Bar Membership Means Bar Participation

There is no difficulty in cultivating even a passion for this study; and though a lawyer should be, in some degree, acquainted with the whole circle of human science, so that he may be as occasion may require, a philosopher to detect, a logician to reason, a poet to describe, and an orator to persuade, yet, believe me, that excellence in a single scientific profession, is all that our reasonable expectations should embrace.

— David Hoffman, founder, University of Maryland School of Law, 1836.

JUST AS THE STUDY OF LAW will cultivate passion, so too, does involvement in your local or specialty bar.

With few exceptions, local and specialty bars are entirely voluntary. That means that members want to be a part of a team. While reasons for membership vary, (ranging from wanting to expand knowledge, to networking and camaraderie), the voluntary nature of our associations ensures a core common bond. Whether a bar association is a local geographic bar, or a specialty-practice bar, not only “is there no difficulty in cultivating a passion” for membership, but it’s easy. The same holds true whether a small local bar of thirteen members where the bar office consists of a couple of file boxes transferred from president to president, or a bar of 2,500 members.

Only those lawyers who are interested in advancing the practice of law, as well as their personal professional development, choose to participate in voluntary bars. Therefore, the big challenge to bar leaders is to make members feel that their bar involvement furthers their goals.

The paramount issue for every bar association, regardless of size, is to know its members expectations and to fulfill them. In order to ensure increased member involvement, a bar must strive to surpass member expectations.

Bar membership should mean bar participation. Bar membership is not meant to be a spectator sport; getting out on the field and playing is much more fun. In that sense, a bar leader may sometimes need to rotate the flock or act as a coach of a team by seeing that everybody gets to play.

The CLBA continually seeks to improve its efforts to better serve the needs of Virginia’s local and specialty bar associations, to identify best practices and inform bar leaders of developments and trends on issues of importance to association leadership.

The CLBA will present a Bar Leaders Institute at the University of Richmond School of Law on March 5, 2012, and a series of Solo & Small-Firm Practitioner Forums. Each of the Solo & Small-Firm Practitioner Forums will be immediately followed by a Town Hall Meeting presided over by a Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia. Dates and locations for the solo programs are:

- November 17, 2011 — Stratford Hall, Stratford; featuring Justice William C. Mims
- April 4, 2012 — Longwood University, Farmville; featuring Justice Donald W. Lemons
- April 27, 2012 — Mountain Empire Community College, Big Stone Gap; featuring Chief Justice Cynthia D. Kinser

Registration information and other details will be posted on the CLBA website at http://www.vsb.org/site/conferences/clba/. Watch for your monthly e-news, which is sent to VSB members with email addresses on file.

As chair of the Virginia State Bar Conference of Local Bar Associations, it is my honor and privilege to extend to every attorney in Virginia an invitation to attend these programs, as well as to contact us at the CLBA with any thoughts or questions regarding how the VSB can be of assistance and resource to your bar association.