

# mba | Young Lawyers Section

## What is the YLS?

An inclusive section of the bar, which includes any MBA member in practice less than six years or under the age of 36. The YLS provides leadership, networking, professional development and service opportunities. And we have fun!

## Ask the Expert

Dear Expert,  
I am a new attorney who has just passed the bar and I am unsure about what area of law in which I want to practice. It seems all of my classmates know exactly what they want to do, and I just don't. I feel like I need to make a decision now as I search for a job. How do I decide on a particular area of law?  
-Unsure

Dear Unsure,

Cast your fears aside! It may seem that your friends all know exactly what they want to do, but rest assured that many of them are just as uncertain as you are. New graduates often lack the experience and knowledge to make an informed decision about what area of practice would be a best fit for them. Many of your friends are likely basing their decisions on what classes they enjoyed in law school, rather than any significant practical experience in that field. It is perfectly okay, and actually quite normal, to not yet know the practice area on which you would like to focus.

Furthermore, you should not feel pressured to corner yourself into a highly specialized area

early in your career. Many young lawyers who do so quickly find themselves disappointed by the difference between what they thought their job would be like, and the reality of what it is. Also, narrowing your practice area too early makes it difficult to transition out of that practice area in the future should you decide you would rather practice in another area. Lastly, it can be difficult to find a job in a highly specialized area early in your career. There are far fewer of these types of jobs available and they are often absorbed by attorneys with more experience.

If you are unsure what area you want to focus on, do not be afraid to seek out positions with general practice firms. You will learn many of the basic skills you need as a lawyer at a general practice firm, while also gaining exposure to different areas of practice. You may find that you eventually discover a practice area that best suits you, or you may wish to continue in a general practice. Everyone's career path is different and you should never feel pressured to make your path match someone else's. Good luck!

## mba yls | EVENT

### YLS Drop-in Social and Toy Drive

Lucky Labrador Tap Room  
1700 N. Killingsworth, Portland  
Wednesday, December 14  
6:30-8 p.m.

This annual event has been revamped as a family-friendly social. Celebrate the season and mingle with colleagues, family, and friends. Please bring a new, unwrapped toy for Toys for Tots and help bring holiday cheer to children in our area. No RSVP necessary.



If you would like to collect toys at your firm, please email Shannon West at [shannon@mbabar.org](mailto:shannon@mbabar.org).

## Jason Pierson YLS Member Spotlight

by Tom Adams  
YLS Board

Jason Pierson is one of our community's rising stars who owes part of his success to his involvement in the MBA. Jason joined the MBA when he was still a law student at University of Oregon. He became a liaison between the YLS Board and the law school, and joined the YLS Pro Bono Committee. His involvement has only increased since he passed the bar. Still on the Pro Bono Committee, he is now the lead organizer for the Wills for Heroes clinics, and is attempting to increase the number of clinics each year. Wills for Heroes is a YLS pro bono event in which young lawyers provide wills for police,

paramedics, fire fighters and other first responders and their spouses.

Jason came to Oregon for law school after being raised in Illinois and working in Michigan, the Cayman Islands, Alaska and Nevada. He was a paralegal in Las Vegas for eight years, where his coworkers convinced him that he was lawyer material. Jason was inspired to practice juvenile law by Professor Leslie Harris, who was his faculty advisor for his Oregon Child Advocacy Project fellowship at University of Oregon.

Jason decided to bring his passion for child advocacy to the family law context, and he is currently an associate attorney at

Landerholm Law. Jason's practice focuses on protecting the interests of children who too often become marginalized in custody disputes, and, only one year since passing the bar, he has already handled multiple high-profile custody disputes.

Jason spends his free time gardening, hiking, and exploring new restaurants in the Portland area. "After living in Las Vegas," says Jason, "the green of Oregon lifts my spirits." He takes inspiration from the Dr. Seuss quote: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose."

Jason has proved this by ending up in Oregon and so quickly becoming a successful attorney, volunteer, and member of his community.

