

YLD...In Brief

The Official Newsletter of the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of New Mexico

December 2006

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In Brief - **Roxanna Chacon**
Junior Judges -
Martha Chicoski and Briana Zamora
UNM/YLD Mentor Program
Roman Romero and Valerie Reighard
Mock Interview Program
Brian Colon and Martha Chicoski
Summer Fellowship
Brent Moore

Greetings from the YLD Chair...

S. Carolyn Ramos



It is hard to believe 2006 is already coming to a close. Indeed the year went quickly but I am proud to report that the YLD enjoyed many accomplishments.

In January, we teamed up with the State Bar and the Older Wiser Law Students (OWLS) to co-sponsor a resume party for law students. The Mock Interview Program took place in February with 40 attorney volunteers conducting mock interviews for 74 law students and we are looking for more volunteers to participate in 2007. Santa Fe was the sight for the ABA/YLD Rocky Mountain Regional Conference. We sponsored *two* Summer Public Interest Fellowships. The YLD-UNMSOL Mentor/Mentee program is beginning another academic year of partnerships. The Junior Judges Program and The Dismas House Life Skills Project were huge successes. Our Professional Clothing Drive yielded hundreds of pounds of business attire for those looking for work. We had more volunteers than phones for this year's Law Day Call-In. Our budget for 2007 was unanimously approved by the Board of Bar Commissioners so that we may continue the great work the Division does.

Most notably, many of our board members applied for, and were appointed to, important leadership positions in the ABA, all of which are funded for at least one year. **Mo Chavez**, was appointed ABA/YLD Minorities in the Profession Chair. Board members **Roxanna Chacon, Briana Zamora, Erika Anderson** and **Roman Romero** were all appointed to the ABA/YLD Affiliate Assistance and National Conferences Teams and will travel around the country helping other local young lawyer organizations with strategic planning. Program Chair **Martha Chicoski**

was awarded one of only ten Minorities in the Profession Scholarships given annually. These are all coveted positions that allow more young lawyers to attend national conferences and bring fresh and innovative ideas back to our table. In fact, this year, the YLD sent strong delegations of members to the ABA/YLD Conferences where the "Choose Law: A Profession for All" initiative was unveiled and will be implemented to encourage students of color to attend law school. I must say that one of the things I will miss the most is speaking at the Swearing-In Ceremonies in February and September. Watching new YLD members enter our noble profession with wide eyes and high hearts has been a real honor for me and seeing so many parents move in sons and daughters has been inspiring, to say the least.

Along the way I discovered that the job of Chair is a demanding one and one that is not successfully fulfilled without the help of many. I want to first thank each member of the YLD Board for its hard work, brilliant ideas, calming influence and constant encouragement. Without this Board and this Board in particular, my job would have been unbearable. I also want to thank Joe Conte for his wisdom, guidance and friendship as well as that of the entire staff of the State Bar. They are an amazing crew and I hope you will take advantage of all they have to offer. Thanks are also due to the Board of Bar Commissioners for its unending support of the YLD even though it often came in the form of "tough love." Finally, I want to thank my two families - my work family, the Butt Thornton & Baehr family, for backing me in this endeavor, excusing my absences and always being willing to pitch in for a seminar, some sponsorship or just some honest advice and of course my home family, my superhero husband, Chad Cooper and my funny boy, Santiago, for fending for themselves while I was on any one of my many trips, for getting me to my best, loving me at my worst and making me laugh through it all.

Now, I leave this Division in the capable hands of Erika Anderson knowing that it will continue to provide the extraordinary educational, networking and public service opportunities we have always been known for. I am so grateful for the opportunity to represent this Division and its members and I look forward to serving it in any way I can - even as I sadly, but gracefully, age out. ;Palante!

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Positions of Leadership are Nothing New to the New Superintendent of Insurance

by J. Brent Moore



Chavez

A former chair of the Young Lawyers Division was recently named the Superintendent of Insurance for the State of New Mexico. Morris "Mo" Chavez, 34-year-old Albuquerque attorney, was appointed by the Public Regulation Commission on October 3, 2006, to the post which oversees regulation of the insurance industry in New Mexico. The Division of Insurance licenses and regulates insurance companies and collects insurance taxes and fees.

