or the
Minority Pre-Law Conference, a one-day pre-law conference
that exposes undergraduate students to future legal careers, the
YLC strengthens diversity and inclusion in the legal profession
by providing exposure to the legal profession to young people of
all ages and backgrounds. Additionally, the YLC has programs
like the Emergency Legal Service Committee, a committee that
responds to federal and state emergency declarations by providing
access to legal services for those affected by catastrophic events; the
Wills for Heroes program, which provides wills and testamentary documents to first-responders and veterans; and, the Immigrant Outreach Committee, which programs CLEs and workshops related to legal issues affecting immigrant communities. These are just a few of the many programs the YLC annually conducts to assist those with legal needs arising in our communities.

As the YLC provides opportunities for professional growth and leadership and to help local communities, the YLC also works to address the effects of increasing mental providing access to legal services for those affected by catastrophic events; the Wills for Heroes program, which provides wills and testamentary documents to first-responders and veterans; and, the Immigrant Outreach Committee, which programs CLEs and workshops related to legal issues affecting immigrant communities. These are just a few of the many programs the YLC annually conducts to assist those with legal needs arising in our communities.

As the YLC provides opportunities for professional growth and leadership and to help local communities, the YLC also works to address the effects of increasing mental and physical demands placed on young lawyers. It has been well documented that lawyers suffer mental issues related to this profession at higher rates than many other professions. The YLC has tasked its Wellness Committee with following the charge of VSB President Len Heath and the Virginia Supreme Court in identifying the causes of mental issues within the legal profession while at the same time offering solutions to address and combat these problems. The YLC Wellness Committee has a number of upcoming programs, including CLEs focused on mental health and wellness; a Wellness month with the focus on providing activities and resources for young lawyers; and, opportunities for physical and collegial activities, such as our upcoming Wellness Hike in Charlottesville. Your mental health and wellness as a young lawyer are extremely important to your success as you take on increasing professional responsibility, time demands, and growth within the profession.

Although the YLC offers many opportunities, there are a few concepts I would suggest that you explore as a new lawyer in conjunction with the resources and opportunities offered by the YLC:

1. Secure a Mentor(s): A mentor is the key to success for a young lawyer. They offer wisdom and knowledge that only comes with practicing law over time. Your mentor should be able to assist with questions related to your practice or specialization; offer support and encouragement; and, generally be there to assist in your growth as a young lawyer.

2. Become Involved: We live with the harsh reality that there are only twenty-four hours in a day. However, you should spend some of that time becoming active and involved in your community or with a local/state bar association. Whether volunteering for a YLC program or working with another organization, spending time outside of the office following a passion can be key to your prolonged happiness as a practicing young lawyer.

3. Help Others: Helping others can be truly rewarding and satisfying. There are many in our community that simply cannot afford legal services despite the need for legal assistance. I strongly encourage you to devote some of your practice to pro-bono matters. There are many resources that can help you achieve this goal, including the YLC’s Pro-Bono website, or the VSB’s virginia. freelegalanswers.org website.

As you start the practice of law and embark on a truly great and rewarding career, the YLC is here to help ensure your growth and development as a lawyer. Again, on behalf of the YLC Board of Governors and all members of the YLC, congratulations and welcome to the Virginia State Bar.

Endnotes
1. http://www.vsb.org/site/conferences/ylc/practicetips
2. http://www.vsb.org/site/conferences/ylc/pds
The Wellness Corner:
Welcome to the Bar
By Tiago D. Bezerra

In this installment of the Wellness Corner, our focus is on new lawyers. This month we welcome around one thousand new lawyers into the Virginia State Bar and the Young Lawyers Conference. To our new colleagues, your three-plus years of study and preparation have paid off, and we are thrilled to welcome you to the profession. As you likely know by now, being an attorney requires a lot of time and energy, and the conditions under which we practice will vary from firm to firm and specialty to specialty. Needless to say, “pressure” is a word and a feeling all of us experience from time to time. Thus, it is important to understand and accept this element of practice in order to recognize its causes, its effects, and its cures.

Understandingly, we all handle these pressures differently, so it may not be surprising to learn that a quarter of practicing lawyers struggle with substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and stress. In fact, studies have reported that young lawyers in the first ten years of practice experience some of the highest rates of alcohol abuse and depression. Our profession has taken notice of these concerning patterns as illustrated by The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change, an August 2017 report published by the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being (the “Report”). As you embark on your practice, it is important to understand the very real risks it can present to your overall health and fitness—both mentally and physically. This understanding, in turn, will prepare you to act to avoid such pitfalls in your own careers.

