



FOR PENNSYLVANIA YOUNG
LAWYERS, HERE'S WHAT'S...



AT ISSUE

A PUBLICATION BY AND FOR THE YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION
OF THE PENNSYLVANIA BAR ASSOCIATION

PEOPLE'S LAW SCHOOL: EVERYBODY'S A WINNER!

By Daniel Fellin

Imagine a program that creates a good image for your profession, educates the public on relevant and important issues, gives you a taste of a potential career move without risk and gets your name out there without paying a dime. Such a program does exist — it's called the "People's Law School" and most county bar associations can implement it with only a minor investment of time.

WHAT IS IT?

The People's Law School is essentially a survey course of various general areas of law available to adults interested in expanding their knowledge of legal issues. In Dauphin County, the curriculum consists of consumer law, family law, health law, the state court system, the minor judiciary, vehicle law, criminal law, estate planning and employment law. Other potential topics of general appeal include the legislative process, election law, zoning and land use, environmental law, small business practice, civil rights and education law.

The primary goal of these courses is to provide a basic overview of the session's topic and to answer questions that arise. The classes are certainly not as intense as law school classes; they are not even as in-depth as a bar review course. Lawyers who specialize in a particular area deliver a two- to three-hour presentation and then participate in a discussion with the class. Class size can range from 12 to 50 or more students.

Of course, many topics are best handled by a panel of speakers. For example, a criminal law course can include a speaker from the District Attorney's office, the Public Defender's office, the private criminal bar and a juvenile master. Judges and court administrators can provide excellent insight on the state

court system and the minor judiciary. The program is limited only by the creativity and expertise of the organizers and speakers.

BENEFITS FOR THE BAR

The People's Law School is a great way to publicize your county bar association. It enables the association to attach its name to a public service project with which the local bar has special expertise. More so than other community service programs, the People's Law School provides an opportunity to deliver specialized legal service to the community. It delivers a form of legal education to an

audience that has specifically elected to listen to it for general knowledge and not from a specific need at a specific time. It reinforces the image of attorneys giving back to the community and fights the misconception that attorneys only hand out legal advice after a retainer check clears.

BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

The People's Law School provides several public benefits as well. It helps to impart general legal knowledge to nonlawyers. Furthermore, it makes lawyers available as a resource for questions from those

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BENEFITS OF NETWORKING: NOT JUST CLIENT CONTACTS

By Kim Jessum

There are many benefits offered by bar associations, but one of the most useful benefits is networking. Networking is not about just soliciting business, but making long lasting friendships and contacts — people that you may be able to help or people that may be able to help you in the future.

In my case, my involvement in the Philadelphia Bar Association and other organizations led to me meet many attorneys of different ages and different practice areas. In part, because of these contacts, I found a qualified attorney for a close friend, made a job change from outside counsel to in-house counsel and learned how to rock climb.

In the first situation, my friend's mother was involved in contract negotiations for her small business. I knew that she could not afford much, but needed help reviewing a contract, so I referred her to an attorney whom I met through my involvement in a local intellectual property organization. Through this organization, I got to know the attorney and knew that not only would she do good work, but also would not take advantage of her new client. My friend was grateful, my friend's mother got a fair deal and the attorney later referred a potential client to me.

In the second case, I was looking to change my place of employment. I was not sure if I wanted to move to a corporation, a specialty boutique or another large firm. I spoke to several different attorneys whom I met through different organizations

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WHAT'S AT ISSUE

It will soon be back-to-school time for citizens across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Public Law School, that is.



Wells

The PBA Young Lawyers Division is moving along in its effort to establish a state-wide Public Law School. This effort comes at the suggestion of the PBA Public Relations Task Force as a way to increase the public's understanding of the legal system. The idea is that if we, as an organized bar, educate the public about how our legal system works and help them gain a better understanding of the contributions that lawyers make to society, we will in the process enhance the image of our profession.