Prior to being named Superintendent, Mo served as the state's Gaming Representative for two years where he monitored the compliance of Indian tribes and pueblos with casinos with the state gaming compacts. Governor Bill Richardson appointed him to that position in

October 2004. He gained experience in the insurance industry by serving as surety consultant and corporate counsel for the Manuel Lujan Insurance, Inc., in Albuquerque; serving as Vice President of Operations and Board Member of the National Guaranty Insurance Company in Santa Fe; and serving as an account executive for Talbot Agency, Inc. in Albuquerque. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from University of San Diego and graduated from UNM School of Law in 1998. "I have a unique mix of legal, regulatory, and insurance experience to be a strong advocate for all insurance consumers in the state of New Mexico," states Chavez.

Mo now will lead the Insurance Division as it attempts to restore the public's trust in the Division as he succeeds the embattled Eric Serna as state Superintendent of Insurance. Serna held the post from 2001 until May, when he retired following a series of allegations over conflicts-of-interest. In

succeeding Serna, Mo promised to bring integrity, accountability, and openness to the position. "As the new Superintendent of Insurance, there is no doubt that much work lies ahead," he said, "most importantly, restoring public trust in the office of the Superintendent." Mo was selected over several other finalists for insurance superintendent which included Pete Dinelli, Albuquerque's deputy city attorney; Edward J. Lopez Jr., superintendent of the state Regulation and Licensing Department; and Betty Rivera, who served on the now defunct state Public Utility Commission from 1995-98 and was secretary of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department in 2002 under former Governor Gary Johnson.

In 2005, the State Bar of New Mexico named Mo the "Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year." He said that the being the Chair of the Young Lawyers Division was a wonderful experience that provided invaluable experience for his new post.

2006 - A Year to Remember for Newly Elected State Auditor

by John Blair



Balderas

The year 2006 may go down in the history books as one of the best for young lawyer and New Mexico State Representative Hector Balderas. This summer, Hector was honored by the State Bar as the Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year, and just a few weeks ago Hector was elected to be New Mexico's next State Auditor.

When asked about receiving the Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year Hector said, "Both in my law practice and in my public service the YLD has been a source of tremendous support and encouragement. I was truly honored to be recognized by my peers in this way."

—After graduating from the UNM Law School in 2001, Hector began his legal career in the Bernalillo County District Attorney's office prosecuting DUI and domestic violence offenders. But public service was calling Hector so he and his family moved back to Hector's childhood home of Wagon Mound,

New Mexico so he could run for the House of Representatives. Hector was elected to the State House in 2004 where he led the fight against price gouging, and advocated for ethics reform and the development and implementation of renewable energy. In 2005, Hector was named Rookie Leader of the Year by the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce for his work on energy development.

Hector and his wife, Denise, have three children.

Choose Law: A Profession for All - The American Bar Association's Young Lawyer Division Project

by Erika E. Anderson

Although great strides have been made, individuals of color continue to be under-represented in the legal profession. The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division has developed a new program designed for high school students of color that assists and encourages individuals to become attorneys. The program is called "Choose Law: A Profession for All". Although Choose Law

is primarily directed at students of color, its message is appropriate for all students because it focuses on the importance of the legal profession, overcoming obstacles and pursuing an education. Choose Law teaches students that the legal profession is a noble profession and that attorneys of color have played a crucial role in its development. It stresses to students that to become an attorney, students

must begin preparing early by obtaining a good education, making good grades and staying out of trouble. The program also provides useful information about how to get into college, the application process for law school, paying for law school and obtaining a license to practice law. The New Mexico Young Lawyers Division hopes to introduce Choose Law into New Mexico high schools by next year.

Letter from Summer Public Interest Fellowship Recipient - Iris Augusten

My summer with the Western Environmental Law Center (WELC) is now over and I am left to reflect on the experience. It was a true pleasure working for such a motivated group of people. The summer energized my desire to pursue public interest work and also put me in a better position to do so.

My experience at WELC this summer was fabulous. It was energizing to be around people who are working towards the same noble goal and who are excited about the work they do. I especially appreciated the opportunity to work with multiple attorneys. I was exposed to different styles, topics, and points of view. In this way, my work always had a "new" feel and each week at the office was different from the one before. I realized how little writing I have done in law school and how much my writing this summer contributes to my experience with legal writing. While I think that my writing improved this summer, the most striking improvement I saw in my work was in my ability to efficiently research a legal question.

The work I did for WELC this summer was invaluable in terms of the non school-oriented learning opportunity it provided. While law school doesn't necessarily prepare one for legal practice, working in a law office goes a long way towards this preparation. Thank you for helping to make my summer with WELC a possibility.