The Report defines ‘well-being’ not just as physical health, but as “a continuous process toward thriving across all life dimensions,” which include the emotional, occupational, intellectual, spiritual, social, and physical aspects of life. As young lawyers, we must be conscious of our own well-being and take daily steps to secure it for our own good. We need to remember to advocate zealously not only for our clients, but also for ourselves and for each other. The Report estimates that 65 percent of current equity partners will retire within the next decade, so preserving the well-being of young lawyers in the commonwealth will have a substantial impact on the health of our industry in the coming future.

Of course, maintaining a healthy well-being can be difficult, especially for the newest attorneys among us. We are inherently driven individuals, generally maximizing our opportunities to prove our worth to our supervising attorneys. Moreover, our job is to help others overcome problems, and that often involves carrying the weight and emotions of our clients. This all takes a toll on our well-being. The result is that we often fail to take the time to assess our own problems and to take steps to address them.

The Virginia State Bar has recognized the issues of well-being throughout our legal community and is taking significant steps to raise awareness of this topic. For example, the VSB is actively preparing a resource guide that will be made available to all Virginia lawyers. It has approved well-being as a topic for continuing legal education credits, and it has encouraged various initiatives—including the Young Lawyers Conference’s very own Wellness Initiative—to tackle lawyer wellness issues head on. Activity-wise, statewide and local bar associations are organizing wellness activities such as yoga-in-the-parks, hiking, and other outdoor opportunities. In addition, Lawyers Helping Lawyers is a non-profit organization endorsed by the VSB and other statewide attorney affiliations that provides free, confidential, non-disciplinary services to attorneys with substance abuse struggles.

Needless to say, well-being is a significant focus for our profession, and more and more resources are becoming available for lawyers of all ages and experience to use so that we can all take better care of ourselves.

So, what can you do? First, recognize the problem and take some time to understand the concerning patterns plaguing our profession. Second, understand the resources available to you and take action to be a part of the solution. Please check out the VSB’s webpage on lawyer well-being. There are a number of helpful resources, including a link to read the Report referenced above. You can also follow the YLC on social media for information on wellness events in your area. Finally, once you understand the “risks” associated with the practice of law and know where to look for help if needed, make it priority to address your personal well-being every day.

One thing we can all do is to practice civility towards one another. Practicing law “the Virginia Way,” as Deborah Elkins called it in her September 14, 2014 article in Virginia Lawyers Weekly, can at least stabilize one variable we encounter daily in our practice. While we are constantly at odds with each other, that opposition is a result of the clients we have, not who we are personally. So, when opposing counsel takes a position you may believe is unreasonable, remember that their position may be a product of their client’s wishes and not their own. Let’s make a concerted effort to be civil with each other where we can. Our collective well-being will be better off for it.

Tiago D. Bezerra is an associate with the Law Office of William A. Marr, Jr. focusing on representing homeowners'/property owners’ associations and condominiums, and small businesses.
Attorneys have an ethical obligation to stay abreast of changing rules, regulations, and case law that impact the various areas of the law in which they practice. Rule 1.1 of the American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct specifically outlines that in order for a lawyer to provide competent representation to a client, he or she must have the “legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.” The comments to Rule 1.1 clearly state that lawyers should keep up with changes in the law and its practice in order to provide competent legal advice. However, many practitioners do not know how to balance this ethical obligation against the weight of heavy caseloads and work requirements.

Every area of the law is different in how rapidly changes are made or updates are provided. Thus, attorneys must research the best way to stay on top of their specific practice areas. However, there are certain suggestions that may be followed across all practice areas:

1. **Continuing Legal Education:** Attend CLEs regularly that address specific practice areas. Most practice areas have annual updates to the law or similarly-titled CLE courses. These courses are a one-stop shop to learn about the recent changes or additions to specific areas of the law and often involve question and answer portions for further clarification if any is necessary.

2. **Participate in committees:** Participation in bar committees and/or court committees allows practitioners to interact with other legal professionals outside of their own office or firm. By interacting with other attorneys in a committee setting, attorneys have the ability to know before a change comes out what the update is about, or the impact of the recent amendment to the practice of a specific area of the law.

3. **Legal journals, publications, and podcasts:** Receiving legal journals and publications from a mailing list is very different from reading and digesting what the legal articles discuss. It’s important for practitioners and legal professionals to carve out a specific period of time each month to read through the publications that are sent to them to stay abreast of new issues and the implications of any new statutes, rules, or case law. There are also many podcasts that attorneys can listen to that discuss recent developments in the law and the implications of such issues on the practice of law in a given field.

In addition to the ethical requirements of staying on top of the rules, case law, and impact of changing practice requirements in each legal field, there are serious business consequences for attorneys who fail to keep themselves updated. As counselors and advisors, attorneys cannot provide sound legal advice to clients without knowing the true implications of their proposed course of action. Aside from the ethical problems that can arise in such situations, the serious business implication is that clients will remove their business and go elsewhere. Word travels fast in each practice area, and no attorney wants to have a reputation of not knowing what they are talking about.

