

YLD...In Brief

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

December 2007

Young Lawyers Division Report



Dear Young Lawyers Division Members:

It has been a great privilege to serve as the State Bar of New Mexico Young Lawyers Division Chair for 2007. As the Chair, I have been honored to speak on behalf of the Young Layers Division to different affiliates throughout the country and the newly admitted attorneys in New Mexico about the many accomplishments of our organization. I want to thank those dedicated board members and other young lawyers who have donated countless hours of their time to make 2007 such a successful year for the Young Lawyers Division. I also want to thank my law firm, Long, Pound & Komer, P.A., for their support this past year. Before I turn the Young Lawyers Division over to Brent Moore, I want to provide a summary of the many accomplishments of the Young Lawyers Division in 2007.

Homeless Legal Clinic

The Young Lawyers Division has helped fund the Homeless Legal Clinics in Las Cruces and Albuquerque for several years. This is a program where volunteer attorneys provide legal services to homeless individuals. This year the Homeless Legal Clinic in Albuquerque received an American Bar Association/Young Lawyers Division Award of Recognition. We have also agreed to fund another Homeless Legal Clinic in Santa Fe in 2008.

Law School Outreach

As with previous years, the Young Lawyers Division has helped sponsor several programs to benefit the law students at the University of New Mexico School of Law. This year the Young Lawyers Division co-sponsored a résumé party and mentorship program for law students. We offered a mock interview program for law students to practice their interview skills. We also provided two \$3,000 scholarships to law students to pursue an opportunity in the public sector during the summer.

Community Service Projects

The Young Lawyers Division continued its commitment to community service projects and pro bono work in 2007. For Law Day, Roswell, Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Farmington held a call-in where volunteer attorneys provided pro bono legal services to callers. We expanded our Junior Judges Program throughout the state. This is a program where volunteer attorneys work with middle school students and teach them to make smart decisions when it comes to cheating, bullying, and other negative behaviors. The Young Lawyers Division continued to sponsor the Dismas House Project whereby volunteer attorneys educate individuals who have been incarcerated and are re-integrating into society about family law, criminal law, landlord/tenant law and the restoration of driver's licenses. Finally, the Young Lawyers Division worked with ENLACE and the Hispanic Bar Association

in implementing a new American Bar Association/Young Lawyers Division program called "Choose Law; a Profession for All." This program educates students about the opportunities available in the legal profession and teaches students how to become a lawyer.

American Bar Association/Young Lawyers Division Appointments

Many of our young lawyers received American Bar Association/Young Lawyers Division appointments in 2007. These are national positions that are highly competitive. It is extraordinarily noteworthy that a small state like New Mexico has so many young lawyers with American Bar Association/Young Lawyers Division appointments. This year Roxanna Chacon was appointed Chair of the National Conferences Team; Dustin Hunter and Georgene Louis were appointed to be Assistant Editors to the American Bar Association/Young Lawyers Division publication called "The Affiliate"; Martha Chicoski was appointed to the Affiliate Assistance Team; Roman Romero was appointed to the Program Team; Maggie Carr was appointed to be a liaison for the Criminal Justice Section; and Briana Zamora was appointed to be the representative for the Hispanic National Bar Association.

Bridge the Gap CLE

The Young Lawyers Division sponsored its annual Bridge the Gap CLE. This year we had several great speakers including Thomas Haunty, a financial advisor from Madison, Wisconsin who frequently speaks at American Bar Association / Young Lawyer Division conferences about financial planning for young lawyers.

Brown Bag Lunches

The Young Lawyers Division Board members hosted several brown bag lunches with federal and state judges throughout the state. These

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Call-in Programs 2007 -
Albuquerque: **Mo Chavez**
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Choose Law - **Martha Chicowski**
Disarm House Life Skills - **Briana Zamora**
Homeless Legal Clinic -
Albuquerque: **Laurel Nesbitt**
Las Cruces: **Steven Almanza**
In Brief - **Carolyn Ramos**
Junior Judges -
Albuquerque: **Martha Chicowski and**
Briana Zamora
Las Cruces: **Roxanna Chacon**
Santa Fe: **Molly Schmidt-Nowara**
UNM/YLD Mentor Program -
Erika Poindexter and Valerie Reighard
Mock Interview Program
Briana Zamora and Martha Chicowski
Summer Fellowship - **Brent Moore, chair**
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Young Lawyers Division Partners with the New Mexico Hispanic Bar Association to Launch "Choose Law: A Profession for All."

