

UNDERTAKING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ASSOCIATION

During the past four years in which I have served as a member of the Executive Board of our great association, I have observed our Presidents as they led our Board of Directors through a quagmire of challenging issues, including the retirement of our long term Executive Director, the replacement of our caterer, a loss of funding for our outstanding Lawyer Assistance Program and the deterioration of the structure we lovingly call "Domus". But as Friedrich Nietzsche said "That which does not kill us makes us stronger."

And now, as I assume the reigns of leadership, our organization faces the daunting task of embarking upon a course of action necessary to preserve Domus for future generations of lawyers. As you might expect, there is significant expense inherently attached to the construction that will be needed, and the Board of Directors, in its wisdom, has authorized the borrowing of one and a half million dollars. And that is only enough money to pay for those repairs that are immediately necessary. More funds will need to be secured and expended over the next several years to ensure that our building is properly preserved and maintained.

At the same time, our Association, like most Bar Associations nationwide, faces the prospect of declining

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membership due, in great part, to the challenge faced by our law school graduates in securing employment.

A corollary to this issue has been a substantial decline in law school admissions as more and more potential members of our profession become discouraged by the reports of an over-saturated legal market.

I believe we are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that we continue to maintain both our historical building and to continue to add to the membership roster that allows us to boast that we are the largest suburban Bar Association in the United States.

This can be accomplished by building on the success of those parts of our organization that are our cornerstone, and by implementing new ideas and involving new members.

During his tenure as President, Past President Peter Mancuso recommended, and his Board approved a change in our bylaws which consolidated the positions of First and Second Vice President into one office. This change removed a year of service by anyone considering the road to the Presidency of this organization.

The immediate practical effect is that I become the first President to serve without a new addition to the Executive Board. While the downside of this is the loss of a fresh perspective at Executive Board meetings, the upside is a talented and seasoned Executive Board that is totally dedicated to the success of our Association.

President-Elect Martha Kriesel, an incredible advocate for all of our Access for Justice programs, has spearheaded pro bono programs that have garnered national recognition for our Association. She is currently coordinating a pilot program that would potentially return screening for appointment of counsel for indigent litigants.

Vice President Steve Leventhal utilizes his municipal law background and his broad experience in ethics

to provide the Executive Board with a unique perspective.

Treasurer Elena Karabatos, also currently serving as the President of the New York Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, contributes a common sense, no nonsense attitude that keeps us focused.

And last but not least, Secretary, Rick Collins, a nationally recognized criminal defense attorney, continues in the tradition of his law firm in its continuing commitment to provide our Association with outstanding leadership.

Most importantly, however, is that the bylaws provide that the Immediate Past President, John McEntee, will continue to serve as a member of the Executive Board. John's outstanding leadership in this past year navigated our Association through some challenging times with great success. With the help of Justice Peter Skelos, we were able to obtain the funding needed to maintain the Lawyers Assistance Program,

a vital service to lawyers in need that operates under the auspices of our Association. Past President John never wavered in his support of this program and his commitment to ensure its funding.

Additionally, John steered the Board through the difficult process of hiring the appropriate professionals to identify the structural and mechanical deficiencies existing in the building we lovingly refer to as "Domus". He then guided the Board through the process of earmarking the repairs that needed to be immediately addressed as well as those that will need to be tackled over the years ahead. Finally, John and his law firm helped the Association secure the financing necessary to preserve our structure. I would be remiss if I did not thank John's partners at Farrell Fritz for the countless hours of billable time they donated to our Association during John's tenure.

It is my goal during my year as your President to do everything possible to sustain our great organization for future generations. In order to accomplish this, we will need to redouble our efforts to raise funds to enable us to retire our debt on an expedited basis. I have asked Past President Christopher McGrath to chair a task force to address this issue. He has graciously accepted.

I am also a firm believer that a collegial relationship between the Bench and the Bar, which our Association fosters, is integral to our continued success, and that it is critical for the continued growth and health of our Association to strengthen the relationship between the newer practitioners and the Bench. This will both engender a better understanding between the younger members as to what the Court expects, while simultaneously promoting a dialogue between the young lawyers and the Judges in a relaxed atmosphere.

To this end, Justice Jeffrey Goodstein, sitting in the Supreme Court, Matrimonial Center, and Andrea Brodie, immediate past Chair of our Young Lawyers Committee, have agreed to serve as the Co-Chairs of a task force designated to explore the most effective avenue to address the needs of our young lawyers and ensure their continued involvement which is so critical to the sustained health of our association.

During the coming year, I hope to successfully continue all of the existing programs, clinics and Continuing Legal Education classes, (under the guidance of our Dean, Mary Ann Aiello) which have long been the hallmark of success of our Association. We have an outstanding group of committee chairs and a dedicated Board of Directors who have all volunteered their time. We all look forward to serving during the coming year, and I personally thank all of the members of this great organization for placing their faith in me to serve as the 113th President of the Nassau County Bar Association.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

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