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## Spring Brings More than Flowers and Showers

The motto of the Alabama State Bar is *Lawyers Render Service*. The arrival of spring provides many great opportunities for you to render service and to become more involved in your Young Lawyers' Section. The first opportunity is to volunteer to assist with our Minority Pre-Law conferences. This year, the Minority Pre-Law conferences will be held in Montgomery April 15<sup>th</sup> and in Birmingham April 29<sup>th</sup>. These conferences introduce high school students to our justice system and to the career choices available to them in the legal profession. They also expose the public to lawyers rendering service.

First, high school students and administrators see the impact that attorneys make in their communities. Students observe lawyers who have taken time from their busy schedules to design this program and to teach them about our justice system. Second, students witness the valuable roles that lawyers play in our society. The students observe a mock trial and participate as jurors. At the end of the conference, students deliberate and administer justice. These experiences are invaluable in teaching the public about our profession and our nation's system of justice. Finally, these conferences encourage diversity in our profession by promoting to high school students the various types of careers that are available in the legal profession.

This program has become so successful that Alabama's Young Lawyers' Section received an Award of Achievement from the American Bar Association's Young Lawyers' Division in August 2008. This award is given to the state or local YLS who performed the best minority service project, and Alabama won first place in the mid-size bar category. **J.R. Gaines** (Montgomery), **Kitty Brown** (Birmingham) and **Navan Ward** (Montgomery) have been working hard to put together a great program again this year. Each year, young lawyers volunteer to participate in the mock trial, to lead students to and from the different workshops and to speak to small groups of students about their experiences as a lawyer and to answer questions about the legal profession. I encourage you to contact J.R., Kitty or Navan to volunteer at one of these conferences.

## YOUNG LAWYERS' SECTION Continued from page 101

The second opportunity to render service is through the Young Lawyers' FEMA Disaster Relief Program. This program assists FEMA in securing *pro bono* legal services during times of natural disasters in our state. In the past, young lawyers have helped Alabama citizens whose lives have been affected by hurricanes, tornadoes or other disasters. In the aftermath of hurricanes Ivan and Katrina, young lawyers performed a tremendous amount of *pro bono* service through this FEMA program, and in 2006 the Young Lawyers' Section was awarded the Pro Bono Award (Firm Category) by the Alabama State Bar.

Last year, the YLS FEMA committee, chaired by **Brent Irby** (Vestavia Hills), drafted a disaster assistance manual to assist young lawyers in handling these cases. The comprehensive manual, which is available online at

[http://alabamayls.org/ebooks/2008\\_FEMA\\_Disaster\\_Manual.pdf](http://alabamayls.org/ebooks/2008_FEMA_Disaster_Manual.pdf), is a primer on landlord-tenant disputes, insurance law and other common issues that typically arise in the wake of a natural disaster. If you are interested in being added to the list of volunteers willing to assist FEMA in the event that a natural disaster strikes Alabama, please contact Brent.

The third way that you can render service is by volunteering to assist in your local school system. The Young Lawyers' Section participates in the *Lawyer in Every Classroom* program designed and promoted by the Alabama Center for Law and Civic Education. This program sends attorneys into seventh-grade classrooms to teach a course entitled *Play by the Rules: Alabama Laws for Youth*. Through this course, seventh-graders learn about the laws to which they are held accountable. Although the YLS only became involved in this program in the past few years, the program has grown exponentially under the leadership of **Mitesh Shah** (Birmingham). At last count, there were several hundred attorneys around the state who volunteered to participate in it. I encourage you to contact Mitesh to get involved in this worthwhile program.

Finally, after rendering service, young lawyers need to relax. To promote relaxation, networking and collegiality, the Young Lawyers' Section hosts its annual Sandestin Seminar. This year, the seminar will be held May 14-16. It has always been our largest event, and it attracts young lawyers from around the state. There has been a concerted effort this year to recruit a diverse panel of speakers who will appeal to attorneys working in many different practice areas. In addition to the CLE opportunities offered at Sandestin, there are also beach parties, a golf tournament and a cocktail party featuring a silent auction. More detailed information about the seminar will be provided in the next article, but you should be receiving a brochure in the mail about it soon.

If you have any questions about your Young Lawyers' Section, or if you would like to get more involved with your YLS, please contact me.



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