

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

Affiliate Spotlight: Louisiana State Bar Association Young Lawyers Section

By Maria-Vittoria "Giugi" Carminati

The Louisiana State Bar Association Young Lawyers Section consists of young lawyers in Louisiana under thirty-nine years of age or who have practiced five years or less. The Young Lawyers Section is governed by an eighteen-member council, twelve of whom are elected from members scattered throughout the state. Louisiana has eight districts, composed of the various parishes. Eleven council members are elected from each district while one position is elected from the entire state and two are appointed by the YLS Chair.

Member Service Projects

The **Barristers for Boards** is an ingenious, and effective, affiliate member service project that increases young lawyer participation in a variety of charities. The YLS has partnered with The Central Louisiana and New Orleans United Way and other nonprofit boards within Louisiana. As part of its partnership, the YLS goes to nonprofit boards and gives presentations about YLS members, the demographics of YLS membership, and the projects YLS members are interested in. The YLS also collects resumes and questionnaires from its members, in which each member expresses his or her interest in particular nonprofit causes (that is, children, animals, women, and so on). When these nonprofits boards need to fill vacancies, they contact the YLS for interested candidates. The YLS sends appropriate resumes and questionnaires to the boards. This project allows young lawyers to join boards of nonprofit organizations that match their interests, and provides the boards with energetic, qualified, and enthusiastic new members. A win-win for all.

Because Louisiana is a mandatory-bar state, each lawyer is required to get 12.5 hours of CLE, of which one hour has to be ethics and one hour has to be professionalism related. In an effort to help its members, the YLS offers four hours of free CLE each year in its **Professional Development Seminar**. The CLE is only offered to 175 lawyers, and participation is on a first-come, first-served basis. The program is held during the Midyear Meeting of the bar and runs from 8 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. The topics are always different and selected on a yearly basis. YLS Chair Alainna R. Mire explains that the YLS makes every effort to have at least some programming about law firm management and small firm practices.

The Law School Outreach Committee in addition to sponsoring the **Law School Mock Trial Competition** and **Law School Essay** contest hosts a program called **Resumay** each spring to bring together solo or small firm practitioners with law students. This program addresses the law school concentration on recruitment for, and placement of, the top of law school classes. Resumay is an informal event in which lawyers meet law students interested in small firm or solo practice. It is also timed to fit small and solo firm hiring schedules. Whereas a big firm may recruit in August–November for the next year, small firms and solo practitioners are only able to recruit in late spring and early summer for the fall. Allowing law students to meet potential employers during that time maximizes the chances of finding employment.

The Law Student Division Committee is the newest YLS committee. This year is the inaugural year of the Law Student Division of the LSBA. The YLS is very excited about this new undertaking and ready to involve law students in the LSBA.

Public Service Projects

Every year, the YLS holds the **Cinderella Project**, whose goal is to provide high school students with dresses and accessories for prom or homecoming. Each year, the YLS matches up with a local city affiliate. The local city affiliate solicits prom and homecoming dresses and accessories from its members. The local city affiliate then partners with a dress shop or business in town. High school students are invited to come and try on dresses and accessories. If a high school student finds a dress she likes, she is free to walk away with it.

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Louisiana's implementation of **Wills for Heroes** is another remarkable story. Until about two years ago, it was unethical (illegal) for a public servant to receive a service—such as someone writing a will—for free. The YLS was therefore faced with the fact that implementation of the ABA YLD's Wills for Heroes program was illegal in its state. Not the type to be discouraged by such details, the YLS called on a young lawyer who also happened to be a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives. The House Representative filed, and successfully passed, a repeal of the ethics rule prohibiting free services for public servants for any project authorized by the LSBA, specifically including Wills for Heroes. The YLS now regularly implements Wills for Heroes events throughout Louisiana with the help of its local affiliates.

The YLS also held its first "Local Affiliate Outreach Symposium" last spring. The symposium was successful in providing affiliates with a place to come together to learn about new programs and assistance that the YLS can offer. The YLS also handed out its first **Local Affiliate Award** to the St. Tammany Young Lawyers Association for its "A Day at the Court" program. The program consists of taking twenty-five students from a law studies class in Covington, Louisiana, for a tour of the courthouse. The students also were allowed to watch real proceedings in drug court.

Of course, in addition to its programs, the YLS sponsors the statewide **High School Mock Trial Competition**. The YLS finances the winning team to attend the national competition.

With 6,043 members, the Louisiana State Bar YLS shows tremendous ingenuity and dedication to helping its members and its community. Its dedication to helping its members and its community in nonlegal ways is a good reminder that young lawyers aren't just good at law!

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