

**American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division**  
*The Affiliate*

## **Washington State and South Carolina Take Home Top Awards**

*By James Bilsborrow*

The results are in and the 2008–09 Awards of Achievement winners have been announced! A total of ninety-two projects were submitted from thirty-four different affiliates. Twenty-eight top award-winners were selected in various categories. The South Carolina Bar Association Young Lawyers Division's (SC YLD) "Families Forever" project won recognition as the most outstanding project in the "service to the public" category, while the Washington State Bar Association Young Lawyers Division's (WA YLD) "Young Bar Leaders Summit" took home first prize in the "service to the bar" category.

### **Service to the Bar—Young Bar Leaders Summit**

The WA YLD won the "service to the public" category by bringing young bar leaders from across the state to participate in their "Young Bar Leaders Summit." WA YLD's president and Summit creator Jaime Hawk explained that the project was modeled on similar events she had attended through the ABA YLD. After participating in an ABA YLD summit held in Washington, D.C., Hawk realized that a Washington State summit would provide a "great opportunity to pull all of our young bar leaders together from across the state." The goal was to foster collaboration among the various specialty, county, and minority bar associations, according to Hawk.

"If you can meet face-to-face and connect, naturally you will think of ways to work together and collaborate," Hawk said.

In this vein, the Summit featured a speed networking session, as well as several breakout sessions focused on specific challenges facing young lawyers in the state of Washington. Among the topics discussed in these small group sessions were: challenges facing young lawyers in the current economy, practicing law while managing a nonprofit organization, and ways in which law firms can create an environment of inclusiveness.

In addition to young lawyers from across Washington State, the president of the state bar association as well as its board of governors and several other senior bar leaders were in attendance. Lizz Acee, 2008–2009 ABA YLD Chair, also made the trip out west for the event.

The Summit's theme was "the changing face of the profession." Many of the events centered on ways to increase the diversity of the Washington bar as well as on minority participation in bar programs and leadership. Towards that end, the WA YLD adopted a diversity plan—modeled upon the ABA YLD diversity plan—at the Summit.

Participants of the Summit also brainstormed strategies to create a statewide database for young lawyer public service opportunities. WA YLD Board Member Michael Pellicciotti explained that bar association young lawyer leaders from across the state felt there was a strong need not only to identify such opportunities, but to approach them with a unified, young-lawyer voice.

"Ultimately, [this] makes our WYLD organization more effective in our advocacy for young lawyer issues," Pellicciotti said.

Hawk and Pellicciotti offered advice for young lawyers looking to organize statewide events in their own affiliates. Hawk stressed the importance of facilitating "buy-in" from an array of groups in order to increase participation.

"It's important to form an organizing committee so they have a voice in the issues that are discussed," Hawk explained. For the "Young Bar Leaders Summit," Hawk put together a task force with members from an assortment of bar associations. This allowed for a variety of ideas and, ultimately, kept young lawyers interested in attending.

## American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division *The Affiliate*

“Bringing together the young lawyers in the various bar associations is very important,” Pellicciotti said. “An event like this can only be accomplished through a partnership, which includes joint leadership in the planning of the event. It’s a great way to bring future bar leaders together, and unify voices on important issues.”

### **Service to the Public—Families Forever**

Seeing a need in the community, the SC YLD created “Families Forever,” a program focusing on adoption awareness throughout the state. In the 2008–2009 bar year, SC YLD put on Family Fairs in Columbia, Charleston, and Greenville. During these Family Fairs, families were educated about foster care and the adoption process, both domestic and international. They were encouraged to consider foster care or adoption, whether through the South Carolina Department of Social Services, an adoption agency, or through private arrangements.

The SC YLD has already seen the fruits of its labors. As a result of “Families Forever,” at least ten children were placed in homes.

With this success under their belts, but seeing more need in the community, the SC YLD is continuing the project this bar year and plans to hold Family Fairs in Greenville and Charleston.

### **ABA YLD Awards of Achievements**

The Awards of Achievement Program offers a unique opportunity for state and local young lawyer organizations affiliated with the ABA YLD to submit their best projects for evaluation and recognition by a jury of their peers. The Program is designed to encourage project development by recognizing the time, effort, and skills expended by young lawyer organizations in implementing public service and bar service projects in their communities. It is also a great way for other affiliate leaders to learn about successful projects and programs run in other states.

Each project submitted in 2008–2009 was evaluated by a panel of judges using several criteria, including the project’s achievement of its stated goals and impact, its originality, and the degree of participation the project engendered. For 2009–2010, the nomination process will open on April 1, 2010. Projects and programs can’t receive an award unless the affiliate applies. So if you have a member or public service project you feel is deserving of an award, or if your newsletter or overall bar group is above par, you should consider applying for an ABA YLD Award of Achievement. Complete information is available on the ABA YLD website at [www.abanet.org/yld/awards/aoa](http://www.abanet.org/yld/awards/aoa).

---

*James Bilsborrow is an Assistant Editor of The Affiliate and a law clerk for U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.*

---