Shirin Afsous is an associate attorney at Livesay & Myers, P.C., practicing exclusively family law.
Time flies when you’re having fun! It seems just like yesterday I was attending 1L orientation at Richmond Law. I honestly do not remember much about that day except being in awe about the Moot Courtroom and intently trying to capture the advice everyone—from students to practicing lawyers—shared about how to “master” law school. If only I knew then what I know now: success is predicated on simply being the best version of yourself.

While some of the advice was not so good (e.g., don’t worry about attending class), some of the advice was pretty great. However, rarely spoken was the advice to not forget who you are—to not discount the fact that, if I had what it took to get into law school, I had what it took to succeed in law school. The good grades and professional and civic experience that got me to law school, those were the things that would actually help me get through law school.

To that end, if I could go back and give my law school self advice about how to successfully navigate the arduous years of law school, I would tell myself: remember the importance of mental health; be mindful of imposter syndrome; and be the best version of myself.

Self-care. Being mindful of my mental health, or what I like to think of as self-care, is undoubtedly the most important piece of advice no one ever gave me. According to the American Bar Association’s Student Law Division, law students and lawyers experience much higher rates of depression, anxiety, and stress than the general public.1 Fortunately, law schools and the legal profession are now placing much needed emphasis on mental health. In hindsight, I realize that I should have dedicated more time for self-care during law school. Whether that was in the form of working out, pampering myself (on my limited law school budget), or seeking counseling or therapy to simply vent about the haze of law school, I should have done more. As a practicing lawyer, the haze hasn’t stopped. And now I have clients to answer to. Nonetheless, I have mastered the art of self-care, and that helps tremendously. Whether it is a kick boxing boot camp, a bubble bath on Sunday, or a “therapy session” over mimosas with close friends, I now understand the importance of self-care to my mental and, subsequently, physical health.

Imposter Syndrome. Doubting your accomplishments and feeling like an imposter may be what stresses law students the most. It’s so easy to forget that the purpose of law school is to learn. I remember before a contracts exam my professor said, “You have all the tools you need to do well in your toolbox; you just have to use them.” Said differently, I belonged and was worthy of being in law school. Even if I didn’t grasp a concept right away, I had the mental aptitude to eventually master the concept. It might take reading a treatise or doing extra practice problems in a study aid, but I was capable. Even now as a practicing attorney, imposter syndrome is a real thing. It is easy to question your competence when you are in court or at your firm with so many brilliant legal minds, but in my post-law school wisdom I know I have the tools to be a great lawyer in my toolbox; I just have to use them.

Be the best version of Yourself. There is no shortage of advice from others about what you should do to succeed in law school (not even in this article!). So much, in fact, that you may not even realize you’re doing something everyone says you should do instead of what you actually want to do. Maybe you didn’t want to write on to law review, but everyone said you should. Or you were told to take a certain class, and you absolutely hate it. It’s important to not forget to be yourself—the person attending all the classes and staying up late to study. The person who actually got you into law school. That person is not perfect and doesn’t know everything, but it’s okay—no one knows everything.

Being cognizant of self-care, aware of imposter syndrome, and conscious about being the best version of myself is in no uncertain terms the best advice I could have given my law school self.

Latosha M. Ellis is a 2014 graduate of the University of Richmond School of Law. She is currently an Associate at Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP in the Insurance Coverage Litigation Group. She also serves as committee chair of the YLC Bench-Bar Relations Committee.

Endnotes:
Want to Write More Readable Briefs? Write Shorter Sentences (on average).

By Alexander T. MacDonald

A nyone who’s taken a 1L legal-writing class has heard the golden rule of legal writing: “Write short sentences.” But rarely is that rule explained. Why should I write short sentences? And what is a short sentence, anyway?

In fact, the rule needs some refinement. The important thing isn’t to write short sentences, per se; it’s to keep the average length of your sentences in control. And the reason to do that is simple: readers understand short sentences more easily, and so can follow your argument better. The rule should, therefore, be stated this way: “Write short sentences on average.”

Of course, that still needs some explaining. What do we mean by “short”? Well, it depends on whom you ask, and when. Sentence length has been declining for four hundred years. In the 1600s, the average published sentence came in at around 60 words. A hundred years later, that average had dropped by nearly a third, and it kept falling. By the twentieth century, averages had dropped to around 25 words. And today, most publications average well less. Publications like The New Yorker and The Atlantic still average around 20 words per sentence, but the average general-interest newspaper has fallen to somewhere around 15.

These publications are a good barometer for what modern readers like. After all, newspapers and magazines survive only if readers are willing to pay for the pleasure of reading them. So, for you, the brief writer, they offer a useful rule of thumb: try to keep your average between 15 and 20 words per sentence.

