

from the president

By John C. Cruden

As part of my focus on professionalism, under the theme of "Lawyers Render Service," I asked in my first column in *Washington Lawyer* that we have a dialogue within the Bar about ways to enhance mentoring. My goals were straightforward: lawyers with mentors perform better, have richer professional experiences, and place a higher value on the practice of law. Research in both educational settings and the workplace supports the view that employees are more likely to succeed if they have a mentor.

To highlight this issue, the D.C. Bar Board of Governors devoted nearly half of its annual retreat to exploring all aspects of mentoring. Under the direction of President-Elect Jim Sandman, the board heard a frank assessment from an experienced group of attorneys, including Nathalie Gilfoyle and Esther Lim, about the numerous alternatives available, as well as efforts that did not work owing to their rigidity or lack of agreed-upon objectives and follow-through.

Since then the Bar has been collecting articles and practical information on mentoring. The Bar's web site, under the Practice Management Advisory Service area, has an excellent section on mentoring that we will expand in the future. A future article in *Washington Lawyer* will be dedicated to this subject. Last month a Bar committee reported to the Board of Governors on methods to assist the Bar in promoting and advancing mentoring. Our plan is not to develop a formal program, but rather to stress the importance of attorneys helping others in the profession grow.

I am also in the process of encouraging the leadership of the Bar's 21 sections to explore creative ways to bring mentoring to their members. In one program the Health Law Section took my suggestion a step further and adapted the concept of "speed dating" to "speed mentoring." Gilfoyle, who participated in the event, said that every eight minutes mentees and

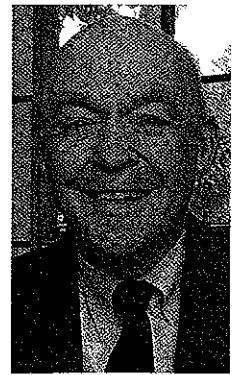
Encouraging Mentoring, Enhancing Professionalism, Delivering Service

mentors switched partners, giving everyone an opportunity to meet attorneys with different experiences, and providing mentees with a number of mentor options. I understand this novel undertaking was successful and, as you will soon find out, is being replicated elsewhere.

A few weeks ago I participated in the Women's Bar Association's superb Initiative on the Advancement and Retention of Women at Georgetown University Law Center. Joining its dynamic leader, Karen Lockwood, I walked among the audience doing a poor imitation of Phil Donahue, directing questions gathered from the audience to the panel of experienced practitioners. It was clear to me that mentoring was central to many concerns by those present. The Women's Bar is leading the way in this area and will soon be inaugurating its own speed-mentoring program, to be followed by periodic meetings to further mentor relationships and related programs.

To advance a further dialogue in this area, the D.C. Bar recently held its first mentoring meeting, to which all of the voluntary bar leaders of the District of Columbia were invited. The room was full, and the discussion was fascinating, as virtually every bar had started or increased its mentoring emphasis. Several of the bars, led by the Hispanic Bar Association and its president, Christina Guerola Sarchio, have reached out to the next generation of lawyers, focusing on law students and their needs.

Because I cannot do justice to the incredible array and diversity of programs going on in the D.C. area right now, I will highlight only a few. The Washington Council of Lawyers, under the tutelage of Jessica Rosenbaum and Adam Levin, has started a superb mentoring program for Equal Justice Act fellows. The American Immigration Lawyers Association has a long history of promoting pro bono and mentoring programs. The Asian Pacific American Bar Association, led by Janet Shih



Hajek, has had a mentoring reception and developed a multifaceted mentoring program. In March, under the leadership of Kirra Jarratt, the Greater Washington Area Chapter of the Women Lawyers Division of the National Bar Association held a ceremony for mentors at the D.C. Superior Court. Because of my work, I am aware that the Department of Justice has its own program, which includes training for new mentors.

Mentoring need not be a formal program, and can take place in a specific situation or during a particular case. In his memoir *Fighting Injustice*, Michael Tigar discusses working under Edward Bennett Williams:

Ed Williams was, in short, the most self-aware and disciplined advocate I have ever known. He talked to us with a double purpose. We were expected to contribute ideas and even to challenge his approach, leading to changes and refinements. Ed even remembered to note the ethical limits on what an advocate could do in given circumstances. And we, his acolytes, had the benefit of the best practical legal education that we could possibly have. This method, which is the best use of the term *mentoring*, is too often missing in litigation offices and firms, public and private.

As you read this, think about the people in your lives who have taught, encouraged, motivated, advised, and pushed you. They were probably diverse, talented, and numerous. Now you must pay back to others what you received from these individuals.

When I left the wonderful meeting of voluntary bar leaders, all committed to mentoring, I promised them my next column would be on mentoring. I am fulfilling that commitment now, but challenge every reader to find a way to advance this dialogue and improve our profession.