

Thank You, Volunteers!

by Howard W. Martin Jr., 2007–08 VSB President



One of the best things that happens in the Virginia State Bar is that hundreds of lawyers throughout the state volunteer their time and energy for bar and law-related activities each year. This contribution costs nothing in general tax funds from the commonwealth, yet it delivers a tremendous amount of service for the citizens of Virginia, as well as for the community of attorneys. On behalf of the bar, I thank each of you for the volunteer commitment you make in the interest of our profession.

I think of the volunteer structure of the bar as a pyramid, where the top levels are only as strong as the broader base that supports them. As you can see from the diagram on page 13, that structure in Virginia is based on more than 760 lawyers throughout the state who are active on bar committees, in bar programs, and in community outreach based on bar-initiated activities.

At the top of the pyramid are the three officers and the 75 members of the VSB Council, who serve with commitment and often with considerable sacrifice. This policy-setting group is the executive arm of the bar and represents all thirty-one judicial circuits in the state.

The next level carries out the primary mission of the bar: the self-regulating disciplinary system, which is executed by the Disciplinary Board and the local district committees. This method of self-governance is unique among Virginia professions. Volunteer lawyers and laypersons, backed by a professional support staff, initiate recommendations on disciplinary policy, shape

ethics rules, and sanction attorneys who break those rules. When the volunteer lawyers and their lay compatriots do a good job at lawyers' self-regulation, the public and the profession benefit. The 135 lawyers, working in the disciplinary system with 59 nonlawyer volunteers, personify a professional conscience that must hold steadfast as they discipline their peers. The contributions of these lawyers and laypersons cannot be measured in hours alone.

The pyramid is further supported by more than 200 lawyers and judges who serve on the bar's sixteen other committees that collectively carry out the bar's missions — Budget and Finance, Lawyer Advertising and Solicitation, Lawyer Discipline, Legal Ethics, Professionalism, Unauthorized Practice of Law, Access to Legal Services, Bench-Bar Relations, Information Technology, Judicial Nominations, Lawyer Malpractice Insurance, Lawyer Referral, Midyear Legal Seminar, Personal Insurance for Members, Publications and Public Information, Resolution of Fee Disputes, and Technology and the Practice of Law — and two special boards that govern the Clients' Protection Fund and Mandatory Continuing Legal Education.

The strong base of the pyramid includes the boards that govern the twenty VSB sections, which work through newsletters, Web sites, and CLE programs to keep members current in specific areas of the law. Almost 280 attorneys, judges, and law professors serve on those boards of governors.

The base also includes the 59-lawyer leadership cadre of the three conferences that support the work of the Young Lawyers, Senior Lawyers, and Local Bar Associations.

A very conservative estimate of time committed by bar volunteers annually is 6,200 hours. Multiply that by a rate of \$150 per hour, and the "budget" for contributions by bar volunteers is almost \$1 million. So again: thank you volunteers, for enabling us to be the good stewards of our own profession, and for delivering the great community benefits of education, protection, and legal services.

From a personal perspective, I can affirm the value of being a volunteer in the bar. For almost twenty years, I have worked with wonderful, committed, intelligent men and women who sincerely care about the issues confronting the bar and its twenty-seven thousand active members. Working together to do the work of the bar is a rewarding experience. Volunteers meet together, work together, plan together, sometimes disagree, travel together, and laugh together, with a wonderful spirit of cooperation and collegiality. I believe they get the job done, and done well. My volunteer experience has reminded me why most of us went into the law in the first place: to engage in what former dean Hardy C. Dillard of the University of Virginia School of Law called "man's unyielding search for freedom, order, and human dignity." I submit to you that all of us, as legal

Volunteers continued on page 13

Volunteers *continued from page 12*

practitioners, in each and every one of our cases or assignments, are seeking one or more of those goals: freedom, order, and human dignity. Those are the components of the Rule of Law, the cornerstone of our individual liberties. Our volunteer hours are protecting, improving, and promoting the Rule of Law in our society.

