



By Richard K.
Leefe

Committee on the Profession, Mentoring

My term as Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) President has begun and I hope you will help me move the practice of law forward. I ask that you get involved yourself and make a difference. I understand that time and/or desire is often lacking, but I do ask that each of you who wants to have the LSBA address a particular issue to let me know.

I can address it, refer it to the appropriate committee, or do whatever may be appropriate. There is no doubt that there are ideas out there which we have

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not considered, but should. I know that the various committee and section chairs are all willing to consider the thoughts of LSBA members and can deal with issues you may want to raise or have the LSBA review. If you would like, we can even arrange for you to attend a committee or section meeting to present your issue. My email address is president@lsba.org.

One of our more active committees is the Committee on the Profession. How many times have you heard the conversation about how professionalism has suffered in the practice of law? Older lawyers take great joy in describing the camaraderie and friendliness with which the practice was handled in "the old days." Because some members believe that professionalism has been on a long decline, and public opinion of us has diminished, the LSBA has, and continues to undertake, efforts to deal with this phenomenon.

Under the guidance of the LSBA's

Committee on the Profession, the Louisiana Bar has initiated a number of programs, including targeting new law students from day one of law school. This has included sincere effort to instill in the newest students an understanding of what professionalism is and the need to maintain it within the profession with the desire to better the reputation of the profession with the public and even among ourselves. The Committee on the Profession organizes orientation programs with law students on the first day of law school to emphasize the importance of professionalism and follows up later in their law school careers. The committee reaches out to the Bar for volunteers to participate in these law school orientations and it has been wonderful to see the Bar respond in great numbers. These volunteers have for years now given their time without compensation and I believe you would find almost unanimous agreement among those attorneys and judges who have participated in this program that it has been a very gratifying experience for them and the students.

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Another area in which the LSBA is active is in promoting a mentoring program. This program was approved on May 15, 2013, by the Louisiana Supreme Court as the Transition Into Practice (TIP) Voluntary Mentoring Program. The program will be initiated on Jan. 1, 2015, for a test period of two years, with the first test areas being in

Shreveport, Baton Rouge and the Greater New Orleans area (Orleans, Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes). Thereafter, the program will be reviewed for possible expansion statewide.

The mentors in Louisiana will be nominated by the LSBA and, as an honor, approved by the Louisiana Supreme Court. Mentors also will receive CLE credits. This program partners a newly admitted attorney with an approved mentor for a year, during which time the mentor will ensure that the new attorney attends a deposition, trial, motion day, appeal oral argument, closing, etc., and obtain a feel for the practice of law.

The LSBA will match mentors and new attorneys one-on-one for true support and learning, helping the new attorneys to transition into practice. The LSBA hopes to have senior attorneys volunteer as mentors and will be looking to the experienced attorneys to help in this program. We ask that those attorneys interested in participating as mentors to let the LSBA know of the interest.

The mentoring program is an exciting step toward helping new attorneys make the transition into practice in a way that can make the process easier for them and for all of us. We hope you will help in this process.

Each of us has, on more occasions than we can count, stood and said the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States, mouthing the words "... with liberty and justice for all." Do any of us as attorneys claim or believe that we have fulfilled that ideal?

Last year, while serving as president of the LSBA, John H. Musser IV declared a "Month of Service" to emphasize the obligation of attorneys to do their part in assuring that justice is available to everyone.

This year, to coincide with the National Celebrate Pro Bono Week (Oct. 20-26) and to continue President Musser's efforts, the LSBA has moved the "Month of Service" to October 2013 and is asking courts and attorneys to set up and volunteer to work in Ask-a-Lawyer desks at the various district courts, in the nature of the help desks the LSBA supports in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lake Charles and Shreveport. We hope to increase the awareness of how effective these help

desks have been with local attorneys and judges while helping the public.

The LSBA stands ready to help with forms and material for use in these projects. The LSBA is reaching out to the local bars, members of the Board of Governors and judges to help organize this effort and to take a step forward in providing justice for all. Please provide whatever help you can with this worthwhile project.

For more information on the LSBA's "Month of Service" and for help desk

resources, go to: www.lsba.org/atj/LAMonthofService. For updates on Pro Bono Week activities, go to: www.lsba.org/celebrateprobono, or email LSBA Access to Justice Administrative Assistant Katie Mozier at katie.mozier@lsba.org or contact SRL Counsel Michael W. Schachtman at michael.schachtman@lsba.org.



Pro Bono Heroes: Providing Justice for All

“As a bankruptcy practitioner, I encounter underprivileged people on a daily basis. A surprising number of potential clients that I meet do not realize that they have been taken advantage of in some way by their various lenders or creditors. These potential clients think everyone is paying 45% interest on a loan. These potential clients do not realize that a creditor is not permitted to knock on their front door and threaten to throw them into jail if they don't pay. It is very rewarding to be an attorney who can defend a pro bono client and get the various bullies to abide by the law. I can also say that my pro bono clients are extremely grateful, send thank you notes, and think higher of our profession when they realize that not all attorneys are fee driven. “Do well, but also remember to do good.””

— Robin R. De Leo
The De Leo Law Firm, LLC
and volunteer with Southeast Louisiana Legal Services
North Shore Pro Bono Project
Mandeville, LA



 Providing Justice For All
Access to Justice
Louisiana State Bar Association
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