



YLD NEWS

The newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division

Addressing underemployment and underrepresentation: One lawyer's thoughts on how to attack the problem

By George Petrilli

The growing issues of law student indebtedness and unemployment may provide an opportunity to address a lack of access to the legal system

There is no shortage of coverage in the news, journal articles and political debate about the increasing burden of student debt among recent graduates. The economic downturn, coupled with the increase in the number of students graduating from law schools, has created what the *Wall Street Journal* called, "...the worst legal market in 20 years." As a result, the law school graduates of the class of 2011 had slightly better

than a 50-50 chance at getting a full-time, long-term legal job. The reality is even more grim when a new attorney considers the culture within traditional firms because the longer a new attorney is unemployed, the less desirable that candidate may become. This makes it even more unlikely for a new graduate to turn a J.D. into a well-paying, stable career.

What many of the statistics and doomsday forecasters are addressing when they question the current level of sustainability of the legal

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The event of the season is almost here!

By Angel Wawrzynek

The 15th ANNUAL YLD HOLIDAY PARTY will be held on Friday, December 7, 2012 from 6:00 p.m. -10:00 p.m. at the Cubby Bear in Chicago. A fundraiser for the YLD Children's Assistance Fund, this party is crucial to the continued ability of the YLD to provide grants to non-profit organizations (across the state) related to children and law.

If that isn't enough of a reason to attend, the Holiday Party is also a great time for all! The purchase of your ticket buys you four hours of food and drink (and great company). The event is not limited to attorneys, so bring your loved ones, bring your friends, bring everyone.

Tickets purchased prior to November 26, 2012 are \$35. Law student tickets purchased

prior to November 26, 2012 are only \$30. Any tickets purchased at the door will be \$40. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

If you are looking for great advertising opportunities and want to ensure that your logo is prominently displayed during our party, or if you have any other questions about the fundraiser or the Children's Assistance Fund itself, please contact Angel Wawrzynek at Wawrzynek@het-attorneys.com or visit our Web site (www.HolidayParty.org).

We look forward to seeing you this holiday season at the Cubby Bear, having a blast while supporting nonprofit organizations across the state that benefit children. ■

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From the Chair

By Meghan O'Brien

The YLD has several fall events planned. We hosted our first Professional Development Lunch (PDL) on September 12, 2012 and it was a huge success! Attendees heard from our esteemed panelists Patrick Driscoll (Deputy State's Attorney and Chief of the Civil Actions Bureau of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office), Gina Arquilla DeBoni (Managing Attorney at Romanucci & Blandin) and Tom Fahey (Managing Partner at Ungaretti & Harris). YLD member Matthew Coleman moderated the program titled, "Getting Your Foot in the Door" and panelists answered questions on how law students and young attorneys can get jobs in their chosen field and try to change fields if they are working in a practice area that is no longer desirable for their chosen career path. The YLD is very grateful for the time and efforts of the panelists of our September 12, 2012 PDL.

Our second PDL, "Taking Charge of your Career," was held on October 9, 2012. Panelists for October's PDL were Paula Holderman (Chief Attorney Development Manager at Winston & Strawn and President-Elect of the Illinois State Bar Association), Mary Sabatino (Managing Partner at the St. Louis office of Wiedner & McAuliffe) and Shawn Kasserman (Partner at Corboy & Demetrio). This program

was an extension of our first PDL, and focused on the issues of how attorneys can advance their careers through networking, leadership roles and extra effort at their law firms. The cost of each PDL is \$10 and includes a box lunch.

At the end of October, the YLD will volunteer at the Chicago Food Depository. We are very excited that ISBA President John Thies, and his wife Terry Thies (Chair of ISBA's Lawyers Feeding Illinois Committee) will volunteer with us as well. The YLD is always looking for public service opportunities as well as opportunities to collaborate with bar associations on public service projects. Please contact me at mobrien@ridgeassoc.com if you are aware of any public service projects that are in need of volunteers.

Although it is hard to believe, the holiday season is right around the corner. Mark your calendars for the YLD's 15th Annual Holiday Party that will be held at the Cubby Bear in Wrigleyville on December 7, 2012. More details about this event will be distributed in the upcoming weeks.

As always, if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at mobrien@ridgeassoc.com. ■

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Young lawyers as entrepreneurs: A conversation with Paul Richardson, JD, founder of Law Blog Writers, LLC

By Allan Niemerg

Continuing our series on young attorneys as entrepreneurs, in this issue we talk with young attorney Paul Richardson (Loyola '11) the founder of Law Blog Writers, LLC.