I could not have worked for WELC this summer had I not received the Young Lawyer's Division fellowship. This fellowship allowed me to pursue work for which I have a passion, work that helped me to further develop my focus. In this way, the Young Lawyer's Division had a hand in both my desire and my ability to pursue public interest work in the future. I hope that the Young Lawyers Division will continue to support such work as the results extend far beyond a summer experience. My experience this summer will go a long way to shaping my experience as a lawyer, for it helped me to find an appropriate and exciting path to becoming a public interest attorney.

Iris Augusten

Tools for Success: Dismas House Project a Huge Success!

by Briana H. Zamora

The New Mexico Young Lawyer's Division sponsored the First Annual "Tools for Success" community service project. "Tools for Success" provides legal presentations and professional clothing to residents of Dismas House New Mexico. Dismas House provides a transitional home with a family atmosphere to nonviolent parolees who are transitioning back into society. Dismas House provides assistance to its residents to help them seek gainful employment and a successful recovery.

Carolyn Ramos, YLD Chair, stated, "I received a moving letter from Dismas House Executive Director, Peter Rinn, also an attorney, thanking the YLD for both the workshops and the clothing drive. Specifically, he wrote, 'Your support helps turn the Dismas House dream into a reality for our residents.' This is the true mission of the YLD and we hope to continue the project in the coming years."

The New Mexico Young Lawyers Division recruits volunteer attorneys to teach seminars on various legal topics, including family law, license restoration, landlord/tenant law, employment discrimination and criminal law. Volunteer attorneys **Laurel Keefe, Laurel Nesbitt, Roman Romero, Kasey Daniel** and **Marjorie Martin** all devoted their time and provided invaluable training sessions to the Dismas House residents. "Many of our residents have legal issues or questions but don't know where to begin to solve the issue or get answers to their questions. The YLD presentations help fill this gap," said Executive Director of Dismas House Peter Rinn.

In addition, the Division hosted an annual professional clothing drive. The donated professional clothing was provided to Dismas House and Crossroads residents. The clothing drive was a huge success, which was the result of committed attorneys and judges throughout our State. Together we collected several truckloads of clothing. As Executive Director Peter Rinn's responded when the first batch of clothing was delivered to Dismas House, "Wow, what great clothing! We don't usually see such high quality in our clothing donations."

The New Mexico YLD will sponsor the Second Annual "Tools for Success" project next year. YLD will be collecting donations of small household items such as linens, small appliances and other small household items in the spring of 2007. Please contact Briana Zamora at bhzamora@btblaw.com if you are interested in participating. The dates for volunteer attorneys to provide presentations on legal topics are as follows:

Wednesday, March 28, 2007:	Family Law: Child Custody & Divorce
Wednesday, May 23, 2007:	Criminal Law
Wednesday, August 29, 2007:	Landlord/Tenant Law
Wednesday, October 17, 2007:	Restoration of Drivers License

Young Lawyers Division/UNM Mock Interview Program Volunteers Needed

The Young Lawyers Division is seeking 25 volunteer attorneys to serve as interviewers at the 17th Annual Young Lawyers Division-UNM Mock Interview Program. The interviews will be held at the UNM Law School Clinic from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., February 24, 2006. A training session on the "do's and don'ts" of interviewing prospective attorneys will be held preceding the interviews from 8:15 to 8:50 a.m. The program allows UNM law students to experience mock interviews with attorneys from around the state to prepare them for actual interviews, with constructive critiques following. Attorneys are needed from small and large commercial and civil firms, solo practitioners, the district attorney's office, the public defender's office and public interest firms. Judge volunteers are also needed. Interested attorneys should contact Briana Zamora at bhzamora@btblaw.com or Martha Chicoski at Martha@roblesrael.com.

Interview with the Honorable William C. Birdsall, Chief District Court Judge, Eleventh Judicial District, Division I

by Joseph F. Sawyer

In a legal career spanning 32 years in San Juan County, Chief District Court Judge William C. Birdsall has done just about everything, including civil practice, public defender work, and a term as elected District Attorney. He now serves as Chief District Court Judge of the Eleventh Judicial District.

Career

Born and raised in Idaho, Judge Birdsall's legal career began in Farmington, New Mexico in 1974 after graduating from the University of Missouri School of Law. His move to Farmington was prompted by a desire to return to the west, as well as enthusiasm for New Mexico after visiting the state on a camping trip. Fellow law school classmate, Kevin Hale, was already in Farmington, and suggested he move there also.

