The Arc of Opportunity

by Manuel A. Capsalis

It is said that the privilege of public service is its own reward. I know of no better example of this than the honor bestowed upon those of us who have served as stewards for the Virginia Law Foundation. As the philanthropic arm of Virginia’s legal profession, over the last thirty-nine years the foundation has granted almost $24 million throughout our commonwealth to promote and protect the rule of law, improve access to justice, and support law-related education.

The VLF’s history of grant-making in addressing the legal needs of our fellow Virginians is simply astounding. As the articles within this issue of Virginia Lawyer wonderfully illustrate, the foundation has supported and sustained countless legal projects large and small, statewide and local. As the foundation prepares to celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2014, and for all that is has achieved, it is clear that there is much more work to do and many challenges ahead. With those challenges, however, comes great opportunity. The foundation will continue to make a critical difference, and its unrealized potential is enormous.

We are members of the only self-regulated profession in the commonwealth. The Preamble to the Rules of Professional Conduct sets forth the duties attendant to the practice of law and that go well beyond the ethical considerations in the representation of our clients. Along with the license to practice, each of us carries the unique responsibility of our learned profession. The preamble reminds us that a lawyer is a “public citizen having special responsibility for the quality of justice... As a public citizen, a lawyer should seek improvement of the law, the administration of justice and the quality of service rendered by the legal profession.”

It is my respectful opinion that no organization is better poised to meet this glorious responsibility than the Virginia Law Foundation. As a long-time board member and now as a past-president, I have been blessed with the opportunity to see the good works of the foundation firsthand. It has been truly inspiring to work with so many dedicated colleagues.

Thank you for the honor of service.