

## YOUNG LAWYERS

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## UNITING THE BAR WITH CIVILITY AND ADVANCEMENT

The year 2015 will be a very eventful year for me as I step into the role of chairperson for the Young Lawyers Section of the West Virginia State Bar. I believe this will be a very exciting year and my main goal will be to continue to broaden the reach that young lawyers have in the great state of West Virginia, as well as strengthen the bond we all share as attorneys. To begin, I will introduce myself and give you a little background on how I got here.

I am a life-long native of West Virginia, and hail from Webster County. I attended West Virginia Wesleyan College for my undergraduate degree, graduating in 2007, and West Virginia University College of Law for my J.D., graduating in 2010. I began clerking for the Honorable Judge Jack Alsop of the 14th Judicial Circuit in the summer of 2010

and remained with Judge Alsop until the summer of 2013, at which time I began working as the assistant prosecutor of Braxton County, under Kelly McLaughlin. I began serving on the YLS Executive Committee in the fall of 2011 for District 12. I was very apprehensive, as most are, when I attended my first meeting, as I had not really heard a whole lot about the committee and did not really know its purpose. However, I was very lucky to come on board at a time where the committee was transforming, and becoming a body newly admitted attorneys could turn to for guidance. I served on the committee for two years before running for secretary and had the opportunity to see great leaders, including Jason Pizatella, Jacqueline Sikora, and current Chairman Jason Foster, rise through the ranks ahead of me, and develop this committee

into what it is today. I cannot thank these individuals enough for all the hard work they have done with this committee to allow me to be in the position I am in today.

Which leads me to my subject of this article, "My Agenda." My goals for the upcoming year are simple 1) aid the State Bar President, W. Michael Frazier, in uniting the Bar and reminding lawyers why they chose this profession, and 2) continue to develop the programs the YLS is currently engaged in.

### CIVILITY AMONG THE BAR

In my few short years as an attorney here in West Virginia, I have had the privilege to meet attorneys from all walks of life, be it large firms to solo practitioners, but even prior to that I gained access and insight as

I traveled around to different courthouses with my mom meeting several attorneys along the way. I often talk with my mom, Joyce Morton, Esq., about my grandfather, Jack Morton, and what a wonderful man he was, and she always adds “and a wonderful attorney, the kind that truly cared about justice.” She always said he was from the “old school” where you helped your fellow man.

*I challenge all those who read this article to remember why you started your journey as an attorney.*

As I began practicing in the 14th Judicial Circuit, I was fortunate enough to deal with several attorneys who are from the “old school” and have helped me to learn the practice of law, without making me look like a fool, (and I now I understand why it is called practicing, because you learn something new every day). I have several friends, however, who have not been as fortunate as young lawyers entering the profession. It seems to me that too often, as both young and experienced attorneys, we forget the reason we set out to practice law in the first place. We become so entrenched in the daily grind, and getting the big “win” at all costs, we forget, that big “win” is someone else’s big loss. Too often civility is lost in the law. My main goal while chairperson is to change that perception, and focus on that “old school” way of practice.

I challenge all those who read this article to remember why you started your journey as an attorney. What was it that made you want to fight for justice? Abraham Lincoln has been attributed with saying, We shall sooner have the bird by hatching the egg than by smashing it.” These words still ring true today, each of us will benefit more from extending a helping hand than we will from trying to undercut our adversary. Although adversaries, civility need not be lost.

### **ADVANCEMENT OF YOUNG LAWYER COMMITTEE PROGRAMS**

Over the past few years the YLS Committee has made a very conscious effort to shift its focus to activities and programs that benefit other young lawyers as well as the communities they practice in. The

YLS Committee has three main programs designed to benefit their communities. Each year the committee has four meetings throughout the state of West Virginia in which the Young Lawyers and BOG collect monies to donate to a cause chosen by a district representative. Each meeting, a different district is selected to ensure that all communities throughout the state benefit from the generosity of the

BOG and YLS committee members. Additionally, the YLS Committee has been providing a Christmas to a local family, in a different area of the state since 2012. Finally, the YLS Committee is planning to launch its “Wills for Heroes” program in the summer of 2015. This program is aimed at providing all first responders, including EMS and Law Enforcement, with a last will and testament free of charge. This program has been several years in the making, but due to the hard work of several of our members, it is nearly ready to launch, and I believe we can make it happen.

The YLS Committee also has several programs to benefit other young attorneys throughout the state. The YLS Committee has made a huge effort to strengthen its bond with WVU College of Law to encourage participation from students even before passing the Bar. The committee hosts an annual tailgate to allow attorneys both young and experienced to mingle with current students. Additionally, the committee has a forum to assist students taking the Bar exam and even provides a box lunch for all test takers who take the July Bar. Further several members have arranged luncheons, in which judges or other experienced attorneys come to speak, lunch is provided and CLE hours are obtained free of charge.

So as you can see we are a very active committee and will only continue to prosper and move in the right direction. For those interested in helping with any of these programs, please contact me or your local representative for more information. In conclusion, I look forward to serving as chairperson for YLS Committee and feel truly blessed to have such an honor. **WVU**