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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN MONTANA BAR ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2014

President's Message by David Steele:

On collegiality, and an Invitation...

I was recently reminded how lucky we are to practice law in western Montana. While our local bar is very small by national standards, there seems to be a corresponding comradery and collegiality perhaps not commonly found in larger legal communities. After all, there are a couple of law firms in the larger coastal areas having twice as many lawyers than in our entire membership area of Missoula, Ravalli and Mineral Counties. As I have mentioned before, I am interested in knowing as many members of our local bar as possible. There remain many folks I'd like to meet. But wouldn't it be strange to work in a law firm with a few thousand attorneys, not knowing or interacting with those up on the fortieth floor, or those over in Singapore?

What reminded me of our local bar's collegiality was an interaction I had with another local attorney. I was preparing for a site visit to a property which was the subject of a dispute between our clients. I received a phone call the day prior, and opposing counsel asked if we could perhaps share a ride to the property location. I had worked with this particular attorney on a few different cases, and so I agreed. Of course, I called my client ahead of time to give her a heads-up that opposing counsel and I would be arriving together. In the same car. And

that we would probably be smiling, and maybe even laughing when we arrived.

I implored my client to not be alarmed at such conduct, and explained that our local bar is quite small, and that opposing counsel and I had worked together before, and that we will work together again. I further explained that, contrary to so many TV shows holding out attorney characters as "bull dogs" and the like, that most lawyers worth their salt don't actually behave like those TV characters. I also explained our comradery and collegial relationship would likely work to her benefit, and to the benefit of opposing counsel's client too.

Without getting into what was actually dis-



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cussed in the car, I can report that we did in fact share some laughs. We also talked about the case. And we did reach a resolution which was beneficial and fair to both clients, without crushing our clients with attorneys' fees.

I have since spoken of this interaction with other local lawyers, and many report having similar relationships with their colleagues. One local attorney described how she and a frequent opposing counsel have actually shared rides to Helena or Great Falls to appear at a contested hearing or trial. She explained that she and her opposing counsel have developed a relationship where each is able to recognize that the dispute they are trying to resolve is actually between their clients. While each lawyer certainly does his or her best to represent the client's interests, that advocacy does not negatively affect their professional relationship. I would imagine that, like my professional relationship with the op-

posing counsel above, it actually enhances what each lawyer is able to achieve for his or her client.

Of course, I'm certainly not the first to recognize the great professional environment in which we all practice. I haven't been practicing very long, and I am a beneficiary of the comradery and collegiality which was already established in our local bar by more senior members, many of whom still practice here. Hence, I suspect you are already well aware that the fight is between your client and the opposing party, and not between lawyers. I am also quite certain that you already treat opposing counsel with respect, and work toward developing and fostering a collegial relationship with your colleagues. If you're not interested in comradery or these collegial relations... well... you might consider LA or DC; I understand that with the fall of "big law," there might be some office space available on the fortieth floor, or maybe in Singapore.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Join the WMBA on Thursday, October 16, 2014, for the first luncheon of the new session. Justice of the Peace Candidates Marie Andersen and Matthew Lowy will be speaking and offering a question and answer session.

Please RSVP to westernmtbar@gmail.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.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Western Montana Bar Association is Going Digital!

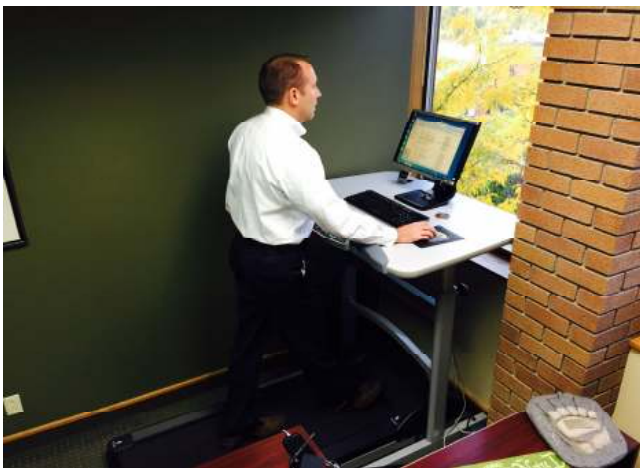
As our members know, as the times change so does technology. The WMBA is proud to announce that our members will soon be able to access us online, to review upcoming CLEs, read the newsletter, contact board members, and more. Look for more information in future newsletters, including our domain name and new email accounts.

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Scott Stearns, Boone Karlberg P.C.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Look for these upcoming Luncheon Speakers:

* November 20, 2014: *Ethics of Legal Outsourcing* presented by Wilton Strickland, 1 ethics CLE pending

* January 15, 2015: *Federal Court Update* presented by Hon. Dana Christensen, 1 CLE pending

**Please review the WMBA newsletter for confirmation of each month's speakers, as scheduling may change*

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Western Montana Bar Association
Membership Registration
2014-2015

The WMBA is now accepting applications and payment for the 2014-2015 membership year. The cost is \$25.00 per attorney for full membership in the WMBA from September 1, 2014 to August 31, 2015. Please complete the following form and return it to:

WMBA Treasurer
P.O. Box 7451
Missoula, MT 59807-7451

(Please print or type:)

Name: _____ x \$25.00

Firm: _____

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