

# LAW Camp Paves the Way for Future Lawyers

By RON HOUDE



I had no idea in high school that 10 years later I would be a lawyer. As a result, I took no specific initiative in high school to prepare myself to become a lawyer. I was on the tennis team, I played trombone, and I was a boy scout, among other things. Though these activities influenced me as a person, I am not convinced any of them made a material difference in the path I took to become a lawyer.

Also, my time in high school was not career oriented. I took a variety of classes and generally did well, but my focus was always only on the next step, which at that time was to get accepted and go to college. It took nearly four more years before even the thought of going to law school crossed my mind.

My first meaningful exposure to the legal system was between college and law school. I interned with the public defenders in New Haven. In my mind, the internship was a test to see whether I should commit to law school. In the beginning, I did not even think I had what it took to intern in court, let alone become a lawyer. I doubted my judgment and I was worried someone would tell me flat out that law school was not a good fit for me. Over time though, the difficult issues

that shook my nerves became interesting problems for which I enjoyed imagining all the potential solutions. I began to understand the flow of the court and I started to feel like maybe I did have what it would take to become a lawyer. By the end, I had proven myself, to myself, and I had no more hesitation at all about going to law school.

I think sometimes about what I would have done differently if I made the decision to pursue or even considered the possibility of becoming a lawyer when I was still in high school. Maybe I would

have done mock trial or debate, maybe I would have tried a little harder in certain classes, and maybe I would have pursued more career focused opportunities. Most significantly, I think about how much more confident (and less like an imposter) I might have felt the first time I stepped into a courtroom. Maybe something like LAW Camp could have helped me see a future in the law sooner and clearer.

Judge Angela Robinson (ret.) and Attorney Sung-Ho Hwang started LAW Camp in 2011 to show high school students the path to become an attorney and the variety of career opportunities that follow. Diversity, equity, and inclusion also inform the mission of LAW Camp, specifically to get students who are under-represented in the legal field to consider a legal career.

LAW (“Love to Learn, Apply Yourself, Work for Justice”) Camp is a week-long summer enrichment program. During the beginning of the week, students attend interactive workshops on topics ranging from advocacy and cross-examination to how to prepare to succeed as a lawyer and legal careers. A diverse group of local attorney volunteers lead the workshops and presentations. The week culminates in a mock trial competition where the students





get to work together to present their cases in a real courtroom and apply everything they learned throughout the week. In the competition, the students get constructive feedback and scores from sitting judges.

Over the years, LAW Camp grew with support from the New Haven County Bar Association and others to eventually become a standing pipeline program within the Connecticut Bar Association's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. During the pandemic, LAW Camp was reworked as a virtual summer program with a variation of a moot court competition instead of mock trial. Student participation and enthusiasm were outstanding during that time, but it also wasn't quite the same energy as an in-person LAW Camp.

Thankfully, LAW Camp is ready to return in 2024 in-person in New Haven, Monday July 8 through Friday July 12, and is poised to be better than ever with the help of Connecticut's bar and bench. This year's students will have the opportunity to present their cases in the New Haven Superior Court and Federal District Court. Students will attend workshops at the Yale Law School Campus and prepare for their mock trials in the offices of some of New Haven's most prominent law

firms with guidance from their attorneys.

Attorney volunteers are still needed as they are a critical part of LAW Camp's success. They are the teachers and role models for the students who attend. Please consider volunteering a couple of hours (or a couple of days) for this year's LAW Camp. All LAW Camp volunteer opportunities can be viewed and registered for at [ctbar.org/LAWCampVolunteer](http://ctbar.org/LAWCampVolunteer).

LAW Camp is free to attend and is organized and run by the Pipeline Subcommittee of the CBA's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, with indispensable support from the CBA's Director of Diversity and Human Resources, Rachel J. Tischler. ■



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