YLD: What is your business and how does it work?

Paul: Law Blog Writers, LLC is a legal content writing firm. We produce written material that law firms (and some SEO companies) use on Web sites, blogs, and articles published online.

The business is based on the need to share informative, interesting, and useful information about the law to the public, and the fact that sharing this information is one of the best marketing tools a firm can employ.

We are hired by law firms, Web site companies catering to attorneys, and search engine optimization professionals to write copy that is used by the firms in various ways. As our name implies, blog posts are our "bread and butter." But as the business has grown we've expanded into copy for law firm Web sites, articles, pamphlets, and more.

What was your inspiration?

While in graduate school I stumbled upon a few of the more popular business/lifestyle design books—"The Four Hour Work Week," "The 80-20 Principle"—and first began thinking about starting a business. I also read a lot about "positive psychology" (the study of happiness—"Flow,"—and knew that I did not want to end up doing something every day that I did not actually enjoy.

My first venture, during law school, involved compiling classic American texts (i.e., Paine's *Common Sense*), converting them into electronic documents, and writing reading guides on the material. After selling a total of 20 subscriptions for \$19.95 over the course of a year, I decided the idea was not going to have long legs.

At the same time I came across a Craigslist Ad for part-time work helping a Chicago personal injury firm with online writing. It is a terrific firm with wonderful people, and I truly enjoyed the work.

I was still writing for the firm as graduation neared, and, like everyone in my class, was

racking my brain to figure out how I would make the first student loan payment in a few months. It wasn't long before I decided that I might as well try to take my current part-time job and make it more substantial.

What did it take to get started and who helped?

I had virtually no money. But I also had few obligations (other than looming loan payments), and so I was able to take the time to learn what I didn't know about the whole process. I did a bit of market research to see what was out there, but I consciously avoided getting mired in the trap of business plan treatises and the like. I knew that I could prepare forever if I let myself.

There wasn't much more to it: I built a Web site and started trying to get clients. I spent a total of \$29.95 (on a "premium" Web site building tool) before landing my first client.

What are some of the challenges you face?

Far and away the biggest challenges relate to bringing on other people to help in the business. It wasn't until I was knee-deep that I realized that the most important thing I could do, long-term, was ensure the people I hired had the ability and training to do what I felt needed to be done. That is especially true for this business, because it involves writing—a creative task that is inherently different for everyone.

Beyond that, getting a system in place to make the business scalable is tough. The logistics are never that simple. All of this is made infinitely more difficult when employees get sick, take other opportunities, or just

fail to do the work. I did not realize how difficult it is to make things seem smooth to the client while things were constantly changing internally.

How has your training as a lawyer helped you in starting the business?

My friend and mentor Rich Miller from The Capitol Fax often said, "Being a lawyer provides a back-stage pass to America." I didn't really appreciate what he meant until recently. There is such a fear around administrative or business issues among the public—so many details seem complex and many avoid them. But as a lawyer your whole job is to simplify that complexity and understand the potential ramifications of conflict and disagreement. In other words, I was far less intimidated by starting a business after going through law school, because we've already thought through the worst case scenario.

On top of that, the legal training is all about figuring out how to find information about things you don't know. That made all of the "formal" aspects of the entrepreneurship thing quite easy.

Any words of advice or encouragement for other young lawyers considering starting their own business?

Don't over-think everything or dwell on the potential downsides.

99% of people will never even try, which makes it far easier for those who at least give it a shot.

Virtually no mistake is permanent. Life is too short and the potential upside is too high to risk it.

At the end of the day, we have to be honest with ourselves: Are you genuinely happy doing what you are doing right now? If not, there are few reasons to stay stagnant.

We already spent three years at law school, suffered through the bar, and paid the tuition. Nothing will change that, and staying in a legal position that you do not like so that it all wasn't a waste serves no purpose. ■

Paul is a 2011 graduate of Loyola University of Chicago School of Law. He can be reached directly at paul@lawblogwriters.com, by phone at (202) 505 - BLOG (2564), or at www.LawBlogWriters.com.

Professional Development Series

By Jessica Durkin

The YLD has developed a new series of professional development luncheons under the direction of YLD Chair Meghan O'Brien. These lunches were created to aid law students and young lawyers in advancing their careers. Each luncheon will consist of a panel of three to four attorneys answering a variety of questions on topics that are important to lawyers at the beginning stages of their careers.