By Briana H. Zamora, Vice-Chair

This past summer, the New Mexico Young Lawyers Division (YLD) and the New Mexico Hispanic Bar Association (NMHBA) launched the American Bar Association's (ABA) program entitled "Choose Law: A Profession for All." As part of the Choose Law program, volunteer attorneys had a dialogue with high school and middle school students about the legal profession. The volunteer attorneys encouraged the students to consider a career in the legal profession. In addition, the volunteer attorneys stressed the importance of diversity within our profession.

The ABA has developed a video, written materials and a website that can be utilized by the volunteer attorney during their presentation. The video was created by a group of racially diverse young attorneys, each of whom briefly commented on their background and explained how and why they became an attorney. The video demonstrates why diversity is an integral part of our profession. Specifically, the Choose Law program emphasizes that claimants involved in the legal process are diverse and are therefore, seeking a varied representation of our community when choosing an attorney. The YLD and the NMHBA are interested in continuing this program in the Spring of 2008. If you know of any middle schools or high schools interested in this program or you are interested in volunteering for this program please contact Briana Zamora at bhzamora@yahoo.com. If you are interested in viewing or requesting any of Choose Law materials, please visit the website at <http://www.abanet.org/yld/chooselaw/home.shtml>.

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lunches provided an excellent opportunity for young lawyers to meet the judges and other young lawyers in their area.

State Bar Convention

This year the State Bar Convention was held in Mescalero, New Mexico at the Inn of the Mountain Gods. The entire convention was a huge success. The Young Lawyers Division had more young lawyers attending the convention than we have ever had at any other convention.

Future Young Lawyer Division Projects

The Young Lawyers Division has several new projects it intends to implement in 2008. The Young Lawyers Division plans to introduce the American Bar/Young Lawyers Division service project for 2008 called "Wills for Heroes." This project is run by volunteer attorneys who draft simple estate planning documents at a designated location for firefighters and police officers. The Young Lawyers Division will also partner with Equal Access to Justice to host an awards dinner in 2008 honoring attorneys and law firms who donate time and money to legal aid services. Finally, the Young Lawyers Division hopes to work with the public schools throughout the State and the New Mexico Court of Appeals to have Court of Appeal oral arguments held in the public schools.

Conclusion

I want to encourage all young lawyers to be active with the Young Lawyers division and to take advantage of the opportunities and great friendships this organization has to offer. Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as the Chair of the Young Lawyers Division in 2007.

Very truly yours,
Erika E. Anderson

First Annual Justice for All Ball – Coming in October 2008

By Martha Chicoski, Region 5 Director

“We are here on earth to do good to others. What others are here for, I don’t know.” - W.H. Auden

In October of 2008, Equal Access to Justice and the Young Lawyers Division will hold the First Annual *Justice for All Ball*, an event to recognize long-term commitment by New Mexico attorneys and judges to providing access to justice for low and moderate income persons. This is an exciting endeavor for both EAJ and the YLD because at the present time, no type of state-wide recognition exists for the many legal professionals who champion access to justice for all of our state’s residents.

At the Ball, the inaugural *Pamela Minzner Equal Access to Justice Award* will be presented to honor its recipient(s)’ long-term efforts

towards improving access to our judicial system for low and moderate income persons. The recognition may be for significant personal work, financial contribution, or pro bono contribution to legal aid services. The Award is named for Justice Pamela Minzner who was known for her strong support of Equal Access to Justice and her mentorship of young attorneys. A Nomination Committee has been formed to select legal professionals who meet the criteria for the Award. EAJ and the YLD Board of Directors will make the final Award decision(s).

