

## YOUNG LAWYERS

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# PRACTICE OF LAW PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL GROWTH & FULFILLMENT

In his notes for a law lecture in 1850, Abraham Lincoln wrote, "Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise — in fees, expenses and waste of time. As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough." For those who have read my columns, this idea proposed by President Lincoln has been the common thread throughout all of them and is just as relevant today as it was then. When I began my tenure as Chairperson for the Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar, I, along with State Bar President, Mike Frazier, made it our goal to try to unite the West Virginia State Bar as best we could. I personally wanted to make people remember why they became attorneys and

in turn create camaraderie among colleagues.

As you all know I am from a rural area, Webster County, and take great pride in where I come from. I have spent all of my time as a practicing attorney in the 14th Judicial Circuit and have a great love for the people and the attorneys I get to work with; they are like family. I have always heard there is no place like home and although that may be true, I have discovered through my time, as both a member, and this year as Chairperson of the Young Lawyers Executive Committee, that no matter where you go in our great state there will be someone there to help you and make you feel welcome.

Being an attorney is in no way an easy endeavor. The hours are often

long and the work is adversarial. It sometimes feels as though you are in a constant battle, whether it be in the courtroom or trying to balance a family with your practice. It's easy to feel animosity for attorneys on the other side, as they continue to badger you with pleadings and refuse your settlement offers. It's easy to forget they are not actually opponents but people doing a job just like you. They, too, are missing time with family. So I ask you to keep that in mind when you are spending what feels like an eternity at the office to finish answering all those interrogatories or typing an order that has to be done.

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years, attorney has become synonymous with snake, crook and scoundrel, and not just in the public eye. Often times we don't even want to deal with each other. This image and this persona can only change if we each take steps to correct it, and that begins by treating one another with respect.

Becoming involved with the State Bar and its programs is one of the best things I have done. It has not only made me a better attorney, but has made me a better person. I have had the opportunity to work with an amazing committee whose members strive to be the kind of attorneys described by Lincoln. Not only does the YLS Executive Committee serve as a link for all young attorneys to the Bar; these individuals also take significant time giving back to their communities. At each quarterly meeting, this group takes up a donation for a worthy cause chosen by the district representative, in a rotating pattern. Additionally, the YLS has donated several meals to Manna Meal and has provided a Christmas for needy families throughout the state for more than five years. The YLS Committee is also championing the Wills for Heroes program to reach out to first responders who put their lives on the line each day to keep the communities we live in safe. Achieving the balance between career and service is a very difficult task for many and I am lucky to have found a group so dedicated to both. The individuals who serve on this committee do not do it for recognition but because they have a calling to be better people and change the image for attorneys all across the state.

Being an attorney places us all in a unique position. It allows us to be leaders in our communities and give a voice to those who may not have one otherwise. It allows us to resolve conflict with mere words. From the time I was about 6 years old I always said I wanted to be a lawyer, and I am so glad I followed through with that dream. For me, being an attorney is the greatest thing I have done with my life. Coming from a smaller area, you really do not get the opportunity to know many attorneys, other than the small group you see in court on a day-to-day basis. This committee, and becoming involved with the State Bar, has provided me with an opportunity I may not have had otherwise. I have been afforded the chance to meet people from throughout this state and made friendships that will last long past my time on this committee. Thank you for that opportunity.

I can say without a doubt we have the best group of contemporaries a person could ask for. I encourage you all to look into the programs offered by the State Bar. If nothing else, join us for the Annual Conference and Meeting or attend a regional meeting. You will not be sorry. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the YLS Committee and hope that my message continues on. The attorneys of West Virginia are truly exceptional and have the ability to change the perception of how attorneys are viewed if they just take a little time to do it. Not everyone can join this elite class, it takes discipline, courage and a lot of determination. And least not remember, "As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man." **WVLE**