Now, some of you are objecting already:

“Legal writing deals with complicated subjects, and complicated subjects need long sentences.”

“Good writers routinely use long sentences.”

“I don’t care what readers like—my job isn’t to please; it’s to persuade.”

Let’s take these objections one at a time, starting with “legal writing deals with complicated subjects.” Surely, we can stipulate that, no matter what kind of law you practice, it’s not more complicated than astrophysics. And even astrophysics can be explained in snappy sentences. For example, in his compulsively readable Brief History of Time, Stephen Hawking averages fewer than 18 words per sentence. If Dr. Hawking doesn’t need overlong sentences to describe the nature of the universe, you don’t need them to describe a breach of contract.

As for “good writers routinely use long sentences,” that’s true. But remember, we’re not talking about individual sentences. No one (competent) would recommend that you cripple your prose by arbitrarily capping your sentences. Instead, you should focus on your average sentence length. Even authors who are known for their long sentences kept reasonable averages—Charles Dickens of all people averaged around 20. So yes, good writers do often write long sentences, and so should you. The important thing is to spread them out among shorter sentences. In fact, studies have shown that no single factor increases readability more than variety in sentence length. Variety is the spice of life.

Finally, let’s consider “it’s not my job to please the reader.” That, of course, is also true, if horribly shortsighted. Yes, judges are civil servants, and they’re paid to read whatever you put in front of them. But that doesn’t give you free license to file whatever dreck you please. You still have a job to do, and that job is to persuade the judge to rule in your client’s favor. And do you think the judge will be more likely to accept an argument from a brief she had to force herself through, or one she enjoyed reading?

In other words, readable briefs are effective briefs, and shorter sentences increase readability. But that’s not their only benefit. Studies have shown that readers retain information better when it’s “chunked”—i.e., broken into smaller, related pieces. And that’s precisely what shorter sentences help you do: they help you chunk your information into bite-sized nuggets your reader can easily digest and retain. That will come in handy when your judge is ready to write her opinion. The more of your argument she remembers, the more likely she is to rely on your brief.

So how do you shorten your average sentence? The easiest way is to use fewer words. Now, that’s sometimes easier said than done, but you can at least go after the low-hanging fruit. First, cut your “filler” phrases—dead weight like “it should be noted,” “it need not be stated,” and “the fact that.” These phrases almost never add any meaning, and your sentences will be leaner without them. You can also target prepositional phrases, particularly “of” phrases, which you can replace with an adjective or possessive noun. For example, you could replace “the conclusions of the Board” with “the Board’s conclusions.” You only save a few words each time, but over the course of a 50-page brief, the savings add up.

You could also target your semicolons and turn them all to periods. Yes, some writers use semicolons to great effect. I’ve even used a few in this article (perhaps to lesser effect). But if you need a quick way to bring down your average, just take a few out—or better, use fewer to begin with.

Whatever technique you choose, always write with the (revised) golden rule in mind: keep your sentences short on average. Follow the rule, and your prose will perk up, your readers will follow your argument better, and you may find yourself winning more cases.

Alexander MacDonald is a 2012 graduate of the William & Mary School of Law. He is an associate with Littler Mendelson, P.C., and the editor in chief of the Practice Tips Series. He can be reached at amac2644@gmail.com.
Do you ever wish you could have just had your mom write a few of your papers in law school? Well, it might not have been the best idea, even if it was tempting; but in this case, I get to do just that. My mother has graciously decided to share her thoughts and tips, the same advice she gave to me, now that she has retired. For the last twenty years she has worked at elder law firms in New York, with the last decade as a head paralegal. She spent many years refining the firms’ processes and procedures to provide stellar customer service, a smooth-running office, and more money in the bank.

You have finally made it through law school and you found a job at a law firm. Your dream is move up in the firm to become a partner or to one day have your own law firm. But do you know what it takes to run a successful law firm as a partner or sole practitioner looking to grow your law firm?

There are many attorneys who become partners or start their own practice and they may be good at the aspects of the specific law they have chosen. However, they do not have any knowledge on how to run the business side of the practice and the day-to-day operation. As the practice grows, they are not knowledgeable in hiring competent staff. Just because an attorney, a paralegal, or legal assistants’ resume looks good on paper, does not mean the person is competent to do the job. Consider testing the applicant’s skills by having the applicant draft or edit a draft of a common document. Test the candidate’s ability to handle a phone call by having another person call the firm and let the candidate field the call. Hiring the right people for the job is important to making the firm successful.

