

YOUNG LAWYERS

Shannon P. Smith

Chairperson
Young Lawyers Section
The West Virginia State Bar



“THE YEAR OF SHANNON”

(Raise your hand if you got the Seinfeld reference!)

Welcoming a new chairperson or president of anything, especially when it happens once each year, can give anyone an overwhelming sense of déjà vu. So I will start off my year with a different kind of icebreaker, a joke from my 6-year-old son:

What washes up on tiny beaches?
Microwaves.

For those of you who are not in my law office or are not otherwise a part of my day-to-day life (and are still reading this), allow me to give a brief introduction: I have lived in Morgantown for almost all of my adult life; have been married for 16 years to Michael Smith, a teacher at University High School and have an incredibly entertaining child, Seamus, who can outwit many adults. I graduated from

West Virginia University College of Law in 2006, was a PIA fellow during both summers of law school, began my career in Clarksburg and am now a member at Kay Casto & Chaney PLLC in Morgantown, where I have been since 2008.

I began my term on the Executive Committee of this Section in 2012 as the District 14 Representative, covering Marion and Monongalia counties. In the past five years, I have been able to see many projects and community service activities come to fruition. I have seen our Section sponsor lunch-and-learns with some of our honorable judges statewide; I have seen our Section gather and deliver food and gifts to underserved families each year during the holiday season and I have seen our Section volunteer time and effort to both the legal community and the community

at large, whether by sponsoring a gathering with law students or giving time at Manna Meal. My remarkable predecessor, Matt Harvey, covered one of the more memorable moments in his article about the flood relief efforts.

There are even a couple of projects of which you may not be aware. First, and this should be of particular interest to those of you venturing out with your own shingle hung, is the *Practice Handbook*. This increasingly helpful tool contains 39 chapters of substantive, practical information and law and can be found on our website: www.wvyounglawyers.com/practice-handbook. (Perhaps I should have started with the most helpful bit of information ... **We have a website!**) The *Practice Handbook* is a fluid project, being updated as often as your Executive Committee Representatives can find

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authors to update it. This link will provide you a quick and easy reference to, among many others, the Rules of Appellate Procedure, the most recent *West Virginia Judicial Benchbook for Child Abuse and Neglect*, forms used in civil and criminal practice and information on how to defend DUI cases, Magistrate Court practice, summary proceedings and wills.

The next project is Bridge the Gap. You know which that one is — the exhilarating 310 minutes of videos you are required to view within your first year of practice. Thanks to former Chairperson Jasmine Morton, those videos were at least updated since I had to watch them almost 11 years ago. The good news is that this program is slotted to change completely. The new Bridge the Gap is modeled after the Kentucky Bar Association's New Lawyer Program and is the brainchild of Chairperson-Elect Linnsey Amores. Multiple other states, including Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi and Washington, have shifted from programs similar to our current Bridge the Gap to a program for new attorneys much like Kentucky's. The proposed change would amend Rule 5.3(A) regarding mandatory CLE in West Virginia. This new program plans to be a free, live seminar offered twice per year and would increase

the credit hour requirement to seven, including two credit hours of legal ethics, office management and/or substance abuse, to be obtained within the first two years of practice. The change from video to in-person, expectantly, will increase the networking circle for all new lawyers, will encourage participation and engagement not only in the seminar, but in other programs presented and will make an impression not otherwise available from a series of videos. The proposal is currently sitting with the Supreme Court, waiting on final approval, and we are hopeful for this opportunity for a better transition into the practice of law.

I am honored and excited to have entered this new role as chairperson of the Young Lawyers Section. If you do not know your representative on the Young Lawyers Section or on the Board of Governors, give her or him a call. See how you can get involved. If you have an item to be considered by the leadership of those organizations, let your vote count and let your representative know. These folks are the epitome of dedication to the legal profession and to the State of West Virginia, and they sincerely want to help. Our state and our Bar are proud to have them, and you, as members. **WVL**