The first luncheon, titled "Getting Your Foot in Door," took place on September 12, 2012 with approximately 60 registered attendees. Three attorneys who are responsible for hiring attorneys at their various practices answered a series of questions from the moderator about getting a job in the legal profession, whether it was one's first job ever or a

new job in a different area of law. The panel consisted of health law attorney Tom Fahey of Ungaretti & Harris, plaintiff's personal injury attorney, Gina DeBoni of Romannucci Blandin, and Cook County State's Attorney Pat Driscoll. Along with answering the moderator's questions about how to spruce up one's resume and how to stand out in an interview, the panel also took time to answer audience questions including how to transition from a non-legal career to a legal career and what are "good" questions to ask an interviewer.

The next luncheon in the four-part series was titled "Taking Charge of Your Legal Career," and took place on Tuesday, October 9 at the ISBA's Chicago Office. The panelists for this event were Shawn Kasserman, a partner at Corboy & Demetrio, Mary Sabatino,

a partner at Wiedner & McCauliff, and ISBA's President-Elect, Paula Holderman, the Chief Attorney Development Office at Winston & Strawn. These panelists discussed how to take your career to the next level through developing business and networking. The remaining two professional development lunches are scheduled for January 9, 2013 and March 13, 2013. The third luncheon will feature panelists discussing careers in the judiciary, and the fourth luncheon panel will tackle the topic of alternative legal careers.

If anyone has questions regarding the Professional Development Luncheon Series, they can contact the Co-Chairs of the committee: Matt Coleman at mcoleman@ridgeassoc.com; Jessica Durkin at jessica@mdr-law.com; or Heather Pfeffer, at hpfeffer@cassiday.com. ■

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Addressing underemployment and underrepresentation: One lawyer's thoughts on how to attack the problem

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profession, are market saturation concerns against the backdrop of the traditional practice of law. While this current traditional model is deemed unsustainable by many, few suggest or even consider alternative models that may help the legal profession thrive if young lawyers are given the opportunity to practice in less traditional roles.

The American legal system, despite what one might say about specific decisions handed down, is an excellent system for parties seeking a resolution to a dispute. There is always a definitive outcome, and each party is afforded ample opportunity to plead their case. However, the system assumes that all parties are afforded minimum access to the system and are able to be represented by competent counsel. Unfortunately, the fact remains that large numbers of people have historically had little or no access to legal representation. This issue will likely be exacerbated by the current financial state of new attorneys and the depressed potential and stability of the legal employment market. Newly installed ISBA President, John Thies has recognized this problem and has formed a special committee to address the issue, the Impact of Law School Debt on Delivery of Legal Services.

Among these difficult times of indebted, underemployed attorneys, there may be opportunities for the legal profession to address the issue of lack of representation to traditionally under-served populations while simultaneously assisting those expanding number of indebted, new attorneys. What currently exists is an excess of young lawyers handcuffed with debt and underemployment, and a demand for competent legal representation for those who cannot afford such representation. One suggested solution that attempts to address both of these issues simultaneously is the implementation of a loan obligation reduction program for performing pro bono legal work.

A loan obligation reduction plan for federally funded student loans would allow attorneys to reduce their student debt while providing legal services to the underrepresented. This program would afford young lawyers valuable time and experience actually practicing law by analyzing facts against legal theory, arguing motions and drafting appeals. This in turn would allow the young

attorneys to develop into productive professionals and make these young attorneys more marketable. At the same time, traditionally underrepresented segments will gain access to necessary legal representation, where typically none would be afforded.

This type of debt reduction program could be uniquely implemented and administered in the legal field as opposed to other professions because the mechanism for regulation already exists. Any attorney who has ever asked the court to include attorney's fees in an award understands that process. In this scenario, at the completion of a pro bono case, the representing attorney would ask the court to certify their reported time was reasonable considering the facts of the case. It would take submission of a court order to the federal loan administrator to apply a reduction amount.

Certainly, there are many details that would need to be worked out, such as whether there will be an economic qualifier for potential recipients of the work, whether students would be able to deduct from the

principle or merely the interest, what a reasonable rate might be, etc. However, there are numerous benefits that can be obtained through the implementation of such a program. Young and new attorneys have sacrificed to gain the knowledge necessary to practice law. They have put their professional careers on hold, forgone financial gain to incur debt, spent countless hours studying, and in some cases uprooting their families and lives, all for the opportunity to spend their productive years as advocates for others. Sometimes they have even been induced by artificially inflated numbers reporting employment and earning potential. A pro bono student loan reduction program would afford many the opportunity to do just that, while providing representation to those who have been historically shut out of the legal process. ■

George Petrilli has a B.A. in Economics from the University of Illinois and a J.D. from Southern Illinois University. He practices labor/employment law and general litigation in Springfield, IL and can be reached at gpetrilli1@gmail.com.