Along with hiring the right staff, billing practice is another area that should be considered. Retainers are very important. Retainers should encompass all of the legal services to be provided. Quite a few attorneys and law firms make common mistakes such as not incorporating all the legal services that will be provided to the client. Whether the retainer is based on hourly fees or a flat fee, a new retainer should be prepared and sent to the client for signature for the new legal services to be performed. Many attorneys will perform the additional legal services not covered under the original signed retainer—how do you collect the fees for the additional service? It is highly unlikely that you will recover those additional fees. That is why a new retainer should be signed for any new or additional legal services to be performed by the firm.

Another common mistake is letting a potential client leave the initial consultation meeting with a retainer that is not signed. The potential client “promises” to sign it and send it back with the initial retainer payment. If the client does not sign the retainer at the consultation, they are “shopping” around. And, if you think that offering a free consultation will be the answer, you are wrong. Although common in some practice types, if you can steer away from free consultations, it can add value to your practice. Consider that most people value services that cost them money a lot more than services they receive for free.

In reality, most potential clients will not come back and were only looking for “free advice.” You have now wasted an attorney’s time meeting with a potential client who was just looking for free information and did not retain your firm. There should always be a consultation fee and the fee should cover at least one hour of the attorney’s billing rate. If the potential client retains the firm, then the consultation fee could be applied to the legal fees being charged which seems to be an incentive to signing the retainer.

The retainer should, as mentioned above, include all legal services to be performed. It should also include the hourly billing rates for partners, associate attorneys, paralegals, legal assistants, and administrative staff. There should also be a clause regarding mediation if you so desire it.

Finally, consider taking at least one business, accounting, and interviewing practices course. These courses will enhance your abilities either working at a law firm, working towards that partnership, or the dream of your own law firm. Being multi-talented is always an asset in both your professional and personal life.

Scott A. Nerlino is a 2013 graduate of George Mason University School of Law. He is an attorney and currently a data scientist at Aptima, Inc. working on DARPA’s Plan-X, a foundational cyber warfare program to develop platforms for the Department of Defense, to plan for, conduct, and assess cyber warfare. He can be reached at Scott.Nerlino@blueteam.io.
The Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference (YLC) won the State Division, Class A first place award in the Comprehensive category at the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division’s 2018 Awards of Achievement program in Chicago.

The Comprehensive Category allows young lawyer groups from around the country to compete with one another with a full complement of five of the organization’s programs or projects occurring during the previous bar year. Competitors are judged by originality of the programs, impact of the programs, involvement of the greater bar, budget size, and balance of programs for new and experienced lawyers among other criteria. The judging panel consisted of young lawyer leaders from around the country. The State Division, Class A, placed the YLC against large state organizations from Texas, Florida, California, New York, Michigan, Illinois, and Georgia. This is the YLC’s first win in this category in over a decade.

“Winning the ABA YLD’s Comprehensive Award for 2017-2018 is a tremendous honor. It epitomizes the hard work and commitment of our YLC Board, our program chairs, district representatives, and many volunteers,” says YLC President Brian Wesley. “This award signifies that the YLC is a leader among the nation’s young lawyer groups in its development and execution of programming that services the legal and greater community. We look forward to continuing our service to the profession and assisting with the legal needs of communities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

In previous years, the YLC has received first place honors for Public Service Project for its partnership with Hogar Immigrant Services’ Naturalization Clinics, first place for Diversity for the Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Pre-Law Institute, and first place in Service to the Bar for the Professional Development Series. The YLC has also won numerous second place and honorable mention awards in their Division and Class.

Chris Fortier is the immediate past president of the YLC.
Stars of the Month:

October

Edwin Wu and Crista Gantz are our October Stars of the Month for their work as program co-chairs on the Emergency Legal Services Committee. They spearheaded the YLC’s emergency response to Hurricane Florence, implemented our ELS plan, and coordinated our efforts with all necessary contacts and agencies. Their hard work and dedication have resulted in our ability to assist those in need of emergency legal services following the storm.

September

Benjamin Shute, district representative for the 6th District, is our September Star of the Month. Benjamin organized and executed a networking event in Fredericksburg, providing young lawyers a relaxed and collegial environment to gather. This event helped bring awareness about the YLC to the 6th District and facilitated young lawyer interest in YLC involvement.

August

Wesley D. Allen and Courtney M. Frazier are our August Stars of the Month. Wesley and Courtney did an excellent job serving as co-chairs of the Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Pre-Law Institute. The Institute, co-hosted with the Diversity Conference, is a week-long, pre-law intensive program that welcomed over forty high school students. Held at the University of Richmond, the program features a networking event, legal skills workshops, and a mock trial competition.

Southwest Virginia District Representatives Needed

The YLC has vacant district representative positions in the 1st, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th districts. If you are interested in serving, or in learning more about these positions, please contact Kristopher McClellan at kristopher.mcclellan@gmail.com.
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The YLC coordinates a variety of programs in service to both the Bar and the public. If you are interested in assisting with any program or commission, please contact any YLC Board Member, Program Chair or Co-Chair, or your District Representative.

