

Spotlight on Affiliate Leaders: Leading Young Lawyers in the Sunshine State

By Jill M. Kastner

Leading Young Lawyers in the Sunshine State

What do you do when your local bar doesn't have a young lawyers section? If you're like Vera June, you help create a new young lawyers group and then affiliate it with the ABA YLD.

In December 2007, June became one of the founding members of the Seminole County Young Lawyers Division (SCYLD). Last year, she served as its President. This year, she serves as a member of the ABA YLD's Affiliate Assistance Team, using her knowledge and experience to help other affiliates grow and put on great programming.

Unlike many young lawyer groups, SCYLD is a separate entity not affiliated with the Seminole County Bar Association (SCBA). "They've been very supportive of our organization," June said in praise of the SCBA. "They are very active in our programs, usually as speakers."

Although the two organizations work side by side, the SCYLD decided to organize independently, with their own membership, dues, and budget. In their first year, dues were only \$5. This year, dues are \$10—quite a bargain considering the great benefits and programming.

Projects

"The public service project of which I am most proud is the Academic Awards Program that we host for the West Sanford Boys and Girls Club," said June, who cofounded this growing program. "[It] takes place twice a year to celebrate academic success among the children who are primarily in underserved populations." At the Awards ceremony/pizza party, "we encourage students to strive to do better in school so that they too can be an award recipient at the next ceremony," June explained.

"I am very proud of this program because academics are celebrated and not just athletics," June said. "The children seem so pleased and prideful that they are getting the certificate and being honored. I count it a privilege to celebrate the achievements of another, especially a child."

SCYLD also puts on low-cost CLEs for young lawyers. Recently, June co-chaired a four-credit trial CLE for the nominal fee of \$30. "The CLE consisted of two prestigious speakers along with a distinguished judges' panel to address professionalism in the courtroom," June said "This was the first program that we received approval for credits with the Florida Bar". I am pleased with how it turned out."

ABA YLD Affiliation

Last January, at the Florida Affiliate Outreach Conference, June learned about the ABA YLD's affiliate programs. "I did not know that there was such a thing," she admitted. "They educated us on the benefits and the process of affiliation and it was obvious that our organization needed to be affiliated with the ABA YLD. I especially liked the sponsored projects that were available and the opportunities for additional funding."

"There are many benefits of affiliation, like the newsletter, the opportunities to network, and opportunities to participate in the ABA YLD legal community on various levels," June added. "I believe that a good lawyer wins cases, but a great lawyer wins the community. The only way to win the community is to be involved and change the image of the legal profession."

June took the idea to her board during its very next meeting and the group agreed on affiliation. "Our organization is young, only two years old," June said. "We are constantly seeking to improve our status in the community and affiliation with the ABA seemed like a logical next step."

June believes that young lawyers need to get involved with their local bars to be part of the legal community. "It makes you a more rounded attorney," June explained. "You get to know your peers and they get to know you. You make connections. You get referrals. The benefits are boundless."

Despite all of her many accomplishments, Vera June's full-time job isn't working on bar activities. Instead, she is working to set up her own firm as a solo practitioner. June does primarily litigation and bankruptcy work, but will maintain a general practice. She is excited about this new opportunity.

Although born in North Carolina, June has lived in Florida since the age of four and is the first attorney in her family. When asked why she chose law, June said she made this important decision in high school during Florida's Girls' State, when her peers elected her a Supreme Court Justice. The image of herself administering justice stuck with her and continues to drive her to success and community service.

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