

YOUNG LAWYERS

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EDUCATE. LEAD. SERVE.

Greetings, fellow Bar members! As the new chairperson of the Young Lawyers Section, I come to you as a proud West Virginia native, having been raised in Tucker and Marion counties by an amazing single mom. I graduated from West Virginia University in 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and from West Virginia University College of Law in 2010. I have a statewide civil insurance defense practice based in Charleston and I am privileged to work with my mentor and another incredibly talented young lawyer in a three-woman captive law firm. I am also licensed to practice in Virginia and Kentucky. Outside the office, my most important job is being a wife to my husband, Jon, a mother to our two toddlers, Cassiano and Amelia, and a stepmom to Marshall.

In 2013, I was appointed as the Kanawha County representative to the Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee, and then elected in 2014. One of my first

goals when I joined the Executive Committee was to figure out what services the YLS offered, find out where there was a need and do what I could to make the YLS and the Kanawha County chapter more responsive and effective. Fortunately, I served Kanawha County with two other hard-working members who also wanted to make a difference, so together we accomplished community service projects, provided continuing legal education opportunities and put on some great social activities.

The objectives in our mission statement and by-laws for the Young Lawyers Section are: educating, leading and serving new lawyers, our communities and our state. Over the next year, I intend to focus three of my articles on these key topics. Our goal is to assist in the transition between law school and the practice of law through education and mentorship. Accordingly, the YLS is stepping up its efforts to provide

high quality, meaningful education to its new members during my term as chairperson, thanks to changes to the Bridge the Gap Program.

In 2011, I took and passed the Kentucky Bar Exam. One of the requirements of obtaining licensure in Kentucky is to attend a two-day new lawyer training that coincides with the annual meeting of the Kentucky State Bar. I attended the training and left feeling confident, supported and excited about practicing law. When I was elected to the YLS board, I knew I had to try and bring a program of that caliber to West Virginia. I truly felt that our new lawyers would benefit immensely from it. In 2014, I floated the idea of upgrading the Bridge the Gap program from on-line videos to an in-person full day CLE training for new lawyers to the YLS Executive Committee. The idea was accepted and work started to amend the rules. Flash forward three years, and here we are — the

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West Virginia Supreme Court adopted the proposed amendments by administrative order in October 2017, with the changes taking effect on July 1, 2018.

The new Bridge the Gap Program will take place twice per calendar year, once at the State Bar Annual Gathering and a second time at a geographically different location. Each new lawyer admitted to practice after July 1, 2018, will have 24 months to complete the program. Bridge the Gap will be FREE to all new admittees. Moreover, it will count toward the mandatory CLE attendance requirements. The CLE offerings will include general topics that are important to all lawyers, an introduction to the services offered by the West Virginia State Bar and practice-centric breakout sessions to help train new lawyers in their specific areas of interest or concentration. The presenters at the CLE will include judges, practitioners and ethics attorneys to make sure that the information provided is useful, practical and fresh. To say that I am excited about putting on an inspiring first year of the new Bridge the Gap Program would be an understatement.

At this point, you may be asking why I would volunteer myself (a busy, full-time working mom) along with the other members of the YLS Executive Committee (also busy, full-time working lawyers) to establish a whole new training program and then dedicate the

effort required to execute it well. For me, it's simple. I believe that when young lawyers succeed, our Bar becomes stronger — and from that, our whole state benefits. To that end, new lawyers need an opportunity to socialize, network, learn and obtain mentors in a positive environment. Further, we must continue to foster collegiality in the Bar and encourage involvement in Bar activities right from the start of new lawyers' practice. The YLS is perfectly positioned to take on this new program and do it well. Who better to put together a seminar for new lawyers than those of us who still fit that bill? West Virginia's new lawyers deserve a YLS that is committed to helping them transition into the practice of law, into the legal community and into the state with the knowledge and resources to succeed. And, we will deliver.

My goal for this term as chairperson is to take all the excellent work done by chairpersons from years' past and build upon it, by increasing educational offerings to new lawyers and growing the number of active participants in the West Virginia State Bar from among my peers. With the help of the Executive Committee and YLS members statewide, we can accomplish this goal. All it takes is work, feedback, creativity, skills and, yes, some more work. I look forward to my year of service to my fellow young lawyers. **WVLS**