

Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

By JOSHUA J. DEVINE

Each year, the Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee is expected to coordinate Continuing Legal Education (CLE) courses, networking events, and set the professional standard as leaders for other young lawyers throughout the state.

This past September marked the beginning of my seventh year as a Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee member, another year of commitment to meeting that expectation and the start of my year as chair of the largest section of the Connecticut Bar Association. As I started mapping out the year and how I would lead this year's Executive Committee, to not only meeting these expectations but exceeding them, I spent time reflecting on my prior years' experiences. Specifically, I thought back to the leadership of the six past chairs whom I have had the pleasure of working with. With them in mind, I selected an event or theme from each that this year's Executive Committee would carry forward while putting its own twist on them.

As a nod of the cap to past Chair Matthew Necci (2015-2016), I will be bringing back an Executive Committee team competition, in which Executive Committee members will be split into teams where they will compete against one another. Many of us are naturally competitive and with competition comes a drive to perform and exceed expectations. Each team will be tasked with coordinating a volunteer event throughout the state while the Executive Committee as a whole will have a goal of committing one thousand plus (1,000+) hours to volunteer and pro-

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duce pro bono events, leading by example to encourage other young lawyers throughout the state to do the same.

To thank past Chair Dana Hrelc (2016-2017) on her years of continued service to both the Connecticut and American Bar Associations, we will look to continue our strong relationship and presence within the American Bar Association while also exploring the opportunity to bring back the Pre-Law symposium for high school students from across the State of Connecticut. The goal of the symposium is to educate and inform local high school students about law school and the legal profession, and to encourage them to consider pursuing a career in the law.

To continue the growth of the Connecticut Bar Association and specifically the Young Lawyers Section, we will look to past Chairs Aidan Welsh (2017-2018), David McGrath (2018-2019), and Amanda Schriber (2019-2020) to exemplify that the Connecticut Bar Association is "worth the price of admission," while closing the gap with the "big bar" sections and continuing the strong membership drives established by each of them respectively. Lastly, I can only hope to

carry on the leadership from our Immediate past Chair Cindy Cieslak (2020-2021) that she exemplified in an unprecedented year, while also continuing to grow a past program that she helped rekindle—the "Lawyers In the Classroom" program.

While these are some of the events and themes you can come to expect from me and this year's Executive Committee, the work does not stop there. As chair, it is my duty to elevate and challenge our organization to reach new heights. While this is the first time you are hearing from me this year, the Executive Committee has already been hard at work. In early August, more than 50 leaders from the Young Lawyers Section gathered to prepare and organize events for the 2021-2022 bar year. This annual leadership retreat is an opportunity for the Executive Committee members to come together for training in their respective roles and afford them the opportunity to network with one another while also beginning the planning of CLE and our many other events.

At this year's annual Leadership Retreat Conference, I challenged the members of the Connecticut Bar Association

Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee to become comfortable being uncomfortable. In line with the challenge I issued at the leadership retreat, I believe that some of our greatest growth comes when we are uncomfortable. Now stay with me here—when I say “uncomfortable” I don’t mean doing something that makes you sick or puts you in a compromising situation, but rather doing something that takes you out of your comfort zone. For some of us that may be as simple as applying for a leadership opportunity, for others it may be networking and attending an event where we do not know a single person in the room, and yet for others it may be the opposite where we are not comfortable being the one listening versus sharing a story/experience. Regardless of which of these statements most accurately depicts you, challenge yourself to be uncomfortable and then reflect on that experience and I think you will

be pleasantly surprised. The next time you’re in that situation you will notice less discomfort. I have the same expectations for our Executive Committee members. I’m hopeful that that by the end of the 2021-2022 bar year that they will reflect on their experiences and see the growth that occurred when they stepped outside of their comfort zones.

It is my will and desire that the Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee will work tirelessly and when appropriate push ourselves outside our own comfort zones this year. We will bring new and exciting events to the membership and ensure they are more diverse, equitable, and inclusive to members of our profession.

Our Executive Committee members come from diverse backgrounds and communities across the state. I hope to harness the power of that diversity along

with their leadership skills and talent to promote the growth of the Connecticut Bar Association, the Young Lawyers Section, and our profession as a whole.

The ambitious objectives I have issued to the Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee will not be easy to accomplish. Growth is never easy. However, I know that the group of leaders we have this year are committed to the challenge and I look forward to sharing their progress throughout the year with you all.

I challenge you to do something new this bar year—join the Young Lawyers Section for an event (or two or three), or do something that takes you out of your comfort zone. Then take time to reflect on that moment. I anticipate that you will find that you grew in that moment in some way and hopefully had fun along the way. Become comfortable being uncomfortable. ■



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