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Message from the President

Connie Akridge, Esq., State Bar of Nevada President



EXCEPTIONAL EVENTS: 3RD ANNUAL DIVERSITY LUNCHEON, HAPPY 15TH BIRTHDAY VARN AND YLS GOLDILOCKS REMAKE

"Our goal was to create a dialogue with our sister bars and explore ways we could work together to ensure that every Nevada lawyer could meet his or her full potential and, thereby, benefit the legal community and the southern Nevada community as a whole."

Diversity Luncheon 2012

In 2003, as president of the Clark County Bar Association, I brought together the leadership of many of the specialty bars in southern Nevada. Our goal was to create a dialogue with our sister bars and explore ways we could work together to ensure that every Nevada lawyer could meet his or her full potential and, thereby, benefit the legal community and the southern Nevada community as a whole. The State Bar of Nevada (SBN), as the mandatory bar in this state, has an important role to play in this effort. On January 12, 2012, the SBN and the SBN Diversity Committee hosted the Third Annual Diversity Luncheon, attended by Romeo Perez, PC, chair of the SBN Diversity Committee; Janet Belcove-Shalin, NV Disability Advocacy and Law Center, member of the Diversity Committee; Augusta Massey, member of the Diversity Committee; Veronica Arechederra Hall, Krystal Gallagher, Mariteresa Rivera-Rogers and Leslie Nino of the Latino Bar Association; Gabrielle Jones, Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada; Doreen Spears-Hartwell and Rachel Anderson, National Bar Association; Robert Marshall and Julie Ostrovsky, Nevada Justice Association; Paola Armeni, SBN Young Lawyers Section; Kristina Holman, Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys; Kari Stephens, Clark County Bar Association; and Shari Cane-Vogel, Senior Law Project.

The group engaged in a roundtable discussion of their projects, ways in which the state bar could be of assistance to them, SBN's Transitioning into Practice (TIP) mentorship program, the annual diversity scholarship and SBN's Lawyer Referral and Informational Service grants for law-related education and pro bono service projects.

The SBN's Diversity Committee's mission is:

- (i) To increase diversity within the membership and leadership of the State Bar of Nevada and the profession by supporting and encouraging opportunities for current and aspiring attorneys from

underrepresented groups and raising awareness of the benefits of diversity; and

(ii) To promote cultural competence in the profession.

The SBN's Diversity Committee grants two \$5,000 scholarships each year to students of the Boyd School of Law who embrace the committee's mission of increasing diversity within the membership and leadership of SBN and the profession and promoting cultural competence. The scholarship is offered through the Diversity Committee and is funded by the SBN Lawyer Referral and Information Service Public Service Grant Program.

Scholarships are awarded based on merit, financial need, demonstrated potential for leadership and academic excellence. Primary consideration is given to applicants whose essay responses best represent the committee's mission. Preference is also given to those students who attended the University of Nevada Las Vegas or the University of Nevada Reno for undergraduate studies, a Nevada high school and/or students who have been Nevada residents for five years or longer.

Congratulations to VARN

Congratulations to Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans (VARN) for providing 15 years of outstanding pro bono legal services to rural Nevadans! VARN celebrated this special occasion on December 15, 2011, in Carson City at the Governor's Mansion with an event hosted by Chief Justice Nancy Saitta and VARN President Judge Mike Fondi. VARN recognized the extraordinary contributions of Valerie J. Cooney, Esq., Executive Director/Domestic Violence Attorney and Odessa Ramirez, Assistant Executive Director and of many attorney volunteers and past and present VARN officers and board members.

In its Domestic Violence Victim's Assistance Project (DVVAP), VARN provides free civil legal services for domestic violence survivors, regardless of income. DVVAP serves domestic violence survivors in rural communities throughout northern and central Nevada. VARN provides free (pro bono) civil legal services to individuals and families with certain types of civil (non criminal) cases who are low income and live in rural northern or central Nevada. VARN provides free Self-Help Divorce Form Clinics for people who would like to file for divorce without an attorney, by using divorce forms. Divorce forms can be obtained at the Nevada Supreme Court Law



Bar President Connie Akridge (center) joins Chief Justice Nancy Saitta (right) and VARN president Judge Mike Fondi in celebrating VARN's anniversary in Carson City.

Library website. VARN's Lawyer in the Lobby project, which began In January 2010, allows interested parties to speak to an attorney about their legal problems for a limited time, at no cost. The Lawyer in the Lobby takes place twice monthly.

YLS Goldilocks: Lights, Camera, Action!



Goldilocks participants (from left to right) Jeremy Reichenberg, Brian Gonsalves, Connie Akridge, Justina Caviglia, Stephanie Allen and Young Lawyers Chair Paola Armeni

It was wonderful spending Saturday, January 7, with the Young Lawyers Section (YLS), as its members shot their new Goldilocks video. The Goldilocks program provides third- and fourth-grade students with an opportunity to learn about the judicial system. Volunteer lawyers present a video to participating classes; the video is a dramatization of Goldilocks' trial for breaking and entering (entering the house of the three bears without permission), theft (eating baby bear's soup) and destruction of property (breaking baby bear's chair). The children are then sworn in as jurors and deliberate to make the final determination as to Goldilocks' guilt or innocence. The presentation takes place at the requesting elementary school and lasts approximately one hour. The Goldilocks video YLS was using was made a number of years ago and the section wanted to create a more updated, streamlined version.

Directing the action was YLS member Ryan Springmeyer. The cast was comprised of the following YLS leadership: Chair and Southern District Representative Paola Armeni as Goldilock's Defense Counsel; Chair Elect and Rural District Representative Jeremy Reichenberg as Prosecuting Attorney; Past Chair Stephanie Allen as Goldilocks; Carson City Representative Justina Alyce Caviglia as Baby Bear; Northern District Representative Brian Gonsalves as Papa Bear. Secretary and Southern District Representative Kendelea Leascher Works helped with production. I had the pleasure of portraying the judge. Congratulations to YLS for the success of its Goldilocks program, which has educated hundreds of school children during the past several years about the rule of law. It will be exciting to see the reaction of third and fourth graders to the new video! ■