

Spending the Balance of Our Lives as Unofficial Ambassadors

BY NDIDI N. MOSES

“You may never have proof of your importance but you are more important than you think. There are always those who couldn’t do without you. The rub is that you don’t always know who.”

—Robert Fulghum,
*All I Really Need to Know
I Learned in Kindergarten*

Spring is in the air, and many of us have begun emerging from the solitude of our homes, offices, and maybe even the ski slopes, to enjoy the steadily increasing hours of sunlight, blooming foliage, and social gatherings. In this season of new beginnings and rejuvenation, our social calendars, which were starving for attention in the dead of winter, will burst with a multitude of opportunities to explore new places and make new acquaintances at networking events, open houses, and cultural celebrations. Coincidentally, my calendar reminded me that my next President’s Message for the *CT Lawyer* was due while I was at my son’s kindergarten open house. When we arrived, my son froze and clung to my leg once his eyes caught the gazes of a room full of unfamiliar parents and children. Within seconds of our arrival into the auditorium, the school’s official ambassadors

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approached us with enthusiastic chatter and gleeful faces. As they ushered us into the auditorium, my son’s frozen face thawed, and was replaced with dancing eyes. The sincere and welcoming introduction set the tone for the rest of our visit, and transformed my son’s anxiety about starting a new school into anxious anticipation about his new beginnings.

The entire experience transported me back to a series of my own firsts, i.e.: my first day of law school and my first time walking into a networking event. I began to reflect on the crucial roles official and unofficial ambassadors play when we start a new chapter in our lives. For instance, I recall walking nervously and awkwardly onto the University of Connecticut School of Law’s campus, feeling invisible in the sea of new law students, and overwhelmed by the majestic buildings. Then, a welcoming smile greeted me, followed by a genuine and reassuring, “Hello, are you new here?” In that moment, I was reminded that I wasn’t invisible, and the campus began to feel quaint. As I am writing this, I can hear the

chattering voices of attorneys at my first networking event, discussing important cases, legal concepts, and sophisticated ideas. I remember peering out from the furthest corner of what seemed like an enormous room, trying to devise an escape plan. My plan, however, was foiled by the approach of another attorney, who commenced a conversation with me, and gently began to usher me into the crowd to make additional introductions. Instead of initiating my exit plan, I decided to stay a bit longer.

Though my moments with these ambassadors were fleeting, each encounter was life altering. By serving as ambassadors, whether officially or unofficially, these individuals played a crucial role in each chapter of my life. A few of them matriculated to become friends and mentors. The vast majority of them, however, I recognize today only by face, and I doubt many of them remember my name.

While mentors are lauded and celebrated for their efforts, official ambassadors are not often remembered, much less re-

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ceive awards for their gracious deeds. The prospect of notoriety is bleaker if one is an *unofficial* ambassador. In fact, these individuals often fail to realize they are performing a service, and would probably decline the title of *ambassador* if it was offered. The vast majority of people reading this article now fall into this category. You may have unknowingly served as an unofficial ambassador at some point in your life if you greeted a law student or young lawyer you did not know, introduced someone you just met to your friends and colleagues, sparked a conversation with an unfamiliar face, or made someone who may feel invisible aware that they are vis-

ible and valuable. In the absence of unofficial ambassadors, our legal community in Connecticut would experience a mass exodus of talent, very prematurely. Accordingly, a long, overdue “thank you” is owed to these thoughtful and unsung heroes and heroines, who quietly and modestly support the vitality of Connecticut’s legal community, requiring neither honor nor acclaim.

This spring, as you are reentering society and reacquainting yourself with the world, please take the time to be aware of those who are making their debut. Imagine the difference we can all make if we

intentionally assumed the role of an unofficial ambassador when we noticed someone was in need of a genuine smile and a friendly face. The next time you are at an event, socializing with your friends and catching up with lost acquaintances, make sure to glance at the outer corners of the room. You may notice some unfamiliar faces lurking there, preparing to make a quick and discreet exit. Before they can craft an escape plan, consider walking over to introduce yourself. You never know—one of them, one day, may assume a leadership role in a bar association and owe a debt of gratitude to you for convincing her to *stick around*. ■



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