

Now that I have a full year under my belt as Executive Director, I want to thank everyone for their warm welcome and kindnesses (as well as their patience!) during what's been a very eventful year. I thought one way to highlight what your Vermont Bar Association has accomplished this past year would be to reinstitute the tradition of publishing a VBA Annual Report in conjunction with the Annual Meeting each Fall. I hope that you find it helpful. Please don't hesitate to let us know how we can best continue to assist you and your clients; we are at your service!

VBA Annual Report 2016-2017

It's been a pleasure to serve our more than 2,400 VBA members this year. VBA membership includes unlimited access to section activity through our new on-line communication platform "**VBA Connect.**" Developed in response to members' requests for the ability to archive and to search the invaluable information that's shared among section members, VBA Connect was implemented in early 2017. VBA Connect allows section members to control the frequency of received posts, and to easily search and retrieve whatever information has been shared in all communities to date. If you haven't yet experienced the benefits of VBA Connect, please call or e-mail the VBA office at any time for personal training. If you haven't yet provided a photo for your VBA Connect profile, we'll be offering free "head shots" at the Annual Meeting, which will be provided electronically to you for that purpose.

Thanks to the generosity of time and effort of so many lawyers and judges who are willing to share their expertise, the VBA was able to offer a full smorgasbord of **CLE Programs**. Over 2,300 of you attended 264 live programs and watched 482 digital programs this past year. Many thanks to the amazing VBA section chairs who organized CLEs during the year at the Annual Meeting held at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, at the Mid-Year Meeting held at the Equinox Resort in Manchester, at the Solo & Small Firm Conference held at Basin Harbor in Vergennes, or during the numerous stand-alone programs held throughout the state. Please don't hesitate to let us know what CLE programs you'd like to see offered, or if you'd like to present!

We're honored to work closely with all three branches of the Vermont Government, to ensure that your and your clients' interests are well-represented. Towards that end, we were pleased to host both a Gubernatorial Debate and an Attorney General Debate during the election season. We also coordinated "**Legislators' Days**" with the Judiciary in each of the fourteen counties throughout the Fall. County legislative delegations were invited to their local state courthouses to observe court hearings, and to meet with judicial officers and lawyer "ambassadors" from each division. Those events were followed by a Legislators' Reception in January and a Legislators' Breakfast in March that we hosted at the statehouse. The 2017 VBA Legislative Overview gives a summary of relevant legislation that was passed during the session, and is available on the VBA website. We're grateful that VBA Government Relations Coordinator Bob Paolini will continue in that role in the upcoming session. Many thanks also to the ambassadors, to the section chairs, and to members who offered invaluable testimony during the legislative session.

A new focus in the arena of public education was to encourage lawyer presentations in conjunction with **Constitution Day** in September. The VBA provided over 2,500 copies of "Pocket Constitutions" for lawyers and judges to distribute at presentations they gave to school and civic groups throughout the state. To kick off the project, an esteemed panel of five justices and judges as well as moderator VBA President Mike Kennedy presented a one-hour basic overview of the Constitution at the Chittenden County Courthouse last September; a link to the video of the presentation is on the VBA website.

Another presentation with a different (and equally impressive!) panel is on September 20 at the Vermont Supreme Court Building in Montpelier. The VBA is happy to provide these and other resources to whomever would like to make a presentation this year.

VBA Members have automatic access to **Casemaker**, a leading legal research services provider with intuitive search capabilities. Many enhancements have been added to Casemaker features, including the ability to cite-check scanned briefs. The website includes detailed information about the latest enhancements for your research pleasure.

We were pleased to offer the **First Annual Trial Academy** at the Vermont Law School in July. This day-long intensive trial practice program featured seven Vermont Supreme Court Justices and Vermont Superior Court Trial Judges, who ran seven different “courtrooms” throughout the day. They, and participating Vermont Fellows of the American College of Trial Lawyers, offered individual critiques of the 60 participants’ opening statements, direct and cross examinations, and closing statements. Members of the VBA Young Lawyers Division served as volunteer fact and expert witnesses, and VLS students served as timekeepers. Stay tuned for the Second Annual Trial Academy in the Summer of 2018!

Our Vermont **Lawyer Referral Service** continues to work well for clients in need of Vermont counsel, and for the 220 LRS panel member attorneys. This past year, the VBA fielded 6,835 calls, averaging 570 calls per month. Referrals brought revenues of \$93,500 to the VBA, representing 10% of fees earned by the LRS panel members. VBA business cards with the LRS 800 number, the VT Free Legal Answers website, and the “Modest Means” website were printed and distributed to all of the Vermont state courthouses, numerous public libraries, and many veteran centers throughout Vermont. If you’re not already an LRS member, consider joining for the low cost of \$70.00 per year!

Regarding Access to Justice initiatives, the VBA is grateful to the Vermont Bar Foundation for funding the eight different **County Bar Legal Assistance Projects**, which provided legal representation to over 200 low income Vermonters who would have otherwise been without legal assistance in their civil, probate and family cases. Participating lawyers also contributed a total of over 330 pro bono hours to the cases. If you would like to be added to the rosters of participating attorneys, please contact VBA Legal Access Coordinator Mary Ashcroft at mashcroft@vtbar.org.

Thank you to the many lawyers and law firms which contributed to another successful **Access to Justice Campaign**. Under the able co-chairmanship of Gary Karnedy and Rob McClellan, the Campaign raised over \$133,000 to fund Poverty Law Fellow Mairead Kennedy and the work she has undertaken regarding the opioid crisis, and to supplement the VBF competitive grant funds.

As always, we strive to bring you the latest membership products and services, as evidenced by the numerous sponsors and exhibitors at our major meetings, and as detailed in the “**Affinity Partners**” section on the website. Be sure to take advantage of the substantial discounts available for a wide variety of products and services, including consulting, credit card processing, practice management, health insurance, personal insurances, retirement, marketing software, professional liability insurance, rental cars, software training and shipping.

None of the above accomplishments would have been possible without the hard work and complete dedication of the **amazing VBA staff**. CFO Lisa Maxfield, Communications and Education Director Jennifer Emens-Butler, Programs Coordinator Laura Welcome, Legal Access Coordinator Mary Ashcroft,

Office Administrator Tami Baldwin and our newest member, LRS Coordinator Lalitha Mailwaganam, are tremendously skilled at their jobs, and work hard to bring as much value as possible to your membership dollar. I am indebted to them, as well as to the VBA Board of Managers for providing excellent leadership for your Vermont Bar Association.

Please know that we are all at your service, and appreciate whatever recommendations you might have to bring even more value to your VBA membership.