

## VSB Honors Attorneys

The Virginia State Bar presented the following awards during its Annual Meeting.

### Tradition of Excellence

*Presented by the General Practice Section*

#### Grayson P. “Gray”

Hanes, of Reed

Smith LLP in Tysons.

A longtime col-

league recently said

of Hanes: “Gray is a

lawyer for all seasons.

A Renaissance man,

equally comfortable and performing

at the top of his game whether he’s

practicing in front of a judge or jury,

or negotiating a private deal, Gray does

it all; and does it all well, which is very

hard to find.” When Reed Smith moved

to its new office space in Tysons last

year, the firm recognized Hanes’s long

years of service to the law by naming a

conference room after him. Hanes was

unable to attend the ceremony because

he instead chose to represent his client

at a zoning hearing. Hanes recently

told a new partner working with him

on a land use exception with a 17-year

expiration: “After the next 17 years, this

matter will be yours. I’ll be 96 then, and

probably just working part-time.”



### William R. Rakes Leadership in Education

*Presented by the Section on the Education of Lawyers in Virginia*

#### Stephen A. Isaacs,

director of the

Character and Fitness

Committee of the

Virginia Board of

Bar Examiners and

general practitioner

in Richmond. In

her nomination, C. Kailani Memmer

of Glenn Robinson Cathey Memmer



& Skaff noted that Isaacs was chosen for his role at the VBBE “because he had demonstrated the highest integrity throughout his numerous years of practice.” Continued Memmer, “Steve has developed Virginia’s character and fitness process into one of the nation’s best, all the time treating each applicant with the highest respect and courtesy.” In seconding Isaacs, Curtis Hairston Jr. of The Gee Law Firm, PC said, “His willingness to educate individuals on the issues has saved countless law students from making mistakes that would have interfered with their efforts to become licensed attorneys.” Emmeline Paulette Reeves of the University of Richmond School of Law said of Isaacs, “I, and many others in the academy, have been awed by Mr. Isaacs’ unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest level of character and professionalism in our profession and, at the same time, by his tireless efforts to assist and support bar applicants in overcoming weaknesses, becoming their best selves, and serving the public as ethical, responsible attorneys.”

### Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year

*Presented by the Special Committee on Access to Legal Services*

#### Dipti Pidikiti-Smith,

deputy director of

advocacy at Legal

Services of Northern

Virginia. The award

recognizes those who

exhibit: 1) innova-

tion and creativity

in advocacy; 2) experience and excel-

lence in service; and 3) impact beyond

his or her own program’s service area.

Pidikiti-Smith began her legal career

at LSNV in 2008 as a staff attorney and

had various roles including Senior Staff

Attorney and Chair of the Housing Law



and Consumer Law Units. Dipti is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of the District of Columbia – David A. Clarke School of Law. Prior to joining LSNV, Dipti served as a law clerk at the District of Columbia Superior Court for Judge Russell Canan and Judge Stephanie Duncan-Peters. Previously, Dipti worked for AmeriCorps at the Commodore Barry Elementary School in West Philadelphia.

### Oliver White Hill Student Pro Bono

*Presented by the Special Committee on Access to Legal Services*

#### Charu Kulkarni, a

recent graduate of

Washington & Lee

School of Law. David

I. Bruck, Clinical

Professor of Law at

W&L and Director

of the Virginia

Capital Case Clearinghouse, nominated

Kulkarni and noted not only her exten-

sive pro bono hours but her excellent

legal capabilities exhibited in mock trial

competitions and in actual practice,

including “...winning parole for a 70-

year old man who had served 40 years

in prison with virtually no disciplinary

infractions.” Her other successes in law

school include successfully obtaining

a temporary protective order for a

domestic violence survivor and immers-

ing herself in immigration advocacy to

help those who have come to the United

States as immigrants. Says Professor

Bruck, “The list of her achievements

may evoke an image of a hard-charging,

driven extrovert. But the actual Charu

is a small, soft-spoken, and self-effacing

young woman. Though she speaks five

languages, she listens more than speaks,

and when she does offer an opinion

about a problem or an issue, her words

always reveal that she has carefully con-

sidered the problem from every side.”



