

## YOUNG LAWYERS

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## IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING

### Reflections on my year as Chairperson of the Young Lawyer Board (Taylor's Version)

I cannot fathom that my year as Young Lawyer Board (YLB) Chair is coming to an end. Prior to taking my oath as Chairperson, I talked with past YLB Chairs to prepare for my role, and they all shared the same sentiment, that the time as Chairperson goes so quickly. It was something that I was warned about, and to quote Taylor Swift, "it's been a long time coming, but . . ." it's different to experience it firsthand. So now, with my last article as Chair, I would like to reflect on my time on the YLB and highlight some of the amazing YLB accomplishments over the last year.

Let me start by rewinding to the spring of 2019. My husband and I had just relocated to our hometown of Parkersburg a few months prior, as I had taken an in-house position at Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

At that point in my legal career, I still very much felt like a "young lawyer." I had been out of law school for just under two years and had spent my first year and a half as a law clerk. Although I loved my time as a law clerk, starting a new job felt like I was finally stepping out into the legal profession and into my own as a young attorney.

Fast forward a few weeks to when I saw an announcement from the West Virginia State Bar regarding a vacancy on the Young Lawyer Section Board for District 3 (Calhoun, Gilmer, Ritchie, Wirt and Wood). Working in an in-house position, I was relatively insulated from exposure to other attorneys outside my enterprise. I thought joining the YLB would be a great way to get involved and allow me to build contacts with other young

attorneys. When I took the YLB oath in July 2019, I did not know or appreciate the journey I was about to undertake.

The Young Lawyer Section of the West Virginia State Bar was created to assist new lawyers in making the transition between law school and the practice of law by providing a means for personal and professional growth while encouraging participation in the activities of the Bar. Serving on the YLB as a district representative, Secretary, Chair-Elect and now Chairperson has contributed significantly to my personal and professional growth as a young attorney. I hope my work on the board has provided similar growth opportunities for other young lawyers as they make the transition between law school and the practice of law.

The accomplishments of the YLB are not mine alone; the work takes the effort of each board member. I would love to highlight some of their great projects and achievements over the last year.

### **Lunchtime Lecture Series**

The Young Lawyer Section is responsible for implementing programs that promote legal education. Historically, one project that aims to achieve this goal is the YLB Lunchtime Lecture Series at the WVU College of Law. The purpose of the series is to create a connection between the YLB and law students while providing an educational experience in relevant areas of law. This past semester, Mitch Moore, District 14, organized a Lunch and Learn focusing on artificial intelligence and the law. The presentation was hosted by Liz Stryker, an attorney with Bailey Glasser in Morgantown whose practice focuses heavily on utilizing AI resources in solving problems. The lecture received positive feedback from attendees.

### **Service Projects**

The mission of the YLB also includes implementing programs that promote public service. Our public service projects are some of the projects I am most proud of. YLB representatives in several districts across the state organized service projects, and I would like to highlight some of those wonderful projects.

*Backpack Program* — Kyle Elliott, District 2 (Marshall, Pleasants, Tyler and Wetzel), helped organize support for a local Middlebourne backpack program, the Middlebourne United Methodist Church Backpack Program. The program provides students access to nutritious food when school meals are not available, helping to alleviate food insecurity and support students' overall well-being.

*Heart and Hand Holiday Project* — Alex Urban and Blair Wessels, District 8 (Kanawha), organized donations

to Heart and Hand in Charleston. They were able to donate \$500 to help local children have stockings for Christmas this year. In fact, with the contribution, they were able to provide all the stockings for the children that Heart and Hand had on its list to help during the holiday season. Blair and Alex also organized donations of children's socks and underwear to provide to local children.

*Other District Holiday Projects* — Nicole Graybeal Campbell, District 11 (Fayette, Greenbrier and Nicholas), organized providing Christmas gifts for a local family in her district. In District 3 (Calhoun, Gilmer, Ritchie, Wirt and Wood), for the sixth consecutive year, we were able to provide Christmas gifts and needed items to a District 3 family. This year, John Williams (District 3, YLB), John Isner (Secretary, YLB), Angela Brunnicardi Doss (District 3, BOG) and I collected donations from the Wood County Bar Association and other local attorneys to shop for, wrap and provide gifts for a Wood County family in need.

My time on the YLB has connected me with other attorneys across West Virginia and given me the opportunity to serve the members of the West Virginia State Bar. It has been a privilege to serve the young lawyers of the Bar. I'm excited to transition to my next role on the YLB as a Past-Chairperson for the next year. I know the upcoming leaders will do a wonderful job. If you can take away anything from my experience, it is the importance of getting out there and involved. I encourage all young lawyers to get involved at any level, from your local county bar association to involvement with the West Virginia State Bar. I would also encourage you to consider nominating yourself for a position on the YLB when your district is up for election. Even if getting involved means stepping outside your comfort zone, you never know what opportunities and experiences await you. **WVL**