

YOUNG LAWYERS' SECTION

Background

The Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association (ABA/YLD) and young lawyers associations throughout the nation foster a tradition of excellence in the delivery of member services and of public service. Each year, the Division endeavors to serve both the public and the legal profession through special projects. That proud tradition continues in the 2004-05 bar year with the project *We The Jury*. With this project, the Division will educate high school students regarding one of the most valuable civic duties in which they can participate: jury service. *We The Jury* provides the sort of valuable public service with which the Division has long been associated, while at the same time educating those individuals who will one day stand to deliver justice in the context of their civic duty. Other member services include CLE activities and social activities designed to increase young lawyer interaction and contact between young lawyers and members of the judiciary.

Public service projects aimed at youth include programs designed to reduce youth violence and educate students about the Constitution, voting and the electoral processes, and their obligations and rights as they enter the adult world. Other public service projects provide information about consumer issues, information surrounding senior citizen issues, pro se divorce projects, organ donation, and projects to reduce child abuse, domestic violence and lead poisoning.

Missouri Bar Activities

The Young Lawyers' Section (YLS) of The Missouri Bar was created in 1967 to stimulate the interest of young and recently admitted lawyers in the objectives of The Missouri Bar and to encourage participation in its substantive and procedural committees. Through public service projects and educational activities aimed at both the public and young and recently admitted lawyers, the YLS builds strong relationships among lawyers and develops future leaders of The Missouri Bar. The YLS also provides a forum for young lawyer organizations within local bars to share their public service project successes and ideas.

The YLS has had a busy and productive year, initiating three new projects, expanding the geographic scope of some projects, and continuing its commitment to a number of annual projects.

Crossing the Line

Crossing the Line is an interactive curriculum designed to educate middle school students about the rule of law, pre-trial criminal liability, and the social issues they may be facing as they enter an adult world. The project teaches students about their rights and responsibilities regarding the following issues: graffiti; criminal mischief; alcohol offenses; curfew violations; tobacco offenses; failure to attend school; drug offenses; arson; theft; weapons offenses; assault/disorderly conduct/hate crimes/discrimination; and sexual harassment. The project begins with a teacher playing a videotape scenario for the students, followed by the teacher and/or the volunteer attorney using the lesson plans and legal information contained in the curriculum guide to engage in interactive activities and discussions with the students regarding possible legal penalties, responsibilities, or social consequences that may arise. At the conclusion of the project, each student receives a reference

booklet containing information about each of the areas of law. Written materials and videos have been distributed to school districts throughout Missouri.

Junior Judges

Junior Judges is designed to help children make the right choices in tough situations they encounter in their grade school years. It also informs children of the consequences they face when they make the wrong decision. The project's curriculum consists of a written guide and videotape. These materials cover seven problem areas: cheating; destroying property; bullying; teasing; stealing; drugs and alcohol; and gangs and weapons. The goal of the project is to encourage students to engage in a discussion about the situation presented by the children in the video. As a result, the video does not come to a conclusion as to what decision the students should make. Instead, the students are encouraged to decide what the smart choice would be in each situation. Whenever possible, YLS Council members went to schools throughout the state and spoke directly to students about the program. Written materials and videos have been distributed to school districts throughout Missouri.

The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree, a local project in the area surrounding the Lake of the Ozarks in 2003, was implemented statewide in 2004. In 2003, the project raised \$750 and donated the funds to Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Missouri Valley. Because the project made such a positive impact on The Big Brothers and Big Sisters organization, the YLS decided to implement the Giving Tree on a statewide basis. The YLS Council collected donations from individual young lawyers from around the state, and then donated the money to local charities to assist people in need during the holiday season.

The project proved to be a huge success. Overall, the YLS collected approximately \$7,285. The money collected in the St. Louis area was donated to Redevelopment Opportunities for Women, Inc., an organization that combats poverty by assisting battered women in their efforts to achieve economic independence and stability. The Kansas City portion of the funds was donated to the Dream Factory, an organization that assists children who are seriously or chronically ill by fulfilling a wish or dream, such as being reunited with family and friends, or the opportunity to meet the child's hero, such as a sports figure. The outstate portion of the funds was again donated to Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

The success of the Giving Tree is not attributed to one individual, or even a handful of people. Rather, this is a project that received strong support from young lawyers all over the state, including those who are not involved in the YLS Council.

