



By Richard K.
Leefe

The New Class of Lawyers

In October 2013, we welcomed a new class of attorneys to the practice of law in Louisiana. Each one became a new member of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA). It is our obligation to provide the assistance they need to get their practices going — whether it is in their new employment or whether it is helping them move past unemployment (as, unfortunately, many will face).

It is my hope that as practicing attorneys we all become involved in helping these new attorneys get their feet on the ground and learn the practical elements of the practice which are not apparent until an attorney is in the trenches and gains true experience.

Having discussed these issues at length with the judiciary in Louisiana, it has become clear to me that when we declare newly admitted attorneys as ready to represent the public on their own, we are doing a disservice to the public. This is not meant as a criticism of the law schools or the new attorneys. The simple fact is that, just as doctors are required to complete a residency after medical school before they are certified as truly ready to treat the public on their own, lawyers need practical help and experi-

ence to learn the nuances of the practice of law. It was certainly my experience that attorneys truly learn to practice law after they graduate from law school and actually engage in the practice.

An effort to engage the experienced attorneys in solving these issues is a worthy project. These efforts have been in the organizational stages in Louisiana for several years and already are underway in a number of states. As I have discussed in previous President's Messages, the test mentoring program approved on May 15, 2013, by the Louisiana Supreme Court as Transition Into Practice (TIP) is moving toward implementation on Jan. 1, 2015. This program is certainly a step in the right direction and we all need to give it as much support as we can. We will need mentors. Please support the program and volunteer to be a mentor.

As LSBA president, I attended the National Conference of Bar Presidents in August 2013 and heard the countrywide discussion of the issues facing state bar associations. The issues we have are not unusual to Louisiana; the other states are seeing the same questions.

Each state expressed concern over the lack of employment of new attorneys, concern over new attorneys' preparedness for actual practice, as well as considerable discussion of the lack of understanding of young lawyers by the older attorneys. We all need to keep in mind that the new lawyers are who they are — they are the future of the profession. We may not agree with all that the younger set is about, but

they are who they are and we need to ensure that the profession continues to provide a fair and honest system for the public. Complaining about attitude, lack of respect, dress, appearance, dedication, etc., does not change the fact that times are changing. This, along with the new digital age of practice, is now a fact of life that must be recognized.

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By the time you read this, the LSBA-established "Month of Legal Service" for the members of the bench and bar will be well underway. Local bars and

judicial districts are working together to offer and man "Ask-A-Lawyer" desks at their courthouses to help self-represented litigants gain access to justice that is often out of their reach. We need to show the willingness of Bar members to make the justice system available to all and show the new attorneys that public service is something we all need to participate in. If we all do our part, the effort is spread over more people and the effort needed from each individual is lessened. When some do not help, it raises the burden on those who do. We have not always been very good at emphasizing the good that Bar members do every day; this is an opportunity to show the public as well as new attorneys that bringing justice to all is a part of our system that we take seriously and are willing to give of ourselves

for that goal.

As president, the LSBA membership has made me very proud of the outpouring of offers to help. From Lake Charles to Monroe, from New Orleans to Shreveport, it has been amazing how many attorneys have offered their help and come through when asked. The judiciary has expressed its appreciation and help in making a difference to those who are overwhelmed by the system and unable to afford the legal assistance they need. Be one of the attorneys who show the public that our profession is a good and honorable one.



Pro Bono Heroes: Providing Justice for All

“ In our country, the Justice System thrives because we do allow access to all, regardless of income or circumstances. Providing pro bono service to those in need is a privilege not to be taken lightly. It is a means to give back to the community and thereby strengthen it. I often hear from pro bono clients an appreciation for not being treated as second-class citizens but rather being treated as persons of dignity who will both be listened to and represented in their legal issue. I am grateful I am able to provide such services in addition to my work as a partner in our firm and hope to continue to do so many years into the future. ”

– Linda Law Clark
DeCuir, Clark & Adams
and volunteer with Baton Rouge Bar Association Pro Bono Project
Baton Rouge, LA



Providing Justice For All
Access to Justice
Louisiana State Bar Association

