

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

Affiliate Spotlight: Chelan-Douglas County Young Lawyers Division

By Ernestina R. Cruz

Extending from British Columbia to California, the Cascade Mountain Range is known as one of the most accessible and beautiful mountain ranges in the world. Young lawyers who practice law in this region are able to take advantage of many recreational activities year round. One young lawyer organization that has been able to meld public service and mentorship along with work-life balance is the Chelan-Douglas County Young Lawyers Division (CDC YLD). Chelan and Douglas are two counties located in North Central Washington, just east of the Cascade Mountains.

In three short years CDC YLD, which was founded in 2007, has established itself as a premier young lawyers organization in Washington State. The CDC YLD is made up of approximately 25 lawyers who have launched the organization into the spotlight. J. Kevin Bromiley, the current President of CDC YLD and an attorney at Jeffers, Danielson, Sonn & Aylward, has focused his attention on three objectives: service, mentorship, and social opportunities.

Public Service

The CDC YLD has an extensive public outreach program that ranges from educational projects to a referral program for the provision of legal services for those dealing with economic hardship. In terms of its educational programming, the CDC YLD has volunteered at the Eastmont Middle School by having volunteer lawyers assist students who participate in a mock trial competition. Attorneys also sit in on the mock trial to provide students with feedback regarding their understanding of legal practice and procedure.

The CDC YLD established a hallmark equal access to justice project. In 2009 (only its second year in existence), the CDC YLD received the Washington State Bar Association Young Lawyers Division Outstanding Affiliate Organization Award. The Washington State Bar Association noted that its Board of Trustees selected the CDC YLD "for its formation of a moderate-means referral system as part of the Moderate-Means Program (formerly known as the Greater Access and Assistant Program, or GAAP)." With the Moderate-Means Program, CDC YLD focused attention on serving clients who fall into a "financial gap" because they could not qualify for free legal services through local equal access to justice programs, but at the same time could not afford to retain private practitioners.

Through the program, CDC YLD has maintained a registry of local attorneys who are willing to represent qualified applicants who fall into the "financial gap." The attorneys who volunteer for the program agree to provide legal services at a reduced rate fee, which is estimated not to exceed \$75 per hour. The CDC YLD provides referrals for qualified applicants to attorneys who have opted to be included in the registry. Attorneys provide legal services in the areas of family law, bankruptcy, consumer and housing issues, and employment matters.

Mentorship

Although it is a small association in terms of numbers, the CDC YLD has found a way to turn that reality into a positive through mentorship.

"We have found that if we get to know each other better, we work more efficiently," said Bromiley. "We try to mentor our new members so they understand that our local bar association generally enjoys a healthy level of collegiality."

Currently, the CDC YLD is working to formalize its mentorship program for young lawyers who practice within its two county region. Members of the group have also been able to develop high-quality CLE programs for its membership. Last year, the CDC YLD co-sponsored a CLE in which the Honorable Fred Van Sickle, the former Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington, served as the keynote speaker.

Social Opportunities

One of the hallmarks of the CDC YLD is its focus on social networking opportunities.

"We enjoy a high quality of life in North Central Washington, in large part because of the outdoor recreational opportunities," said Bromiley. "We see the CDC YLD as a group that can help us all better enjoy working with each other in this beautiful place we have chosen to live."

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

In this respect, members of the organization have not lost sight of the importance of striking work-life balance. Bromiley noted that it is not rare for members to partake in the vast outdoor recreational opportunities available in the area. From snow skiing to mountain biking to waterskiing on the Columbia River—sometimes during the lunch hour—the CDC YLD has struck gold in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State.

The Affiliate welcomes the Chelan-Douglas County Young Lawyers Division as not only one of the newest members of the ABA YLD family but as a brand new affiliate in its own right. CDC YLD is clearly on the right path to taking an active role in providing service to its members and to the public. We look forward to meeting CDC YLD members at ABA YLD conferences this coming year.

Ernestina R. Cruz is a shareholder at the Narvaez Law Firm, P.A., in Albuquerque, New Mexico, an ABA/YLD Scholar, and an Assistant Editor of The Affiliate.