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There are a handful of counties that have already established very successful Public Law School programs, or People's Law Schools, as they are sometimes known. In this edition of *At Issue*, you will find a great article written by Daniel Fellin, chairperson of Dauphin County's Peoples Law School, describing the positive benefits of this program for the bar, the citizens of Dauphin County and for the lawyers who participate. We are fortunate that so many young lawyers like Fellin have already committed the time and energy necessary for such programs. We at the YLD intend to borrow and build upon the work already done by assembling materials for distribution to all counties. The YLD will then coordinate the effort to find suitable speakers to present the programs throughout the state.

We are excited about the opportunity to improve the image of our profession and to help educate the public in the process. I hope that when you are asked to participate in the Public Law School program, you will share our enthusiasm and say yes!

James A. Wells is the current chair of the PBA Young Lawyers Division.

PEOPLE'S LAW SCHOOL

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who have finally found someone to ask. It also provides opportunities for people with similar curiosities and interests to learn and discuss general legal issues, as well as hot topics currently in the news.

The program provides an excellent opportunity for adult education centers to expand the variety of classes that they offer. The Dauphin County Bar Association has had great success by offering the People's Law School in partnership with the Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC). HACC publicizes the People's Law School by adding it to its course catalog and providing administrative support by handling registration, offering its classrooms for the program and collecting and organizing the evaluation forms completed by the class.

BENEFITS FOR THE SPEAKERS

There are multiple benefits for the speakers as well. A People's Law School

Daniel Fellin is the chairperson of Dauphin County People's Law School.

session gets the speakers' name in front of the public. Each member of the class is a potential client and can make a recommendation to friends and family who may need legal services. This word-of-mouth publicity is an effective and cost-efficient way to introduce a potential client to an attorney.

The teaching experience offers a unique benefit. Attorneys must not forget that they are speaking to nonattorneys who may not be familiar with legal jargon. As educators, teaching attorneys must recognize that the students do not know many of the principles that form the foundation of the lesson. The experience is more similar to conversing with a client than to presenting a CLE course. Most of us interact with nonlawyers in our practices; however, sometimes we need reminders that by speaking "legalese," the attorney can lose the listener. Effectively communicating one's point across without intimidating or bewildering the listener is an important skill to learn and practice.

AT ISSUE

Editor

Brett Woodburn

At Issue is published quarterly by the PBA Young Lawyers Division. Editorial items, news material and correspondence should be sent to the PBA Communications Department, P.O. Box 186, Harrisburg, Pa. 17108-0186.

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Participating in this program also gives an attorney the opportunity to experience classroom teaching. This is a rare opportunity that not all attorneys can enjoy. It offers the chance to teach without having to commit the time and energy attendant with serving as an adjunct professor.

Most importantly, each speaker should enjoy the opportunity available to too few attorneys. This is your chance to speak with an audience that not only tolerates shop talk, but has actually sought it out! These students want to be there; they want to listen and to learn. What could be more satisfying than sharing your expertise with people who are interested in learning it?

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

By Steven R. Serfass

The PBA/YLD Nominating Committee, chaired by Steven R. Serfass, respectfully submits the following report of the Nominating Committee for the PBA/YLD elections to be held on Thursday, May 5, 2005 at the Hilton Pittsburgh.

For the Office of the Chair-Elect:

Justin B. Goldstein

For the Office of Treasurer:

Jennifer Gilliland Vanasdale

For the Office of Secretary:

Amy J. Mendelsohn

For the Office of Division Delegate:

Ryan C. Blazure

Biographical Information on Candidates

Biographical information is based on the information supplied to the Nominating Committee by the candidates.

