



Association Address / Phone: 1 Lodge St., Albany, New York 12207; 518- 445-7691

Web site: www.albanycountybar.com

Founded: 1900

Number of Members: 1,400

Brief Association Vision: To promote professional collegiality among the bench and bar; facilitate public service and access to justice for all; and offer programs, benefits and services to enhance the skills of its members.

Brief History: Our association is over 100 years old and has evolved with the changes in the law. We have had many outstanding women presidents, dating back to 1988. Margrethe Powers, our first woman president, was a partner in the first law firm founded by women, Powers & Katz. She also was a founding member of the Capital District Women's Bar Association.

Our first president was William P. Rudd. He was elected to state Supreme Court in 1910 and served for 14 years. Justice Rudd prepared the details for the design of the court rooms in the Albany County Courthouse. He was president of the board of trustees of Albany Law School and was instrumental in obtaining a new building, which the law school continues to occupy today. Justice Rudd also served as president of the Albany Chamber of Commerce and was involved in improving the city's public library system.

Over the years, we have fostered a statewide reputation as a friendly and courteous place to practice law, not just for the benefit of our members, but for visiting attorneys and judges. This is certainly a testament to our success in cherishing the spirit of congeniality among lawyers.

Where is your association's favorite meeting location? Jack's Oyster House on State Street in downtown Albany. We also use the meeting facilities at the Albany Marriott, just west of the downtown area.

What is your most popular outing / social event? The association's Court of Appeals Dinner, held each February, is by far our most well-attended program. This is a black-tie event that honors the judges of the state's Court of Appeals. The dinner draws a diverse number of members and guests. At the dinner, the association recognizes those within the profession who have provided extraordinary service to the public and community.

What is the most pressing concern regarding the legal profession? It is law school graduates not finding employment and leaving law school with enormous outstanding debt. With sharp declines in employment opportunities, especially within state and municipal governments, bar associations should find ways to assist attorneys with their job searches. We sponsor mentor programs (described below), meet-and-greet events and other networking opportunities that connect lawyers with potential employers. Bar association membership is a good start toward making those connections.

What is your association's goal for next month? Next year? Our immediate goal is to hire a part-time attorney to help enhance the services of our pro bono program. Next year, we hope to expand our pro bono program by part-



Presidential celebration—Past presidents of the Albany County Bar Association gather at the ACBA's Annual Court of Appeals Dinner in February. Pictured left to right are Bob Schofield, immediate past president; Patrick Higgins; Hon. Mae D'Agostino; Barbara Davis, executive director; Daniel Santola; Hon. Cathryn Doyle; Michael Friedman; Elena DeFio Kean; Jim Kelly; Susan Picotte; Hon. Gerard Maney; David Miranda and Jim Potter.

nering with Albany Law School to help implement the Chief Judge's new 50-hour mandatory pro bono rule for new attorneys. Also, the part-time attorney will enable us to have a presence in the family and city courts. As the poverty level in our area has risen, so has the need for legal services.

What are your association's most important current projects / initiatives? We want to offer more continuing legal education (CLE) programs and make more of them web-based. Also, we plan to increase our mentor program. The mentor program not only benefits the younger attorney, but also provides the senior attorney with an opportunity to contribute to the profession. Also, we offer free CLE programs to attorneys who are willing to do pro bono for us. This increases our program and provides for more access to justice for clients who cannot afford an attorney.

If your association had no budget restrictions, what project / initiative would you first take on? We would like to help Albany Law School students fulfill their 50-hour mandatory pro bono requirement. We would do this by hiring an administrator to oversee the program and make sure the process is well documented.

How has your membership over the years helped to improve your association? Our members have been very involved in our relatively new committees, such as the Small and Solo Practitioner and Animal Law committees and the newly formed Public Service Committee. These committees have contributed to our growth as an association by addressing issues within these areas of the profession. ♦

The Bar Around The Corner is a project of the New York State Conference of Bar Leaders, www.nyscbl.org.