

# Networking with the Young Lawyers Section

By CHRISTOPHER A. KLEPPS

I was constantly encouraged to network when I was a new attorney, but for a long time I was hesitant to dive in. Initially, networking seemed nothing more than superficial interactions and business card exchanges at social gatherings. I ended up joining the Young Lawyers Section Executive Committee (EC) in 2016 primarily so I could check the networking box for my annual review. During my first year, I would have laughed at anyone who suggested that I would one day become chair of the YLS.

My perspective changed during year two. I started to get more involved in the various events planned by the EC. More importantly, I realized that I genuinely liked everyone I was working with. They were like-minded attorneys looking to be involved and

forge a successful career. I also realized how impactful the YLS could be for the bar at large and our respective communities.

As I wrap up my year as chair of the

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YLS and my seventh year on the EC, I've been reflecting on all of the connections and relationships I have made. I now understand that real networking doesn't happen overnight. You do not gain real value after only one lunch or swapping business cards. Instead, networking takes time, patience, and real effort into understanding others, learning from their experiences, and offering support in return. By doing those things, networking transforms into a mutually beneficial endeavor. The connections you form can provide a solid foundation for long-term professional success, personal growth, and overall career satisfaction.

Time is extremely valuable. Life as a lawyer can be busy and demanding, often leaving little time for everything else. We must carefully choose how we spend our time away from work. One of the best decisions I have made in my career was deciding to devote my time to the YLS EC for the past seven years.



Here is a summary of some of the things the EC has done this past bar year:

- ❖ Held our annual leadership retreat at Foxwoods in August 2022 with Justice Alexander as our keynote speaker
- ❖ Raised over \$1,000 for Connecticut Foodshare during our annual Horn of Plenty fundraiser in November
- ❖ Collectively provided more than 1,000 hours of pro bono work and/or public service
- ❖ Held numerous social events, including a UConn basketball game, Hartford Wolfpack game, Barcade gathering in New Haven, Gastropark gathering in West Hartford, and Stony Creek Brewery gathering in Branford
- ❖ Held our annual pro bono fair at Hartford Golf Club, where members

were able to play nine holes of golf and speak to various pro bono organizations throughout Connecticut

- ❖ Held events at UConn and Quinnipiac law schools to interact with students and develop a pipeline of future YLS members
- ❖ Organized a trip to the Supreme Court of the United States where over 30 members of the Connecticut bar were sworn into the court
- ❖ Organized numerous CLE programs for the benefit of the bar
- ❖ Hosted an event entitled “Diversity in the Pipeline” in Cromwell, which featured a unique discussion from a panel of diverse attorneys on the impact and importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion during all stages of a legal career

- ❖ Lastly, in September 2023, we will host the first ever Northeast Regional Conference at Mohegan Sun for young lawyers in New England, New York, and New Jersey

None of these events and achievements would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our 40+ EC members and CBA staff, particularly Carol DeJohn, Shirley Perrin, and Ashleigh Morelli. Thank you for making this past year a success. Thanks also to Dan Horgan for his unwavering support for the YLS.

My experience with the Young Lawyers Section shattered the misconceptions I held about networking. The past seven years were undoubtedly time well spent. The YLS will continue to thrive, and I hope some of you decide to invest your time into the YLS EC. You won't regret it. ■

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