The Ball will also spotlight and raise funds for the four civil legal service providers that

EAJ currently supports: New Mexico Legal Aid, Law Access New Mexico, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, and DNA – Peoples Legal Services. EAJ uses its generous contributions to make justice work for those who need it but who cannot afford it.

Specific details regarding the First Annual *Justice for All Ball*, as well as information on sponsorship opportunities, table sales, and auction donations, will be released in the upcoming months. For more information, please contact Kate Mulqueen, Campaign Director for EAJ, (505) 797-6000, or Martha Chicoski, YLD Region 5 Director, (505) 768-4508.

New Mexico Board of Legal Specialization

“In the long run men hit only what they aim at.” - Henry David Thoreau

From time to time good fortune falls randomly upon each of us, providing opportunities and successes that we can hardly take credit for. However, most of the time getting where we want to go requires our active participation and planning. As a member of Young Lawyers Division you are at an opportune point in your career to consider specialization. The New Mexico Board of Legal Specialization offers certification in 14 practice areas: appellate, bankruptcy, employment & labor, environment, estate planning & probate, family, federal Indian, local government, natural resources, real estate, taxation, civil trial, criminal trial, and worker’s compensation.

Individual attorneys have a variety of reasons they choose to specialize. Some of the benefits include a competitive advantage when advertising, increased peer referrals, free marketing from the Board of Legal Specialization, and listings on the New Mexico Bar website. Certification also allows the specialist to “level the playing field” by allowing attorneys who are not from large firms to demonstrate their proficiency to the public, and it provides greater recognition when applying for promotions, new positions, committees or boards, and speaking opportunities.

To become a Board Certified Specialist, attorneys are required to meet standards in several areas of emphasis. Specialists must demonstrate a high level of expertise in the practice area as measured by exceptional knowledge of, and time spent in the practice area. They must comply with continuing education requirements related to the specialty, and to obtain favorable evaluations and reviews from other attorneys and judges. They are also required to have a history of ethical and professional conduct with no disciplinary problems.

Legal Specialization is administered by Court Regulated Programs, an Agency of the Supreme Court. For additional information call (505) 821-1890, email ls@nmmcle.org or visit us at www.nmbar.org, *Attorneys/Members, Bars & Legal Groups, Legal Specialization*.

Summer Fellowship with the ACLU of New Mexico

By Joachim B. Marjon

Leading up to my externship with the ACLU, I had studied law at the University of New Mexico and learned through textbooks, classes, papers and tests, a little about the legal profession, but I had not had much real experience with the practice of the law. Because of this I wanted to experience actual practice of law and in a field that interested me, so I applied for and got an externship with the New Mexico chapter of the ACLU, for the summer following my first year in law school. However it would have been impossible for me to take this position because the externship did not pay and I would not have been able to afford to work for free all summer, but with the help of a fellowship from the New Mexico Young Lawyers Division I was able to take the externship and give it my all.

On my first day on the job I was shown to my desk and my computer, and before I had settled in I was handed a file with a handful of testimonies and complaints for which I was to draft a complaint. The case was a search and

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Summer Fellowship Reflection Letter

By Sarah Gonzales

My summer at the Metro Division Public Defender's Office was educational, enlightening, and inspirational. I felt challenged, proud, and fulfilled by the work that I did there, and in many ways I feel that I have found my calling. I am so grateful to the YLD for granting me that opportunity.

Over the past ten weeks I conducted witness interviews, assisted with arraignments, and was able to represent clients in bench trials, pre-trial conferences, and plea agreements. I realized that the role of an attorney is not only someone who fights for a client's rights, but also someone who can offer guidance and comfort at a difficult time and in an often intimidating and frightening environment. The YLD Summer Fellowship allowed me to get a taste of what it feels like to be a practicing attorney, and I learned more this summer than I ever thought possible. The exposure to the courtroom and the opportunity

to actually practice law has been invaluable to my legal education and law school experience.

