



Dana M. Hrelc is the Chair of the Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section for the 2016-2017 bar year. She is also the chair-elect of the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division for the 2016-2017 bar year. She is a partner at Horton Dowd Bartschi & Levesque PC in Hartford, where she focuses her practice on Connecticut state and federal appeals. She graduated with distinction from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and Political Science and from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 2008 with a Juris Doctor degree.

# The End of the Beginning

By Dana M. Hrelc

It's difficult to believe that the 2016-2017 bar year has ended. Looking back, I could not be more proud of the team of young lawyers that I helped lead and the tremendous successes we shared. When I joined the Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section eight years ago, I remember feeling both slightly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of events and programs planned by the YLS and challenged to live up to the mission of our section and the high standards set by its leaders. Truth be told, not much has changed. Perhaps my sense of being overwhelmed has been replaced by the poise and confidence that come from experience gained since then—both in practicing law and serving the bar. But I continue to challenge myself to uphold the mission of our section, which includes serving my community and my young lawyer colleagues to the best of my ability every day. I also continue, with great gratitude, to strive to meet the standards of excellence that my esteemed predecessors, including Matt Necci, Emily Graner Sexton, Chris Nelson, Jonathan Shapiro, and Jonathan Weiner, set by their own example.

To that end, it is my pleasure to briefly revisit the goals set forth in my first column this year to explore a little of what the YLS has accomplished. For the first time in its history, a YLS member testified on behalf of the section at a public hearing before the Connecticut General Assembly Judiciary Committee. Executive Committee member and Diversity and Inclusion Co-director Anthony Ciolli

testified in support of Senate Bill 364, An Act Concerning Access to Legal Counsel for Indigent Individuals in Certain Civil Matters Involving Allegations of Abuse. The testimony of Attorney Ciolli, on behalf of the section, was also included in the official summary of the public hearing on the bill. My hope is that this marked the beginning of a trend by which the YLS regularly exercises its legislative voice.

Additionally, the YLS has made waves on the national level. YLS Executive Committee member Joanna Kornafel, who serves as the ABA YLD District #2 Representative on behalf of Connecticut and Rhode Island, and YLS Executive Committee member David McGuire, who serves as the YLS director of legislative affairs, drafted a resolution that will go before the ABA YLD Assembly at its 2017 Annual Meeting in New York City. The resolution urges Congress, state, and territorial legislatures to enact laws ending civil asset forfeiture. It will feature the CBA YLS prominently on the national stage and will give YLS members an opportunity to pursue policy beyond the borders of Connecticut. Moreover, several of our members have worked actively at a senior leadership level in the ABA and ABA YLD. As noted, Joanna Kornafel serves on the ABA YLD Council as the District #2 representative. Austin Berescik-Johns serves as a delegate in the ABA House of Delegates as the CBA YLS representative. Anthony Ciolli serves on the ABA YLD Resolutions Team and is a member of the ABA YLD National Con-

ferences Team. Alfredo Fernandez, who serves as the CBA YLS Diversity and Inclusion co-director, serves as an associate editor of the ABA YLD TYL publication. Finally, I am the incoming chair of the ABA YLD. All of us together are proud ambassadors for Connecticut young lawyers at a national level.

The YLS went above and beyond my expectations for planning CLE, non-CLE, networking, and social programming this year. We organized between eight and 12 programs *every single month*, due, in large part, to the tireless work and guidance of the following YLS directors: Amanda Gordon, Shari Cuomo-Shore, and Garlinck Dumont. In addition to the dozens of CLE programs planned this year by each of our executive committee members, we also implemented a number of larger-scale events.

In October, we hosted our Tenth Diversity Dinner, where we honored United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Bernice Donald.

In November, we hosted our annual Pro Bono Fair and New Attorney Reception, where we welcomed almost 100 new lawyers to the bar and featured at least six local nonprofit pro bono organizations offering volunteer opportunities. In December, our holiday party raised over \$800 for the charity LiveKind Inc.'s Cops & Kids program.

In February, the YLS participated in the "Polar Plunge" to benefit the Special Olympics and raised over \$1,000 for the cause, sponsoring a team called, "Connecticut YLS Cold-Blooded Lawyers."

In March, we implemented our second Pre-Law Symposium (f/k/a Young Law Academy), where we hosted over 100 high school students at Quinnipiac School of Law and, through a series of panels and interactive sessions with the students, taught them a little bit about the law and why it is so important to consider pursuing a career in the field. We also held our annual Pathways to Leadership for Women Lawyers dinner in March. Along with our co-sponsor, the CBA Women in the Law Section, we proudly honored Judge Maria Araujo Kahn for her tremendous work in "leaving the ladder down" for those women who will follow in her footsteps.

In April, we celebrated with YLS Director Shari Cuomo-Shore as she accepted the annual YLS Vanguard Award at the Celebrate with the Stars reception. We also sent two of our members, Austin Berescik-Johns and myself, with the Connecticut Delegation to ABA Day in Washington, DC, where we met with Connecticut's congress people and proudly lobbied on behalf of increased funding to the Legal Services Corporation.

In May, we held our Annual Women's Professional Golf Event, planned impeccably by YLS member Cindy Cieslak, who was new to our section this year but proved herself to be a consummate professional and true superstar.

Finally, we held our annual end of year celebration, which offered members a relaxing and fun opportunity to celebrate the end of this year with friends and family.

These are but a few of the accomplishments of our section this year, and but a few of the names of those individuals who tirelessly dedicated their time and energy to the tremendous success we achieved. I am forever indebted to my colleagues and friends with whom I have worked to represent the voice of young lawyers and to try consistently to put young lawyers first. I also would be remiss if I did not knowledge and thank those in my life who

truly inspired and supported me as chair this year, without whom I would never have been able to pull it off.

To my law partners at Horton Dowd Bartschi & Levesque PC, thank you for your patience, your understanding and your support of my dedication to CBA YLS this past year. Thank you especially to Kimberly Knox, whose example of bar service and commitment I always strive to meet. To the CBA staff, and my fellow YLS officers and directors, thank you for supporting my goals and working so hard to see my vision through. Finally, to my husband, Anthony Ciolli, thank you for your wise counsel, for your friendship, for your love and support, and for never failing to be my sounding board. I could not have done this without you.

So, in the words of *The West Wing's* great President Bartlet, "What's next?" While my time as chair of the YLS is coming to an end, the success of the YLS and its members is only beginning. The next few years will no doubt bring great pride and accomplishment to the YLS under the determined leadership of Aidan Welsh and David McGrath. I am excited for the future, and thankful for the opportunity I had to serve my fellow young lawyers in Connecticut. Stay tuned, because the best is yet to come! **CL**



Legal Solutions since 1977  
**Stanger Stanfield** LAW

# Welcome Sandy!

Bruce's Connecticut law firm has a new name and a new partner.

"Adding Sandra Stanfield's name to our law practice acknowledges Sandy's contributions to the firm, her commitment to our clients and our community." -Bruce Stanger

**BRUCE H. STANGER**  
Attorney & Counselor at Law  
BStanger@StangerLaw.com

**SANDRA R. STANFIELD**  
Attorney & Counselor at Law  
SStanfield@StangerLaw.com

**StangerLaw.com**  
Corporate Center West  
433 South Main Street, Suite No. 112  
West Hartford, CT 06110  
Main: 860-561-0650  
Fax: 860-561-0646