SERVICE TO THE BAR

ADMISSION AND ORIENTATION CEREMONY
This committee is responsible for organizing and staging a special ceremony sponsored twice a year by the YLC at which time all newly licensed attorneys are given the opportunity to appear before the Supreme Court of Virginia to be admitted to practice in the courts of Virginia. Because the Court sits in Richmond, this committee typically is comprised principally of young lawyers practicing in the metropolitan Richmond area.

Chair: Jasmine R. McKinney
jasmine@cvlas.org

Sponsors Coordinators:
Stephen Pierce
spierce@spflfirm.com

Volunteer Coordinator:
Blair Hawkins
Blaire.hawkins@gmail.com

ANNUAL MEETING/PROGRAMS
This committee plans a CLE or other special interest program to take place during the Bar’s Annual Meeting held each June in Virginia Beach. During gubernatorial election years, this committee typically schedules a debate.

Contact: Amanda Hayes
ahayes@rpb-law.com

Ashley Barendse
abarendse@dbllawyers.com

ANNUAL MEETING/ATHLETICS
This committee is responsible for organizing the “Run in the Sun” 5 kilometer foot race and the David T. Stitt Memorial volleyball tournament, both sponsored by the YLC during the Bar’s Annual Meeting in June in Virginia Beach.

Contact: Simone Williams
swilliams@geelawfirm.com

Joshua Labat
jlabat@mcguirewoods.com

BENCH BAR CELEBRATION DINNER COMMITTEE
Each year the YLC hosts a dinner to honor newly elevated women and minority judges from across the state. The dinner provides an opportunity for young lawyers to interact with judges in a casual, relaxed atmosphere.

Contact: Anna Birkenheier
annabirkenheier@gmail.com

Madeline Gibson
Madeline.gibson@gmail.com

BENCH BAR RELATIONS COMMITTEE
The Committee would also develop best practices and contacts for YLC events with judges and provide program planning resources to District Representatives seeking to organize an event with local judges. The Bench-Bar Committee Chair also works closely the VSB’s Bench-Bar Committee to address concerns directly related to young lawyers.

Contact: Latosha M. Ellis
latosha@latoshaeillis.com

Shannan Fitzgerald
sfitzgerald@cblaw.com

Kyle Boynton 571-309-6322

FIRST DAY IN PRACTICE SEMINAR
In conjunction with the General Practice Section, this committee plans and implements the First Day in Practice Seminar for new lawyers traditionally held the day before the Fall Admission and Orientation Ceremony.

Contact: Jamilah LeCruise
757-627-5215

Kevin Biniazan
757-622-6000

DOCKET CALL NEWSLETTER
The editor and editorial board of the Docket Call are responsible for publishing four issues of the YLC's newsletter each year.

Contact: Andrew Selman
aselman@vanblacklaw.com

NON PROFIT BOARD MATCH
Board Match is a program that the YLC is developing to provide an opportunity for local non-profit organizations to solicit new board members and board participation from area lawyers.

Contact: Igor Vaserfirer
757-640-7212

Lexy Fenlason
lexymckay@gmail.com

PRACTICE TIPS SERIES
This committee solicits and prints practice tips from a variety of young lawyers across the state in all areas of the law.

Contact: Alexander T. MacDonald
atmacdonald@email.wm.edu

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE
This committee implements a one day CLE program addressing practice tips and professionalism issues specific to young lawyers.

Contact: Laura Lieberman
laura.a.lieberman@gmail.com

Jesse Beringer
jberinger@foley.com

Adam Yost
ayost08@gmail.com

Stephen Sovinsky
ssovinsky@oag.state.va.us

Jazzirelle Sepulveda
js2cp@virginia.edu

Rachel Radspinner
rachel.radspinner@racklaw.com

Andrew Tarne
atarne@oag.state.va.us

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES
The Professional Development Series (PDS) is a weekly podcast series devoted to our newly sworn in attorneys and young lawyers. The PDS will present programs bringing basic skills training, introducing the business of the law, educating on mental health issues, and showcasing long term career options. Programs will come from a variety of sources locally and from around the country.

Contact: Julie Cook
jcook62@gmail.com
INFEWS.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/SOCIAL MEDIA
The Public Relations/Social Media Committee was established to bolster the exposure of YLC through social media and press channels. This committee will obtain and create content for dissemination through the YLC’s website and various social media channels. YLC Program Chairs and District Representatives will also work with this committee to help promote YLC events.

Contact: Amanda Lee Gregory
algregory@cityofchesapeake.net
Christina A.C. Stierhoff
Chris20@mail.regent.edu

WELLNESS INITIATIVE
The goal of the Health and Wellness Committee is to help attorneys learn and apply skills that promote a balance of developing their mind, body, and soul.

