

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division  
*The Affiliate*

## ***Making Connections: Year End Review of the Member Service Project***

*By Jaime Ackerman*

This year the ABA YLD's member service project was *Making Connections: How to Develop Lasting Personal and Professional Relationships*.

"One of the greatest achievements of the *Making Connections* program was the variety of ways it has been distributed to ABA YLD members and affiliate members," said Christopher Rogers, this year's ABA YLD Member Service Project Coordinator. He explained that the project was designed to benefit young lawyers by helping to develop their networking skills in both their personal and professional networks.

Throughout the year, the Member Service Project Team organized in-person and online programs. Speed networking sessions were scheduled at each ABA YLD function that provided the opportunity to maximize the number of contacts developed at each conference.

### ***Making Connections Programs at the Fall Conference***

**Networking Strategies.** At the Fall Conference in Birmingham, Alabama, the Member Service Project Team presented a program on building successful networking strategies. The program offered valuable insights into generating new business and job opportunities. Some of the topics covered at this conference included distinguishing networking strategy from tactics, starting a conversation, joining groups, and gracefully exiting a conversation.

**Mocktails.** Participants in the Fall Conference were also invited to a "mocktail hour," which provided additional opportunities for ABA YLD members to make connections and further develop their personal and professional networks. Mocktail hours can take on many different forms and promote the successful participation in social business functions. For example, mocktail hours can emphasize proper dining etiquette, professional dress, the art of small talk, or how to work a room. Other appropriate topics for a mocktail hour can range from how to conduct yourself during a business meal to how to balance your glass and plate while shaking hands.

Other mocktail hours assign participants fictitious roles or attributes that they must employ while working the room. That form of the exercise confronts participants with common networking situations from "engaging the quiet wallflower" to "dealing with the overly assertive colleague." Mocktail hours may be fun and educational events for your affiliate. You can take the ABA YLD's example and host mocktails throughout the year to help your members develop connections and hone their networking skills.

### ***Networking During the Holidays Podcast***

One of the most popular *Making Connections* programs this year was the "Networking During the Holidays" podcast, delivered shortly before Thanksgiving by the ABA YLD and Business Law Section. The podcast was 40 minutes long and focused on how to take advantage of the upcoming holiday social events and gatherings to advance career prospects. Some of the topics covered during this seminar included how to most effectively follow-up with contacts met at holiday events and happy hours; the best way to subtly ask family members for a job; when to arrive at holiday functions and how long to stay; transitioning conversation from social topics to a more targeted job/internship focus; how to politely decline invitations to events; and how to express interest in a new position while not speaking badly of your current job.

This successful podcast was moderated by Lynn Howell from Houston, Texas. Speakers included Michael Bergmann (Public Interest Law Initiative, Chicago, Illinois), Kelly-Anne Clark (Greer Herz & Adams, Galveston, Texas), Jonathan Cole (Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell Berkowitz PC, Nashville, Tennessee), Rachel Kopp (Spector Roseman Kodroff & Willis PC, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Jill McCall (ABA, Chicago, Illinois), and Barbara Mendel Mayden (Young Mayden LLC, Nashville, Tennessee).

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**“How to Get What You Want” in Orlando**

During the Midyear Meeting in Orlando, Florida, the Member Service Project Team put on a seminar that drew rave reviews. Professor Jonathan Cohen presented on “How to Get What You Want: Embracing the Art of Negotiation in Your Personal and Professional Life.” Professor Cohen is a Harvard Law School graduate who teaches negotiation, dispute resolution, ethics, evidence, and social justice at the University of Florida. His hour-long seminar taught the audience how to “enhance your negotiating techniques and use them in other relationships: whether with clients, as employees or employers, and in your life outside the office.”

Participants “left the program with a better understanding of negotiation generally and many of the participants left with a full list of top-notch negotiations materials for their reading lists,” Chris Rogers reported.

**Looking to the Future**

Additional *Making Connections* podcasts will be available this summer.

One of these podcasts is “Networking in a Difficult Economy: How to Make the Most of Your Time and Money.” This seminar will cover topics including recommended networking strategies for new lawyers and law students, online networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, and so on), and the best types of networking events to attend with limited free time and resources. The date for this podcast has not yet been set, but be on the lookout for further details on this timely and informative seminar.

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*Jaime Ackerman is an Assistant Editor of The Affiliate and an Associate in the Freehold, New Jersey, firm of Lomurro, Davison, Eastman & Munoz, P.A.*