

Arkansas Young Lawyers— Serving the Community with Enthusiasm



Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that “nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” I think this quote aptly fits the Arkansas YLS. From literacy projects to our new diversity youth project, we volunteer our time with passion, sincerity and great enthusiasm to help our community.

The Arkansas YLS Executive Council began the bar year with a bang at our annual fall retreat held on September 7. The Council is blessed this year with “veteran” members who are extremely experienced in the YLS—Gwen Rucker, Courtney Crouch, H. Wayne Young, Paul Bennett, Eddy Doman, Farrah Fielder, Bill Horton, KaTina Hodge and Tony Juneau. These seasoned members of our Council offer great leadership and experience. Likewise, we are equally fortunate to have our newest Council members, Tasha Sossamon Taylor, Will Crowder, John Houseal, Vicky Vasser and Brendan Monaghan. Each new Council member brings fresh ideas and energy to the Council, which will take us into the future.

At the afternoon long retreat, we discussed a full year of community service projects, ideas for future projects and ways to make our section better serve the needs of its members while working hard to meet the goals of the Arkansas Bar Association. After the long day, we had a fabulous reception with good food and beverages followed by an excellent dinner at The Brave New Restaurant. It was a time for our Council to break bread together and have a time of fellowship and fun together after working hard on Council business.

In last month’s column, I unveiled to you the newest Arkansas YLS project, “Choose

Law: Diversity Outreach,” which is being funded with a grant from the American Bar Association. This project is extremely timely in light of the 50th anniversary of the Central High experience and the moving tribute to the Little Rock Nine. With the YLS Diversity Outreach project, we will be reaching out to minority high school and college students in an effort to show them that law is a profession for all people. Plans are under way to bring this project to the four corners of Arkansas at local high schools. We will also have programming at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. If you are interested in volunteering for this worthwhile project, please contact KaTina Hodge, Diversity Project Chair at KaTina.Hodge@arkansasag.gov. This is such an important project, and we want to get you involved.

Looking ahead, the YLS bar year is extremely active. In September, we began our fifth year with the Arkansas literacy project in Texarkana, Arkansas. This project originally began during the year that Mark Hodge was the Chair of Lawyers for Literacy. The project involves young lawyers “adopting” an entire fourth grade class at Fairview Elementary School. This year, the students are challenged to read the book, “Charlotte’s Web” over the course of the school year and pass a proficiency test. In the spring, the students will be rewarded with a pizza party and a viewing of the movie. It is a project that the young lawyers look forward to every year since it instills a lifelong love of reading in the children.

The Arkansas YLS helped host the Southern Conference of Bar Presidents on October 11, 2007. Brendan Monaghan and

Will Crowder are the Co-Chairs for the YLS Host Committee and actively recruited volunteers. The young lawyer volunteers picked up the incoming bar presidents and their spouses or guests at the airport and transported them to the Capital Hotel. We were pleased to play such a vital role in hosting these folks. The YLS rolled out the Arkansas “Razorback Red” carpet and showed our guests the finest in hospitality.

On November 2-3, 2007, the Arkansas YLS will hold the annual “Bridging the Gap” CLE course at the UALR Bowen School of Law. This CLE course is the most important training for new attorneys in Arkansas. It is designed to help the new lawyer learn what to expect in the real world of practicing law. The program also establishes a standard of uniform excellence in the practice of law for Arkansas attorneys. In this way, all new attorneys know what is expected of them as they enter new legal jobs. This year, Eddy Doman and H. Wayne Young have worked hard, along with Bar staff, to put together a dynamic curriculum with two tracks of programming. “Bridging the Gap” follows the Arkansas Professional Practicum held on November 1, 2007, and is an extremely worthwhile course. I encourage you to attend.

In short, the YLS is a ball of energy and enthusiasm. Through our many projects, we will impact the lives of children and the less fortunate in a positive way. We also hope to do tremendous service to the Bar. The YLS is your “home” after law school, during those early years of practice where you will undoubtedly make lifelong friends. Don’t wait; get involved now! We are ready to get to know you and get you involved! ■