## ABA Young Lawyers Division Fall Conference Highlights

by Shayda Zaerpoor Le  
YLS Secretary



As the MBA Young Lawyers Section Delegate to the ABA, I recently had the opportunity to attend the ABA Young Lawyers Division (YLD) Fall Conference, which took place in Detroit, Michigan. The YLD holds four conferences a year, two of which (mid-year and annual) line up with the big ABA. Fall and spring conferences are held separately, so they're a great opportunity for new and young lawyers to meet others from around the country who are similarly situated in practice experience and career development.

**Legal Education:** One of the highlights of the conference is the variety in programming, all of which is targeted toward lawyers who are young(ish) or new(ish) in the practice. This quarter's lineup consisted of topics such as: the Anatomy of a Solo/Small Firm; Justice for Flint; Ethics and the Interplay Between the Judicial System and the Media; Gender Identity, Title IX and K-12 Education; Data Breaches and Cyber Security; Emerging Security, Economic and Legal Challenges to Airport Security; Lessons from Detroit: Municipal Bankruptcy and its Implications on City and Local Government Operations; Women in Politics and Leadership; Prosecutorial Discretion in the Wake of Public Outcry; LGBT Family Law Considerations and Practice Tips; and Work-Life

Management. There's something for everyone, regardless of practice area.

**Public Service:** Consistent with the Division's focus on public service, each conference provides an opportunity for attendees to participate in a service event in the local community. The *Dare to Dream* event was held with local middle school students and consisted of a vision-boarding program with the children, led by lawyers in small groups. At Wayne State University School of Law, a panel discussion was held, entitled *What Do Lawyers Do*, which educated prospective law students on preparation for law school, the law school experience, and different career paths available to law school graduates. Panelists ranged from practicing attorneys, including a legal aid lawyer, to a judge, to the University's Director of Career Services.

**Leadership and Career Development:** Each conference focuses attention on different components of leadership development and career growth. In particular, this year's YLD Chair has developed a theme for the bar year focused on relationships, relevance, and resilience with specific emphasis on personal development and professional advancement. Attendees were able to learn about effective messaging as well as practice developing a targeted "elevator pitch," and participate in a workshop on leveraging personality types to lead more effectively, which included a focus on how leadership styles may change in the gradual transition from associate to partner. The YLD leadership also met for the Council Meeting to discuss division status reports, including an update on Disaster Legal Services organized by young lawyers throughout the country, initiatives focused on increasing diversity in the legal profession,

as well as a special presentation on the law and impact on disparaging trademarks, with a focus on social justice, First Amendment considerations, and the Lanham Act.

**Networking:** In recognition of the importance of networking and relationship building at all stages of career development, each conference provides ample opportunities for networking: from the first time attendee orientation, to speed networking, to the welcome reception, and the dinner events. The fall and spring conferences also provide an amazing experience called the *Affiliate Showcase*, in which YLD affiliates throughout the country (such as our own MBA YLS and Oregon New Lawyers Division) host a booth and provide materials and a quick presentation on programs that have been successfully implemented in their areas. What is especially significant about this event is that the showcase is focused on providing tools and materials to allow other affiliates to take these projects and implement them in their own areas. The range of projects and initiatives is as varied as the attendees themselves: from teaching constitutional rights to school-age children, to Native American law school recruitment, to bringing community members together with policing agencies, to human trafficking awareness, to training new lawyers on children's immigration issues (thanks to Oregon's own ONLD).

For those looking for that small push to get more involved locally, the MBA YLS offers numerous opportunities to meaningfully participate in local initiatives and ABA programs through committees, events, and targeted projects. In addition, the ABA mid-year conference will be in Miami, Florida from February 1-7 and registration is now open on the ABA website. I encourage young lawyers in our area to consider attending, and I invite you to reach out to me if you have questions about opportunities to get more involved with the YLS or the ABA YLD.