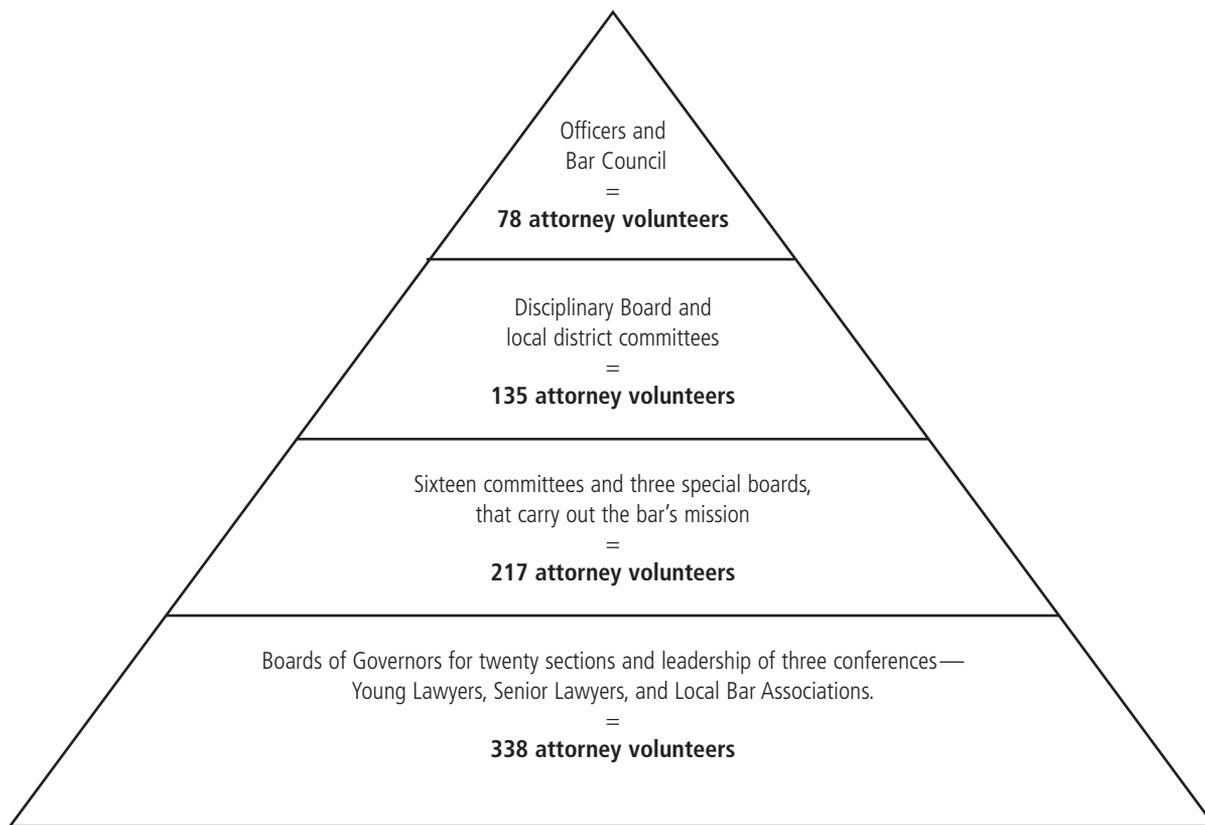
I could never suggest naming an “outstanding volunteer” for the year, because so many volunteers would merit that award. However, there is a

single one among us who has carried out the volunteer role to its fullest extent and has been the ultimate example of what a volunteer can be. She is our new executive director, Karen A. Gould. Karen’s selection is a direct reflection on her valuable volunteer career. Her involvement in and command of the levels described by the pyramid has been unequaled. And her commitment to the bar grew with each volunteer position she held. With that experience and knowledge base, I would venture to say she is the best-prepared and most enthusiastic new director in the country. Her volunteer work trained her well,

and the bar will see the direct benefits of that training for years to come. Thank you, Karen, for giving up your volunteer hat for the one you now wear as executive director.

In closing, I invite any of you who have interest in serving on the bar council or any of the conferences, committees, or sections to contact Karen or me, and let us know of your interest. There is always work to be done and plenty of opportunity for you to serve and gain the “psychic income” benefit from your service. ☺

Virginia State Bar Volunteer System



Total volunteers:	768
Estimated volunteer hours annually:	6,144
Estimated yearly value:	\$921,600

Attorney volunteers include lawyers, judges, and law professors