

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division
The Affiliate

ABA YLD to Look to Affiliates More Than Ever: An Interview with Incoming ABA YLD Chair David B. Wolfe

By M. Vittoria "Giugi" Carminati

The incoming Chair of the ABA YLD is David Wolfe, an attorney at Skoloff & Wolfe in New Jersey. In addition to his successful litigation practice, David has served in a variety of positions in the ABA, including as editor of the American Bar Association GP Solo Section's online newsletter for Family Law, on the ABA YLD National Conferences Team, and as New Jersey's District Representative to the ABA YLD. David will take over as Chair of the ABA YLD at the ABA YLD's Annual Meeting, August 5-7, 2010, in San Francisco.

David brings years of experience with the ABA YLD and a passion for community service. He also brings a pragmatic, practical approach to increasing the benefits the ABA YLD brings not only to its members but also to our communities. The Affiliate had an opportunity to take a few moments of David Wolfe's busy schedule to ask him what he has in store for us.

The Affiliate: What are the themes for the upcoming year?

Wolfe: This year, the ABA YLD will look to the affiliates more than ever to roll out the major initiatives: Serving Our Seniors, Civics and Law Academies, and a Law Day Video Contest. We will also focus on providing learning opportunities and resources for new partners and those on the partner track.

The ABA YLD will build on the Chicago Bar Association Young Lawyer Section's pilot program, "Serving Our Seniors." Justin Heather, the 2010 ABA YLD National Outstanding Young Lawyer Award winner, spearheaded the project in Chicago. The program provides pro bono services to senior citizens at assisted living facilities and health-care institutions. Because senior citizens have tremendous underserved legal needs such as power of attorneys, wills, and living wills, just to name a few, this program is important.

In addition, as part of the comprehensive 2010-2011 ABA Presidential civic education initiative, the Division will encourage its affiliate network to promote, conduct, and support Civics and Law Academies targeting high school students in each state. This program will be overseen by a Board of the best and the brightest, including Sandra Day O'Connor.

Further, the ABA YLD will develop a "spin off" of the New Jersey Young Lawyers' Law Day YouTube Video Contest, which is designed to educate 9th through 12th grade students on the importance of discourse, participation, and the effect of the law in their daily lives. Each three-minute video will be judged on criteria such as originality, creativity, quality, relevance/adherence to the contest theme, and extent to which the video provokes reflection, discussion, debate, and/or critique regarding the topic. Winners will be invited to attend the ABA Law Day celebration in Washington, D.C., where the winning video will be recognized. The Division will have to rely heavily on affiliates to promote the program in their respective states.

Finally, via the 2011 New Partner Conference, 2011 New Partner Teleconference Series, and *100 Plus Pointers for the New Partner*, the Division will provide new partners and those on the partner track with a number of learning opportunities and resources to help them as they take on this new role.

- The conference, scheduled for February 26–27, 2011, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, will offer new partners the opportunity to learn from the experts, to share ideas, and discuss important issues with their peers and to build relationships and expand their networks.
- The teleconference series, scheduled to run January–December 2011, will provide live and on demand learning opportunities.
- [100 Plus Pointers](#), which is currently available as a download from the ABA Web Store, includes such tips as understanding your firm's governance, structure and economics, personal strategies for business and client development, and the skills and knowledge needed to step up into a leadership position.

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***The Affiliate:* What challenges to you expect?**

Wolfe: The unknown. And the lack of experience.

We are taking on new initiatives with great support from new affiliates, but there are always logistical and promotional challenges. In addition, there is the ever-present challenge of continuing to demonstrate value to our members. And we have to ensure that the affiliates look to the ABA and see the benefits of affiliation.

***The Affiliate:* What do you hope to leave with the ABA YLD?**

Wolfe: There have been 76 Chairs before me, who created a remarkable Division within the ABA. I hope to continue that legacy. Like all Chairs, I hope my year improves on certain areas we currently cover. My focus and goal is to deliver as much as I can in terms of value to our members, but we are also the public service branch of the ABA. We will continue our focus of promoting the fact that young lawyers across the country are engaged in public service and improving the community.

I also hope to leave the ABA YLD with two new yearly events: the New Partner Conference and the Law Day Video Contest.

***The Affiliate:* What did your predecessor leave you with that you are grateful for?**

Wolfe: Kelly-Ann Clarke left the ABA YLD with a renewed interest in providing programming for affiliates. For example, the Affiliate Assistance Team launched the new Facebook fanpage geared to addressing affiliate issues. This focus on affiliate issues has been, and will continue to be, tremendously important to the success of the Division.

The positive media coverage for [They Had a Dream Too](#) has been terrific. It really gets the point across that young lawyers are not just concerned about billable hours. Kelly-Ann has done a tremendous job promoting that message.

***The Affiliate:* What would you like to leave your successor?**

Wolfe: A Division that is vibrant and focused. I want to leave the Division with additional member benefits and the new exciting aspects of the Division discussed above.

***The Affiliate:* What was the best advice you received when you knew you would become Chair?**

Wolfe: To prepare thoroughly before, and to enjoy the year because it goes quite quickly. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to be the face and the voice of the Young Lawyers and to have an impact you won't have again in the profession and the public.

***The Affiliate:* What can a young lawyer get out of the ABA YLD?**

Wolfe: As much as the young lawyer wants. The ABA YLD offers young lawyers the opportunity to:

- connect with young lawyers from across the world and different practice areas,
- access to the knowledge and tools needed for success,
- advance their career through publishing, speaking, and leadership, and
- give back to community through pro bono projects and public service.

For more information about these initiatives and the year ahead visit www.abanet.org/yld/2010.

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