Chair-Elect

Justin B. Goldstein is the current PBA/YLD treasurer. He is a fiduciary officer with the National City Bank of Pennsylvania and is admitted to practice in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. He graduated from the State University of New York at Albany with a B.A. in political science and earned his J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, where he was a member of the Appellate Moot Court Team. Goldstein is a past chairperson of the Young Lawyers Division of the Allegheny County Bar Association as well as a member of ACBA's Board of Governors. He is currently the vice-chairperson of the American Bar Association's National Conferences Team and he also served as chairperson of the American Bar Association's 2003 YLD Fall Conference Host Committee and as PBA/YLD Zone 12 co-chair. He is a graduate of the PBA Bar Leadership Institute and a volunteer with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh. Additional biographical information is available directly from the candidate at 20 Stanwix Street, 16th Floor, Loc. #25-163, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222, telephone (412) 644-7605.

Treasurer

Jennifer Gilliland Vanasdale has been a general practitioner with Gilliland Vanasdale Law Offices in Wexford for over three years. She currently serves as YLD Zone 10 chairperson and Butler County Bar Association District Moot Court Coordinator. She is an adjunct

Steven R. Serfass is a partner/shareholder in the firm of Serfass & Cheng Law Offices, P.C., Palmerton.

professor of law-related courses at Butler County Community College. Vanasdale graduated, cum laude, in 1993 from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in social science and humanities, having majored in political science. In 2001 she earned her J.D. from Duquesne University School of Law, where she was a member of the Trial Moot Court Honor Society and vice chair of the Appellate Moot Court Honor Society. Additional biographical information is available directly from the candidate at 5000 Stonewood East Drive, Suite 310, Wexfield, Pa. 15090, telephone (724) 741-0536, fax (724) 741-0538.

Secretary

Amy J. Mendelsohn works for the Pennsylvania General Assembly as an attorney in its Legislative Reference Bureau. The Bureau is a nonpartisan agency of the Legislature that advises and assists members in the drafting of legislation. Prior to joining the legislative branch, she was in private practice for five years.

Mendelsohn currently serves as the YLD secretary and is a member of the YLD's Executive Council. Previously, she served as the Young Lawyer District Representative for Pennsylvania to the American Bar Association. In 2004, Mendelsohn was appointed by ABA President Robert Grey to serve as a member of the ABA's Standing Committee on the Law Library of Congress. For the 2004-05 ABA bar year, Mendelsohn also serves as a member of the YLD's Special Projects Team. In 2002, Mendelsohn was selected for a two-year term as a fellow of the ABA Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section, for which she also serves as a vice-chair of the Public Information and Web Content Committee. This past fall, she coordinated disaster legal relief efforts to assist victims of flooding in Northeastern Pennsylvania in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the PBA/YLD and the ABA.

Mendelsohn is a magna cum laude graduate of the Dickinson School of Law of the Pennsylvania State University. She received her undergraduate degree, magna cum laude, from James Madison University. Additional biographical information is available directly from the candidate at Room 641 Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, Pa. 17120-0033, telephone (717) 787-2142.

Division Delegate to the PBA House of Delegates

Ryan C. Blazure is an associate of Cardoni & Associates, L.L.C., in Kingston where he is active in third and first-party insurance defense matters. He earned his B.A. in political science from Wilkes University in 1996 and his J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law in 1999. Blazure currently serves as a YLD Zone 5 co-chairperson and has been active in the YLD's Reverse Mentor In Cite program and Project KidCare. He has also served as the Zone 5 young lawyer delegate to the PBA House of Delegates. Additional biographical information is available directly from the candidate at Cardoni & Associates, L.L.C., 340 Market Street, Kingston, Pa. 18704-5498, telephone (570) 283-5800, fax (570) 283-5900.