Contact: J. Harrison Powell
jhpowell@hovplc.com
Tiago D. Bezerra
tiagoesq@aol.com
Heather Miller
540-510-4711

SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

CHILDREN AND THE LAW
The Children and the Law Commission was formed to address the unmet legal needs of children throughout Virginia. The Commission accomplishes this goal by developing new opportunities for recently admitted attorneys to get plugged into the legal profession while helping their local communities.

Contact: Dustin Narcisse
Dustin.narcisse@gmail.com
Ra Jean
757-486-4530

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY PROJECT
The committee is responsible for developing programs to raise awareness about legal issues related to domestic violence. The DVSP has, for example, distributed a Safety Brochure and a Legal Pamphlet in both English and Spanish to domestic violence victims statewide. The DVSP also trains attorneys to provide pro bono representation to domestic violence victims.

Contact: Shannan Fitzgerald
sfitzgerald@cblaw.com
Kollen Daniels
Colleen.daniels@gmail.com

EMERGENCY LEGAL SERVICES
This committee, in conjunction with VBA-YLD, has developed and implemented a statewide Emergency Legal Services Response Plan, which includes training volunteers and working with other bar organizations to establish communication plans in the event of natural disasters and other declared emergencies.

Contact: Edwin Wu
edwinwu@gmail.com
Crista Gantz
cgantz@vsb.org

IMMIGRANT OUTREACH
This committee designs projects, including the Immigrant Outreach-Education Regarding Deportation Ramifications of Criminal Convictions program, to raise awareness about the legal issues facing Virginia’s immigrant population.

Contact: Elizabeth Nehrling Sotiriou
enehrling@gmail.com
Marisa Santana
Marisa_ortega@yahoo.com
C. Quinn Adams
cadams@ohaganmeyer.com

MENTAL HEALTH LAW COMMITTEE
This committee puts on a free, semi-annual CLE in different locations around Virginia. The CLE explains notable developments in Virginia mental health law as they apply to aspects of all practice areas. Mental health laws touch a broad range of practice areas, including employment, family law, trusts and estates, civil rights and criminal law. The course is presented in an engaging format consisting of panelist discussion, audience participation and hypothetical problems.

Contact: Lillie Blanton
lillieblanton@gmail.com

MINORITY PRE-LAW COMMITTEE
This committee plans a seminar that strives to expose college students, especially minority students, to many aspects of a legal career. From LSAT prep courses, mock law school classes, and a mock trial to panel discussions with the bench, bar, and law students, this course provides valuable information to Virginia students considering a career in the law. The event is held in Northern Virginia, Southern Virginia, and Tidewater.

Contact: Northern Virginia
Mark Franco
mfranco@wtplaw.com
Brittany Johnson
804-252-5655

Hampton Roads
Rebecca Lawrence
757-596-1700
Chanel Ann Gray
cagray@cityofchesapeake.net

OLIVER HILL/SAMUEL TUCKER PRE-LAW INSTITUTE
The Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference in conjunction with the Millennium Diversity Initiative and the University of Richmond T.C. Williams School of Law has designed a program, the Oliver Hill/Samuel Tucker Law Institute, to facilitate diversity in the legal profession. The program enables at-risk, minority students to attend a weeklong comprehensive seminar that encourages them to become members of the legal profession.

Contact: Wesley Allen
Wesley.allen.jd@gmail.com
Courtney Frazier
cfrazier@cooperrlawva.com

PRO BONO
This commission was formed to assess current pro bono programs and to develop programs designed to improve the quantity and quality of pro bono activities of young lawyers.

Contact: Erin E. Witte
EWitte@oag.state.va.us
Rebecca Nasca
nasca@masonlive.gmu.edu
Carlyn Anderson
canderson@caglawyers.com

RULE OF LAW DAY AT THE CAPITOL
The purpose of this program is to educate 400 at-risk middle school and high school students about the rule of law principles and the operations of their state government. Students take a field trip to the Virginia Capitol where they learn about the legislative, executive and judicial branches from various government officials in these branches. Prior speakers at this program include...
the Governor of Virginia, the Virginia Attorney General, Justices of the Supreme Court of Virginia, and Senators as well as Delegates from the General Assembly of Virginia. After students listen to these speakers at the General Assembly Building and the Supreme Court of Virginia, students are divided into groups to discuss different factual scenarios with attorneys, judges, and law enforcement officers assigned to their specific group.