**Clarence M. Dunnaville Jr.**

**Achievement**

*Presented by the Diversity Conference*

**The Honorable**

**Rupen R. Shah,**

general district judge based in Staunton.

Edward L. Weiner of Weiner Spivey & Miller in Fairfax, nominated Shah,

noting his service to the bar as 2009 “Bar Leader of the Year,” and his role as president of the Augusta County Bar Association. Judge Shah also served as chair of the VSB Diversity Conference and oversaw the Millennium Diversity Initiative. In the community, Judge Shah personally created and endowed a fund for The Valley’s Children’s Advocacy Center that counsels and assists children who have been victims of sexual crimes. Weiner wrote of Judge Shah, “He exemplifies excellence in promoting and working for diversity and ‘serving the underserved.’ As a role model, Judge Shah lights the way for young people to see the possibilities.”



**R. Edwin Burnette Jr. Young Lawyer of the Year**

*Presented by the Young Lawyers Conference*

**Charles H. Slempp**

III, Commonwealth’s Attorney for Wise County and the City of Norton. In her nomination of Slempp, YLC Board Member Rachel



Wolfe, noted that: “Slempp has made a great impact upon the Conference, the legal profession, and the community. Slempp has actively participated in YLC programming which has led to more involvement from young lawyers in Southwest Virginia. Slempp is noted for initiating various programs designed

to create greater efficiencies in the criminal justice system and to promote public safety in Southwest Virginia. In 2016, Slempp launched the “Courts to Classrooms” program, that provides educational experiences for area students. In 2017, Slempp created the “Southwest Virginia Joint Senior Abuse Task Force” to address crimes against senior citizens and the “Wise Works” program to provide alternative sentencing options for low-risk offenders. He has also worked to address the region’s substance abuse crisis, to protect seniors from financial exploitation, and to safeguard children from abuse and neglect.

**Local Bar Leader of the Year**

*Presented by the Conference of Local and Specialty Bar Associations*

**Jay B. Myerson,**

founder of the Myerson Law Group in Reston. Luis A. Perez of Luis A. Perez P.C. nominated Myerson, enumerating his numerous



volunteer activities both with the Fairfax Bar and with other legal entities including the American Inns of Court, the George Mason Inns of Court, and the American Bar Association. David J. Gogal of Blankingship & Keith seconded the nomination, noting, “Jay has tirelessly planned and coordinated the effort to persuade our state legislators to fill judicial vacancies and increase the number of judges appointed by the General Assembly, in order to meet the needs of justice in our commonwealth.” Sharon D. Nelson of Sensei Enterprises said of Myerson, “His leadership qualities are exemplary. He gently guides people toward consensus and is always diplomatic – even when others are not.” In his endorsement of Myerson, William P. Daly Jr. of Rees Broome PC in Tysons Corner added, “And the fact is, when

someone comes looking for help, Jay is going to say yes and help regardless of how many other things he is working on.”

**Bar Association of the Year**

*Presented by the Conference of Local and Specialty Bar Associations*

**The Fairfax Bar Association (FBA).**

The FBA was nominated by executive director Courtnie L. Norris who enumerated the many programs that the bar supports including the Fairfax Law Foundation, book drives, Jazz4Justice, Heroes vs. Villains 5K, the FBA Paralegal food drive, and the Young Lawyers Toys for Tots. The FBA also manages the Northern Virginia Pro Bono Law Center and donates thousands of dollars and thousands of legal hours to the Center to assist low-income Fairfax county residents with civil, family, employment, landlord-tenant and many other legal issues. In the community, the FBA had over 200 members volunteer for programs with schools including court tours, mock trials, classroom speakers, and the Devonshire Program that educates at-risk teenagers about drug and alcohol related legal issues. Additionally, the FBA operates a law library at the Fairfax County Courthouse that is open to the public and serves more than 60,000 people each year. The FBA has also developed a new pro se program designed to assist both the public and the courts with the swelling number of pro se domestic cases.