I can truly say that I found myself this summer and the direction that I want to take upon graduation. Although I have learned that it can be very difficult dealing with the tragedy and injustice that accompanies work within our criminal justice system, I have also learned that this type of work is critical to the development of a more just future. I have become passionate and dedicated to the furtherance of the Public Defender's mission of providing legal representation to an underrepresented populace in order to protect their constitutional rights. I foresee myself continuing on this path and working in this sector in the future. Without this fellowship, I would not have been able to make that discovery. The value of the YLD Summer Fellowship has been immeasurable and I sincerely thank you.

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seizure case that involved a Native American high school basketball team that was searched and detained at a regional basketball tournament. After reading the file I started calling around as well as doing hours of legal research to try to figure out what legal claims might stick given the facts as they were coming in and started drafting a complaint. As I did this I frequently walked down the hall with lists of questions for my supervising attorney, George Bach. Mr. Bach was always welcoming to my questions and as well always spent as much time as was needed to ensure that my question was answered and that I understood the answer. Mr. Bach also created an environment that welcomed new ideas and my input on every issue, which boosted my confidence in my own analytical abilities. As I continued with drafting the complaint and talking to our clients I realized that was far more motivated when working on something that was real as opposed to the hypothetical scenarios that we face in law school. I found the work to be quite interesting and realized that it did not feel like work to me at all.

During my second week, I to put the drafting of the complaint on hold because we had a hearing to go to in Las Cruces involving a claim against NMSU's football coach. For the hearing I was allowed to sit at our council's table and was encouraged to pass Mr. Bach notes if I had any suggestions. I found the whole experience to be fun and exciting. The hearing was presided over the Judge Lynch and it was just a pre-trial hearing where we set the parameters as to how the trial was to take place.

Following this Trial I returned to work and finished drafting my first complaint. At this point I Turned it in to Mr. Bach who made quite a number of corrections and "suggestions" and then handed it back to me. Following this I corrected the problems and then sent it out to Jane Gagne, Phil Davis and also George Bach Again. I received feed back from all of them which was, some times, contradicting due to style preferences, but the contrasting of the three really helped me to understand more about legal writing. When you are in LRRW or Advocacy you only have impute from one professor who comments on the content more that your approach and wording of things, Having three people review my work and then send me extensive feedback as to what they liked and did not like was extremely helpful in developing my writing skills.

About the time that I finished the complaint, I also was also frequently visiting the Regional Correctional Center (RCC) located in Albuquerque for the first time. This experience was very emotional being that it was my first time in a jail and as well the conditions at the jail were less than stellar. Because I speak Spanish I helped translate for some of the Latin American detainees held at the center. Every one we talked to was extremely grateful that we took the time to go see them. And even though they were there for immigration problems that they knew that we could not help them with, they were still grateful to know that people were willing to help them regarding the conditions and policies of the facility. I never realized it before and did not have any reason to do so but when you visit the jail you can clearly pick up a sense of despair from the detainees. Some had been in the jail for up to nine months and not because of a crime but rather just waiting to be deported. Later in my externship I talked to a Chinese man who had been held for 7 months and had a new born baby with his wife who was 6 months old and who he had never seen, Also I talked to a Chinese couple who had been there for 5 months but had not been able to see each other during their time at the same jail. The saddest part of this was that neither spoke any English and the wife had assigned to appeal her deportation while the husband had not, so they were inevitably going to be separated for at least a year. Working in this environment opened my eyes some to conditions under which people have to live here in New Mexico and it also gave me motivation to continue to pursue a legal path that would help those out who would otherwise be overlooked.

Aside from visiting the jail, I did a lot of other outside the office work including going to lunches with clients and other attorneys, brainstorming at other offices, and I even checked some records at the mayor's office on my own.

At the office I continued to write other complaints, a demand letter for freedom of expression of religion as well as numerous memos that looked in to a variety of civil rights issues. All of these events helped to build my confidence as to my legal abilities, and also fueled my desire to learn more of the practice of the law. I could not have imagined a better summer experience than what I received during my externship with the ACLU. Because of this I would like to thoroughly thank the New Mexico Young Lawyers Division for providing me with the fellowship that made this all possible.