Contact: Breanna N. West
bwest@geelawfirm.com

Drew D. Sarrett
drew@sarrettlawfirm.com

WILLS FOR HEROES
In response to the events of September 11, 2001, the Young Lawyers Division of the South Carolina Bar Association created a program called Wills for Heroes to allow the legal community to show its appreciation for the efforts and sacrifices made by firefighters, police, sheriffs and emergency medical technicians. This committee, in conjunction with VBA-YLD, has developed and implemented a program in the Commonwealth to provide simple wills, advanced medical directives, and powers of attorney to First Responders on a pro bono basis.

Contact: Nicole Vasquez
757-341-5528

Melissa Moser
Melissa.moser@racklaw.com

WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN THE PROFESSION
This commission was formed to address current programs and to develop new programs to address the particular issues facing women and minority young lawyers. The committee provides teleconferences and podcasts with prominent speakers on topics relevant to young lawyers.

Contact: Victoria Walker
victoria@victoriajwalker.com

Jazzirelle Sepulveda
Js2cp@virginia.edu

Shana Oppenheim
shanaoppenheim@gmail.com

DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES
In 2016, the YLC updated the former circuit representatives with a District Representative program. This network is designed to meet three objectives: 1- to provide a liaison between practicing young lawyers on the local level and the Young Lawyers Conference Board of Governors; 2- to promote statewide communication and participation among young lawyers in the projects and activities of the YLC; and 3- to increase the quantity and quality of public service legal programming throughout the Commonwealth. The primary responsibility of each District Representative is to organize and carry out an annual project for young lawyers in his or her judicial district. These projects have ranged from CLE programs to community service programs to YLC membership projects. If you are interested in becoming a District Representative or assisting with any of the projects of the YLC, please contact any YLC Board Member or your District Representative.

FIRST DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 1, 3, 5, 7, 8
1 - City: Chesapeake
3 - City: Portsmouth
5 - Cities: Franklin & Suffolk
Counties: Isle of Wight & Southampton
7 - City: Newport News
8 - City: Hampton

Contact: Carteia V. Basnight
carteia.basnight@gmail.com

SECOND DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 2, 4
2 - City: Virginia Beach
4 - City: Norfolk

Contact: Rachel F. Radspinner
rachelzuraw@gmail.com

THIRD DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 6, 11, 12, 13, 14
6 - Cities: Emporia & Hopewell
- Counties: Prince George, Surry, Sussex, Greensville, & Brunswick
11 - City: Petersburg
- Counties: Amelia, Dinwiddie, Nottoway, Powhatan
12 - City: Colonial Heights
- County: Chesterfield
13 - City: Richmond
14 - County: Henrico
Contact: Howard Bullock
howard@vbpilaw.com

Fourth District
Christina Parrish
Christina.parrish@gmail.com

FOURTH DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 17, 18
17 - City: Falls Church
- County: Arlington
18 - City: Alexandria

Contact: Clarissa K. Pintado
cpintado@fiskelawgroup.com

FIFTH DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 19, 31
19 - City: Fairfax
- County: Fairfax
31 - Cities: Manassas & Manassas Park
- County: Prince William
Contact: Matthew C. Perushek
matthew.perushek@sfmlawyers.com

SIXTH DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 9, 15
9 - City: Williamsburg
- Counties: York, James City, Charles
City, New Kent, Gloucester, Matthews, Middlesex, King William, King & Queen
15 - City: Fredericksburg
- Counties: King George, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Caroline, Hanover, Westmoreland, Richmond, Essex, Lancaster & Northumberland
Contact: Benjamin A. Shute
bshute.esq@gmail.com

SEVENTH DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 16, 20, 26
16 - City: Charlottesville
- Counties: Madison, Greene, Albemarle, Fluvanna, Goochland, Louisa, Orange, & Culpeper
20 - Counties: Loudon, Fauquier, & Rappahannock
26 - Cities: Harrisonburg & Winchester
- Counties: Frederick, Clarke, Shenandoah, Page, Rockingham, Warren
Contact: Kevin Daniel
kdaniel@atandlpc.com

EIGHTH DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 23, 25
23 - Cities: Roanoke & Salem
- Counties: Roanoke
25 - Cities: Covington, Lexington, Staunton, Buena Vista, Clifton Forge, Waynesboro
- Counties: Highland, Augusta, Rockbridge, Bath, Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig
Contact: Andrew Gerrish
agerrish@gmail.com

NINTH DISTRICT
Judicial Circuits 10, 21, 22, 24
10 - Counties: Appomattox, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, & Prince Edward
21 - City: Martinsville
- Counties: Patrick & Henry
22 - City: Danville
- Counties: Pittsylvania & Franklin
24 - Cities: Lynchburg & Bedford
If you are interested in becoming a District Representative or assisting with any of the projects of the YLC, please contact any YLC Board Member or your District Representative.

A full listing of volunteer opportunities and a volunteer form can be found at http://www.vsb.org/site/conferences/ylc/getting-involved