YLD Day at the Races a success

By Michael DiNatale

The Young Lawyers Division held its Day at the Races on September 22, 2012 at Arlington Park in Arlington Heights. The day started off cool with high winds, but by the time racing started the wind calmed and we were able to enjoy a sunny fall day. The event was attended by many members of the Young Lawyers Division, their significant others, children and guests. In addition to the excitement of the races, a few YLD children excitedly reported that they were allowed to pet some of the non-race horses during the day. This event was sold out, which included 50 adult tickets with children under 17 receiving complementary admission. The event continues to be an inexpensive opportunity to meet other young lawyers and mingle at the races.

Arlington Park once again was of great assistance in organizing our event and provided a beautiful setting for a day at the races. My Co-chair, George Schoenbeck, and

I extend our thanks to all of those who attended for making the event a success. ■



Co-Chairs Mike DiNatale and George Schoenbeck, along with Leonardo Schoenbeck, enjoyed the family fun at the YLD's Day at the Races on September 22, 2012.

Upcoming CLE programs

To register, go to www.isba.org/cle or call the ISBA registrar at 800-252-8908 or 217-525-1760.

November

Thursday, 11/1/12- Teleseminar—Business Succession and Estate Planning for Closely Held Business Owners, Part 1. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.

Thursday, 11/1/12- Bloomington, Holiday Inn and Suites—Real Estate Law Update- 2012. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 9-4:30.

Thursday, 11/1/12- Friday, 11/2/12- Champaign, U of I College of Law—Attorney Education in Child Custody and Visitation Matters in 2012 and Beyond. Presented by the ISBA Bench and Bar Section; co-sponsored by the ISBA Family Law Section and the ISBA Child Law Section. 12:30-5; 9-5.

Friday, 11/2/12- Teleseminar—Business Succession and Estate Planning for Closely Held Business Owners, Part 2. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.

Friday, 11/2/12- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Third Annual Great Lakes Antitrust Institute (viewing of Live Webcast). Presented by the ISBA Antitrust Section; co-sponsored by the Ohio State Bar Association, Indiana Continuing Legal Education Forum, and Pennsylvania Bar Institute. 8:25-5:00.

Monday, 11/5/12- Webinar—Introduction to Legal Research on FastCase. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association- Complimentary Training and CLE Credit for ISBA Members Only. 12-1.

Tuesday, 11/6/12- Teleseminar—Attorney Ethics in Digital Communications- Remote Networks, Smart Phones, the Cloud and More. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.

Wednesday, 11/7/12- Webinar—Introduction to Legal Research on FastCase. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association- Complimentary Training and CLE Credit for ISBA Members Only. 12-1.

Wednesday, 11/7/12- Chicago, ISBA Regional Office—Do You Buy or Merge? Pre-

sented by the ISBA Business and Securities Law. 9-12:30.

Wednesday, 11/7/12- Chicago, ISBA Regional Office—Fiduciary Risk and Ethical Challenges for Fiduciaries and Their Advisors. Presented by the ISBA Trust and Estates Section.

Wednesday, 11/7/12- LIVE Webcast—Fiduciary Risk and Ethical Challenges for Fiduciaries and Their Advisors. Presented by the ISBA Trust and Estates Section. 2-4.

Thursday, 11/8/12- Teleseminar—Real Estate Partnership/LLC Divorces. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.

Thursday, 11/8/12- Chicago, ISBA Regional Office—National Healthcare Reform and Its Effect on Illinois Employers and Health Insurance. Presented by the ISBA Health Care

Section. 1-4:30.

Thursday, 11/8/12- LIVE Webcast—National Healthcare Reform and Its Effect on Illinois Employers and Health Insurance. Presented by the ISBA Health Care Section. 1-4:30.

Friday, 11/9/12- Chicago, ISBA Regional Office—2012 Federal Tax Conference. Presented by the ISBA Federal Taxation Section. All day program.

Tuesday, 11/13/12-Teleseminar—UCC Article 9 Practice Toolkit: From Attachment to Remedies, Part 1. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1.

Wednesday, 11/14/12-Teleseminar—UCC Article 9 Practice Toolkit: From Attachment to Remedies, Part 2. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 12-1. ■

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