Additional nominations

Under Article IV, §. 4 of the PBA/YLD Bylaws, additional nominations for any office except that of Chair-Elect may be made only by means of nominating petitions prepared and submitted in accordance with the following requirements:

a. Satisfy all qualifications under Article IV §. 3 of the Bylaws.

b. Each petition shall be endorsed by at least 15 members of the YLD.

c. Each petition shall be accompanied by a brief biographical sketch of the background and qualifications of the candidate.

d. Each petition must be received by the Chairman of the Nominating Committee (Steven R. Serfass, 232 Delaware Avenue, P.O. Box 195, Palmerton, Pa. 18071, telephone (610) 826-2100, fax (610) 826-8082) at least 30 days prior to the first day of the Annual Meeting (i.e., on or before April 4, 2005). Petitions which do not fulfill the requirements of this section will not be reported out by the Nominating Committee. If petitions are received, the co-chairs of the Nominating Committee shall notify all candidates who were chosen by the Nominating Committee by letter, mailed at least 15 days prior to the first day of the Annual Meeting.

Election Procedures

In accordance with Article IV, Section 7 of the PBA/YLD Bylaws, the election of officers, with the exception of the ABA/YLD Representative, shall be held at the Annual Meeting of the PBA/YLD. In order for an election to be valid, there

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BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

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and received the advice I needed to make a decision. I also received several interviews through these contacts, both directly and indirectly. Being known in the legal community as an active participant and leader in bar organizations helped me to develop those interview opportunities.

In the third case, a few summers ago, I attended the PBA Young Lawyers Division summer meeting in Rocky Gap, Md. The main activity during the weekend meeting was a golf tournament on Saturday. A few of the attendees, myself

Kim Jessum is patent counsel at Rohm and Haas Company, Philadelphia. She is also a YLD Zone 1 co-chair.

included, had no interest in participating in this tournament and did not want to spend the day sitting at the pool. So, we decided to hire a guide to teach us rock climbing. It was quite a noteworthy experience and gave us something to talk about that night. I definitely would not have done it had it not been for my attendance at the meeting and the friends I made from attending other events.

Through networking, I have built a circle of friends and acquaintances that has been invaluable. In addition to what I have already described, I can honestly say that I am able to go to any event on my own and know that I will see some-

one I recognize. I also know that I will have the opportunity to meet new and interesting people. Especially important to young lawyers in smaller firms as well as those who are building their own practices, there is no greater benefit in the profession than knowing others who are experiencing the same problems and successes as you are and who can help you along the way.

My advice to you is to attend the next Young Lawyers Division event. Go with friends and colleagues, or venture out on your own and set a goal to meet a number of people. You will never regret putting forth so little effort for such great rewards.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

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must be at least 15 members of the YLD who are eligible to vote present at the Annual Meeting of the YLD in order to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. In order to be binding, the election must be made by a majority vote of those eligible members present and voting, pursuant to Article VIII, Section 7 of the Bylaws. Voting will be open as of the start of the YLD business meeting.

The meeting will begin at 4 p.m. and conclude at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 5, 2005. At the YLD Business Meeting, the Nominating Committee will have a table where the Business Meeting is being conducted. At the table, we will

have a computerized list of YLD members. In order to obtain a ballot, the prospective voter must check in. If the voter's name is on the list as a current YLD member, he or she will be provided with a ballot. If the voter's name is not on the list, he or she will have to pay YLD dues immediately in order to obtain a ballot. The computerized list will determine who is a current member. If voters are uncertain of their membership status, they are encouraged to check with PBA to confirm their membership well in advance of the meeting. Unless a three-way race develops between now and the election meeting, votes will be counted

at the end of "Old Business." Results will be announced during "New Business." If a three-way race develops between now and the election meeting, voting will end approximately one hour and 15 minutes after the start of the business meeting. This cutoff is to permit the Nominating Committee sufficient time to count (and double count) the votes and to certify the results. In the event that a runoff election is required, the two highest vote recipients in the three-way race would participate in the runoff election.

The Nominating Committee wishes the best of luck to all of the candidates.

YLD SUMMER MEETING AND NEW ADMITTEE CONFERENCE

JULY 29-31, ROCKY GAP LODGE & GOLF RESORT
CUMBERLAND, MD.