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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN MONTANA BAR ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2015

President's Message by David Steele:

Kids These Days. . .

Many of you know that I am not only a lawyer, but also a father. I often discuss the role of lawyers in our society, and the honor and burden of responsibility associated with our profession. Of course, those of you with children know that those responsibilities pale in comparison to the responsibility associated with raising a child. I believe this is true, because a parent is not only charged with maintaining the health and welfare of the child. Parents are also charged with doing their best to teach their children about society, and ultimately, to prepare their children to venture out on their own as educated and productive members of our community. These responsibilities are nothing less than daunting. Fortunately, we parents are not alone. After all, we know it takes a village to raise a child. With this month's message, I would like to blend the role of lawyer and parent, and motivate you to help raise all our kids in the villages here in Western Montana.

The area of knowledge and experience in which I think our kids need help, is in an area with which lawyers are particularly knowledgeable and well prepared to assist: Civics. The American Bar Association has conducted surveys which show that about half, or even two thirds of Americans are unable to identify the

three branches of government. One ABA survey in 2005 showed that only 57% of Americans could identify any Supreme Court justice. The 2010 data compiled by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed only 27% of fourth-graders were proficient in civics. Only 24% of 12th graders were proficient, and only 22% of eighth-graders were proficient in civics. Currently more federal funding is budgeted toward math, science and engineering in our public schools under the No Child Left Behind Act, and now federal STEM programs. Because those federal funds are limited, social studies and civics programs are often left to suffer. This should be of concern. The data presented above seem to point to a basic lack



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of understanding among our citizens about what a democracy is and how it is supposed to work. If you think this doesn't affect you, carefully consider that these kids will be running the show when you are in retirement. That's right...take a moment to reflect on that thought.

Here is where your unique knowledge as a lawyer can help. Consider taking some time to teach our kids about civics. Teach them about our government and how it functions. Teach them about how the three branches of government interact. Teach them about our courts and the judicial process. Teach them about how laws are made. Lawyers are in a unique position to help teach our kids about what a democracy is and how it is supposed to work. I would submit the information we can impart upon our youth will be much more useful than the increasingly opinionated news reporting, whether being spewed from the left or from the right.

Finally, please don't regard these comments as a negative reflection upon our fine local schools and teachers. These dedicated folks work really hard, just like you and I. The fact is, they are faced with a political and economic reality, just like every other school system across America. The funding and testing are most often directed at subjects other than the subject which forms the very basis of our democracy: civics. But, as I understand, our local public and private schools are eager to have attorneys participate in programs that teach our youth about civics. Reach out to a local middle-school or high-school principal or school director. If you have children, perhaps you know some of their teachers. Ask them how you can be involved. It just takes a phone call. And if you need more motivation than basking in the good feelings that come with unconditional benevolence, recall that these kids will one day be in charge.

Join the WMBA next Thursday, March 19, 2015 for a presentation on Legal Incubators.*

Over the last decade, law firm incubator and residency programs have emerged as models that enable newly-admitted lawyers to acquire the range of skills necessary to launch successful practices. Recent changes in the economy have led to the creation of similar models by both law schools and bar associations and have expanded to include models that advance access to justice for low to moderate income clients. Join Montana Justice Foundation Executive Director, Amy Sings In The Timber, for this WMBA sponsored CLE presentation to learn about legal incubators and residencies and how they are working to expand access to justice.

Please RSVP to rsvp@westernmtbar.com

WMBA luncheons are the Third Thursday of each month at 12:00 noon in the Florence Building. \$15 for WMBA members; \$20 for non-members.

*** 1 CLE credit pending.**

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mark your calendar for Friday, April 10, 2015, for the WMBA's First Annual "Grace Period CLE" which will be kicked off by a luncheon celebrating soon to be retired Judge McLean.

Lunch will start at 11:45 in the Florence building, with a host of friends and colleagues toasting the work of Judge McLean. Following the luncheon, the WMBA will put on a CLE presentation including a panel presentation with Chief Justice McGrath, Justice Cotter and Justice Baker. Rounding out the afternoon will be a presentation on Orders of Protection by Amy Rubin and Brandi Ries.

\$60 members/\$70 non-members
3 CLE credits pending
RSVP to rsvp@westernmtbar.com



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EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

**We are proud to announce that the WMBA has
a brand new website:**

www.westernmtbar.com

Please take a moment to visit the site and learn about the board, upcoming events, and more. All board members' contact information can be found under the About Us page, and they can be reached by simply clicking on their email address. Please note that all officers have new email addresses.

All RSVPs to our monthly luncheons or other events should be made using the super convenient RSVP button on our homepage.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, QUESTIONS, ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:

De Die In Diem is published monthly by the Western Montana Bar Association. It is designed and edited by WMBA secretary, Hannah Stone, in conjunction with the WMBA board. For announcements, questions and advertising inquiries contact Hannah Stone at secretary@westernmtbar.com. The WMBA is not responsible for the content of any announcement or advertisement. The WMBA does not support or oppose any candidate for public office or public official. For advertisements and announcements please provide at least one week advanced notice. Thank you.