



By Shayna L. Sonnier

It's Holiday Time: Reflections and New Directions

For many, this is usually the time of year — end of the old year and start of the new one — for reflection and review of the past and (possibly) reassessment and re-direction for the future.

As I began my term in June, this is kind of the midway point for me, offering me time to review the first half of the year while eagerly planning for the second half.

In my President's Interview (published in the June/July 2023 *Louisiana Bar Journal*), I mentioned that one of my most important goals was to travel the state and meet more members and reconnect with colleagues and friends, with the intention of promoting all the benefits offered by the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) to as many members within earshot. I must report, I have done just that, attending local bar meetings, openings of court, general meet-and-greets . . . and I have not been disappointed anywhere. I do love to meet people, always eager to experience that personal connection and interaction. Mostly, I enjoy meeting our members to get constructive feedback and to learn how the Bar can improve its current programs or establish new projects to meet ongoing needs.

We have a strong and active Bar — with a variety of programs and projects



that help members at every stage of their practices, those just starting out, or those just ending — and this can only be made stronger with the participation of more of our members across the state. I have always known about our strengths, and I have been fortunate this year to experience them from the ground up.

During this first half of my term, I have had the wonderful opportunity to participate in some very special events.

Harrison Tweed Award

This past year, the LSBA received the 2023 Harrison Tweed Award, presented by the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defense and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. On Aug. 4, I had the pleasure of attending the award ceremony at the ABA Annual Meeting luncheon in Denver, Colo. Also, on hand for this important ceremo-

ny was LSBA Immediate Past President Steve Dwyer, under whose watch the award nomination process began, and we learned of this honor. Not only were Steve and I there to accept this award, but we were joined by President-Elect Patrick Talley, Jr. and Chief Justice John Weimer.

The LSBA was recognized for its creation of innovative Legal Help Access Points to significantly expand access to legal services in underserved areas of the state, identified as "civil legal resource deserts" or areas outside of a 45-minute drive to an in-person civil legal resource like a civil legal aid office, law library or self-represented litigant desk.

I was filled with pride to hear the LSBA's name announced, knowing that this was well-deserved recognition in the national spotlight for the innovation of our members, our Access to Justice

Department and the Access to Justice Commission. This doesn't end here, either. The Commission hopes to continue this work and establish additional access points throughout the state. Plans to improve access to justice in Louisiana will always be a focus for the LSBA.

Memorial Exercises

At the beginning of October, I had the distinct honor to participate in the Memorial Exercises at the Louisiana Supreme Court, recognizing all LSBA members who have passed away in the previous year. It was touching and moving and an opportunity to thank the families of those members for the sacrifices they, too, have made by having their loved ones always on call to help others in need.

Bar Admissions Ceremony and TIP

Then, later in October, I had the opportunity to participate in the Bar Admission Ceremony, celebrating the start of promising legal careers for hundreds of our future legal professionals and Bar leaders. The energy was high and the speakers' messages were insightful and inspiring.

Among the messages, the new admittees were informed about the LSBA's statewide Transition Into Practice (TIP) Mentoring Program. The program has been updated, featuring a new website, new benefits for mentees and more resources for mentors and mentees.

Mentees will now receive two years (25 hours) of CLE credit for completing the program and have access to exclusive professional development workshops for trust accounting, stress management, law practice management and lawyer advertising. And don't forget the \$200 in TIP Bucks upon completion of the program.

Mentors, we are not forgetting you. New mentors from all parishes, all fields and all practice types are always needed to expand the mentoring pool. Mentors receive 6 free hours of CLE credit for completing the program.

Young lawyers, seasoned lawyers and all lawyers in between can, and should, participate. Read more about TIP online at: www.lsba.org/mentoring.

What's on tap for the second half of my term? I am looking forward to the LSBA Midyear Meeting in January. One

of the stellar events at that meeting is the ceremony recognizing the Bar members who have been in practice for more than half a century. There is a lot of successful experience, energy and achievement contained in that one room and I look forward to personally greeting these legal professionals.

There, of course, will be more local bar meetings, meet-and-greets and other events. I will continue working toward achieving the Bar's overall goals contained in the Strategic Plan. Building on the current framework (begun and added to by every previous President) will allow the Bar to keep moving forward and offering a starting point for the next Bar President.

To close, of course, it's holiday time, whichever holiday you celebrate, whichever traditions are important to you and your family. I wish you and your families all the best during this holiday season and offer hope for a prosperous path leading into the future.

Shayna L. Lonnie



MENTORING

Experienced Lawyers Sharing Knowledge

As a young attorney, there will be many circumstances where you will find yourself faced with questions and difficulties. Without enough practice under your belt, you may not have the answers, or the resources, to find the solutions. The LSBA is here to help!

Spot mentoring is an episodic or on-demand mentoring program that allows eligible LSBA attorneys to initiate contact with a volunteer spot mentor on the numerous questions a lawyer out in the practice 2-7 years may encounter. Examples of questions you can post include issues about Career Development, Legal Practice Skills, Professionalism, Practice Development, Client Service/Management, or Family/Work Integration.

There is no need to register for the program. You are already eligible based on your years of admission. Just log into your LSBA account to get started!

www.lsba.org/mentoring