

YOUNG LAWYERS

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Chairperson
Young Lawyers Section
The West Virginia State Bar



YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION IS HERE TO SERVE

The annual meeting of The West Virginia State Bar brings with it a new start to the West Virginia Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee. I am pleased to begin my year as chair of the section and look forward to working with the new members who were elected from their respective districts as well as one member who was appointed to fill an unexpired term. The newly elected and appointed members of the Executive Committee are District Six Matthew E. Chandler, District Seven Justin A. Marlowe, District Eight Catherine C. Eckley and Richard M. Wallace, District Nine Matthew Fragile and District Ten J. Brandon Shumaker.

At the annual meeting, the Executive Committee discussed several ongoing projects. The *Practice Handbook* will continue to be updated over the course of the year and is available free of charge in its current format on the Young Lawyer Section's website, www.wvyounglawyers.com. A social media policy was adopted at the meeting and the Young Lawyers have established a Facebook page, which can be found by searching Facebook for "West Virginia Young Lawyer Section." As more and more young lawyers join the page, we hope to be able to use this as an effective tool for communicating with other young lawyers in the state and to provide a forum for

young lawyers to communicate and interact with each other.

The Executive Committee was also pleased to welcome Dean Joyce McConnell to our meeting to give an update on the law school. Dean McConnell spent considerable time with us detailing the impressive achievements of the law school and the changes that have taken place. With regard to the College of Law, the Young Lawyers Section has continued to sponsor presentations during the lunch hour for any students interested in attending concerning practice areas which may be of interest to them from attorneys with real-world experience. The programs have been well-received by the students, and these will continue to be a focus in the coming year. Each of

these programs are recorded and made available as part of the Bridging the Gap program required for new admittees to The Bar and can also be viewed on the Young Lawyers Section website.

During the next year I plan to focus the attention of the Young Lawyers Executive Committee not only on the young attorneys already admitted to The Bar, but also on the students in the College of Law community who will become important additions to the Young Lawyers Section in coming years. I hope to work with Dean McConnell and the law school student representative in the coming months to identify other areas in which the Young Lawyers Section can assist the College of Law in its important goal of helping with the transition from law school into the active practice of law.

Another project that has taken considerable effort on the part of our outgoing chair Christopher Gardill and others on the Executive Committee is the Wills for Heroes project. Wills for Heroes is a national program to provide our nation's first responders with essential legal documents free of charge including wills, living wills and powers of attorney. The program helps first responders plan now so that their family's legal affairs are in order before a tragedy strikes. As the prosecuting attorney of Wood County, I work closely with many of the first responders in my county, and this program is one small way to give them a much-deserved "thank you" for all that the first responders in the state of West Virginia do for each and every one of us. After many months of planning, the documents are ready and have been distributed for our first county pilot project in Boone County. After completing a few test Wills for Heroes days, we plan on rolling the program out to many more counties. This program will provide not only young lawyers, but also other members of The Bar, a great opportunity to spend a day giving back to those in our communities who put their lives on the line for us every day.

West Virginia Law Adventure is another project to which the Executive Committee has offered its assistance on an annual basis. The West Virginia Law Adventure is a program sponsored by the West Virginia Supreme Court that allows middle and high school students to prepare scripts for mock trials based upon scenarios that are provided. The students then act out their own scripts. The Young Lawyers Executive Committee judges the submitted scripts, and the winning teams are invited to present their mock trials before the West Virginia Supreme Court. This year the Young Lawyers Executive Committee's Law Adventure committee was chaired by Patrick Lefebure.

I would be remiss if I did not thank our outgoing chair Christopher Gardill for the leadership he provid-

ed the Young Lawyers Section during his year as chair and for the assistance that he provided me over the several weeks during my transition to chairing the Young Lawyers Section.

I became a member of the Young Lawyers Executive Committee near the end of the period in which I fit the definition of a "young lawyer" as defined by The West Virginia State Bar, and I have enjoyed my experience both as a committee member and now as an officer. We are fortunate on the Executive Committee to have diverse practice areas represented as well as a wide range of years of practice in The Bar among our members. As such, we each bring our own perspective to the table when topics are discussed at our meetings which affect the young lawyers of the state of West Virginia.

During the upcoming year, if you have a suggestion for a service that the Young Lawyers Section can provide to the newer members of The Bar or to The Bar as a whole, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can easily be reached by email at jasonwharnton@suddenlink.net. I look forward to hearing from many of you in the coming months. **WVL**

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