Throwing caution to the wind, the Judge

moved to Farmington, then a town of about 25,000 to 30,000, without an employer. "At that time the bar admission rules were different than now. You had to establish residency first." Judge Birdsall began looking around to see what was available. He ran into Attorney Ben Eastburn, who was then in partnership with Jay Furot. The partnership needed a clerk, so the Judge was hired.

After passing the New Mexico Bar, the Judge partnered with Jay Furot and Damon Weems. His practice was general and focused on litigation. He worked in areas such as social security, workers' compensation, divorce, personal injury, and criminal. He also served as contract public defender in the late 1970s, and again in the mid 1990s.

In 1984, Judge Birdsall was elected as the District Attorney for the Eleventh Judicial

District. He served one term, returning to private practice in 1988. He sought appointment as District Court judge on two occasions in 1988 and 1996 before being elected by the people of his district to his present position in 1998.

In addition to a criminal and civil case load, Judge Birdsall has additional administrative duties as Chief Judge. His present caseload consists primarily of domestic, civil and juvenile cases.

Advice for Young Lawyers

Judge Birdsall sees the greatest challenge facing young lawyers as financial. He observes that the demand for lawyers in San Juan County does not seem as great as it once was. "New attorneys do not seem to be moving into practices like they once did. Getting a job and developing a clientele on your own appears more difficult."

Letter from Summer Public Interest Fellowship Recipient - Brendan Egan

As one of the recipients of the 2006 New Mexico State Bar Young Lawyers' Division Summer Fellowship, I feel extremely fortunate that I was given the opportunity to work with and serve undocumented immigrant victims of domestic violence. The fellowship enabled me to spend my summer working at Catholic Charities in Albuquerque with staff attorney Melissa Ewer, who is the director of VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) Immigration Department.

I learned a great deal from Melissa Ewer about how to obtain visas for undocumented victims of domestic violence. The clients at Catholic Charities are some of the most vulnerable members of society. A recent national study estimated that 59% of married immigrant women and 49% of unmarried immigrant women experience some type of domestic violence. Not only do they suffer from physical or emotional abuse from the hands of their loved ones, but they also must deal with the abuser's threats of deportation, fear of how to support themselves financially, and at times apprehension of law enforcement agents or social service providers. Obtaining a visa and employment authorization is often the greatest need for immigrant victims of domestic violence. With legal permission to be in the country and the ability to financially support themselves, victims can break the ties of dependency that often times bind them to their abusers.

One woman who I worked with has been living in New Mexico for the past fifteen years. During these fifteen years she was violently abused by her husband on almost a daily basis, but never had the resources or the courage to leave him while she was undocumented. Her and her four children lived in constant fear of not only violence, but also the fear that the husband would report her to immigration officials. I spent two months this summer helping this woman gather the appropriate documents for her VAWA petition. As the summer progressed and she came closer and closer to receiving her approval from immigration, she became more and more confident of herself and developed a new found independence.

I would like to thank the Young Lawyers Division for providing me with the financial means to make my work with such women possible. Without the members' generosity I would not have been able to spend these three months working with a great attorney and advocate in Melissa Ewer. It was an eye opening experience that will continue to give me great hope in the legal profession's ability to secure justice for society's most vulnerable.

Brendan Egan

Young Lawyers Division 2006 Election Results



Chacon



Martinez

The State Bar Young Lawyers Division is governed by a board of directors whose members are elected by the active, in-state members of the division to staggered two-year terms. All members of the State Bar who have practiced law in any state for five years or less, and those State Bar members who are under the age of 36 are members of the division and are eligible for office.

The 2006 election closed on November 22, 2006. Jason M. Burnette, Nasha Martinez and Roman Romero petitioned for Director-at-Large, Position 2. Roxanna M. Chacon and Mateo S. Page petitioned for Director-at-Large, Position 4. Brent Moore petitioned for Region 2 Director, and was unopposed. There were no petitions made for the Region 4 Director position. Ballots were mailed to the YLD Membership, and the vote tally was finalized on November 29, 2006, in favor of **Nasha Martinez** and **Roxanna M. Chacon**. Martinez is an associate with the Rodey Law Firm in Albuquerque. Chacon is a staff attorney for the Third Judicial District Court in Las Cruces.