Law Day Picture Contest

In 2004, the YLS celebrated the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* by co-sponsoring a picture contest with the Missouri National Education Association (MNEA). The theme of the contest was, "Finding Strength in our Differences." Five categories of students – grades K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8 and 9-12 – were asked to take pencils, crayons, paint and markers to paper and illustrate how and why our differences make us stronger.

On March 13, four YLS Council members met NMEA representatives in Jefferson City to judge the contest. The only drawback was that the YLS could only pick three winners from the categories

it sponsored (K-1 and 2-3). Many more participants were worthy of being recognized for their efforts and insight. The winning pictures were displayed on The Missouri Bar's website.

Needs of the Family Committee

Needs of the Family is a new committee that focuses on providing assistance to families suffering from poverty, domestic violence and substance abuse. In February, the YLS partnered with Heart to Heart, a Kansas City organization that gathers unused products from companies and then distributes the materials to not-for-profit groups. The YLS obtained medical, hygiene and educational materials from Heart to Heart and donated the items to New House and Micah Ministries/Veronica's Voice, two Kansas City not-for-profit groups. New House is a domestic shelter and Micah Ministries/Veronica's Voice provides food, clothing and counseling to the homeless population and women who are trying to integrate back into society after experiencing legal problems.

The Needs of the Family Committee also teamed up with the 835th Corps Support Battalion to adopt seven schools and villages in Iraq. A supply drive collected school supplies and personal items such as children's clothing, shampoo, soap, toothpaste and other items.

Vote Missouri

In the past few years, the YLS has implemented the Vote Missouri project in the St. Louis area. However, in an effort to reach as many age-eligible voters as possible, this year the YLS also featured the registration materials online, facilitating easy registration by anyone with a computer. With generous assistance from Charter Communications, the YLS was able to record and circulate a public service announcement (PSA) throughout the St. Louis area promoting Vote Missouri. The PSA is also posted on The Missouri Bar website.

Publications

The YLS provides authorship and financial support to a number of public service publications. Thousands of these publications are printed and disseminated every year. They include:

- *Domestic Violence and the Law*
- *You Can Stop Child Abuse: Legal Remedies Under Missouri Law*
- *The Missouri Bar Coloring Book*
- *Stepping Out*
- *Adoption Guide*
- *New Lawyer Survival Guide*
- *Missouri Small Claims Court Handbook*
- *Senior Citizens Handbook* (the YLS and The Missouri Bar Foundation both provide funding for the printing of the handbook).

Annual Projects

In its 15th year, the **Law Day Essay Contest** is co-sponsored by the Missouri National Education Association, The Missouri Bar Young Lawyers' Section and the Missouri Press Association. The contest invites students in three age categories (grades 4-5, 6-8 and 9-12) to participate in a law-related essay contest. This year's topic was in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision. The top three essays in each age group receive U.S. savings bonds.

We the People took place in Jefferson City on February 2. Westminster Christian Academy took first place, followed closely by Jefferson City High School and Joplin High School. As in years past, the YLS Council donated \$10,000 to help send the winning team to Washington, D.C. for the national finals.

On March 2, The Missouri Bar YLS participated in **Read Across America Day**, which is a celebration of Dr. Seuss' birthday. Young lawyers throughout the state went to classrooms and read Dr. Seuss books to students in an effort to stress the importance of reading and promote the fact that reading is fun.

The Missouri Bar Enrollment Ceremonies took place in Jefferson City on October 8, 2004 and May 3, 2005.

The YLS Lewis & Clark Task Force participated in several events around the state promoting the 200th anniversary of this monumental journey.

The YLS also sponsors two awards at the annual meeting. The **Tom Cochran Community Service Award** is presented to a member of The Missouri Bar whose community service and professionalism have significantly enhanced his or her community. The second YLS award is the **Liberty Bell Award**. It is presented to a non-lawyer or non-legal organization engaged in public service activities that enhance the legal community or dedicated to the advancement of justice.

Finally, the YLS provides member services, including CLE programs, in conjunction with the Annual Meeting, a quarterly newsletter sent to all young lawyers in Missouri, a reception for new lawyers at the swearing-in ceremony in Jefferson City, social events at regional and annual meetings, and other social activities designed to increase young lawyer interaction and contact between young lawyers and members of the judiciary.



Upon taking the oath of admission, new law school graduates automatically become members of The Missouri Bar's Young Lawyers' Section.