

The Young Lawyers Committee

By Stephanie M. Wurdock

“Adaptability is about the powerful difference between adapting to cope and adapting to win.”

—Max McKeown



■ Stephanie Wurdock, the 2014 Kentucky Defense Counsel, Inc. Young Lawyer of the Year, is a litigator who defends healthcare providers against claims of negligent care, wrongful death, and violations of resident's rights. She also speaks and publishes regularly about legal developments affecting the healthcare community. Ms. Wurdock is chair of the DRI Young Lawyers Committee.

Rising to the Challenge in 2021



For those of you I haven't had the good fortune to meet yet, my name is Stephanie Wurdock, and I am the Chair of the DRI Young Lawyers Committee. I am a ninth-year attorney at Sturgil Turner Barker and Moloney PLLC

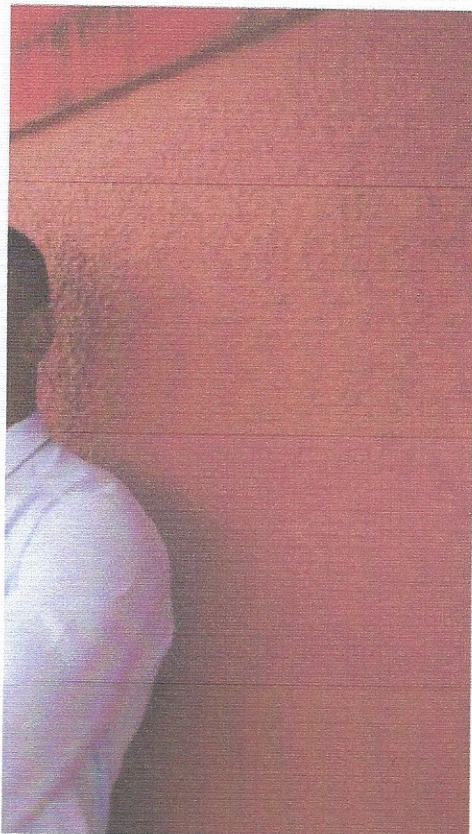
in Lexington, Kentucky, where I practice medical malpractice defense with a smattering of general/premises liability mixed in.

I have been actively involved in the “YLC” for the past five years. This committee has shaped my identity as a lawyer and provided the tools necessary to thrive in my practice. I cannot fathom navigat-

ing challenges of modern day law practice without the relationships developed and the resources available through the YLC.

I know many of you feel the same way, and that is why I am so committed to ensuring that 2021 is every bit as productive and valuable as in years past—even if COVID means things will look a little different. But before we talk about what this year will look like, I'd like to reflect on some of the incredible things we accomplished together last year.

Real talk: 2020 was a complete dumpster fire in many respects. However, despite the complete curveball we were thrown, the YLC was flexible and resilient, rising



to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic instead of throwing up its collective hands and giving up.

When our in-person Young Lawyers Seminar was cancelled, we put on multiple virtual events in June 2020 in order to provide networking, community, and support to our quarantined membership. The YLC also hosted a virtual "mini-mar" in September, providing several hours of quality CLE programming and networking *for free*. Both of these efforts were wildly successful, engaging hundreds of young lawyers nationwide and keeping morale high when many were feeling low.

With the safety and budgetary restrictions on travel, I know it will be difficult for many young lawyers to attend in-person events in 2021 and beyond. The 2020 Mini-Mar was just the beginning of what we hope will be a big increase in virtual/online learning and networking to provide young lawyers incredible value at a reasonable cost.

So now let's shift our focus to the future. What can you expect from the YLC in 2021? The short answer: MORE. More programming, more opportunities, more connection, and more resources. We plan to offer extensive online programming and virtual networking opportunities throughout the year to meet your CLE and career development needs, while also putting on our flagship Young Lawyers Seminar in June 2021.

Here are some shiny new things you can look for this year:

- A virtual community for YLC corporate counsel;
- A diversity book/movie club;
- Wellness challenges (with prizes!);
- Virtual coffee breaks and brown bag lunches;
- Reporting on interesting new ethics opinions from different jurisdictions;
- Multiple online webinars geared toward young lawyers;
- A plan to help you transition involvement from the YLC to DRI's other wonderful SLCs; and
- A *Working Parents Task Force* will provide training and resources to help working parents balance the load.

This year, we also intend to increase our work in the area of diversity and inclusion. We have already involved our YLC Diversity & Inclusion Subcommittee heavily in the seminar planning process in order to ensure a diverse array of speakers and topics. This committee will also work with the YLC's Women in the Law Subcommittee to put on the D&I-WITL luncheon during the seminar. However, their broader goal will be to educate and engage our members throughout the year in order to effect real, meaningful, and lasting change within the legal profession. If you have any ideas for diversity and inclusion projects or initiatives we could/should take on, please email me.

As other and new needs arise, they will be addressed. And that is where YOU come in. How can the DRI Young Lawyers Committee better serve YOU this year? Tell me. I really mean that. Email your thoughts, concerns, and questions to swurdock@sturgillturner.com.

The Young Lawyers publications team also continues to impress, ensuring that you get the latest on a variety of topics that just may offer a new perspective on a case currently on your desk. I want to extend my

personal thanks to Pamela Kaplan, Ashley Scarpetta, Ryan David Class, Christopher S. Dutton, and Lindsay Zanello for their dedication and hard work. If you are interested in being published (and earning valuable CLEs for your scholarly writing), contact the YL publications team for more information.

In this issue, John Floyd tackles an issue that is top-of-mind for the defense bar in 2021: liability for contracting COVID. From the multiple means of transmission to the long incubation period, pinpointing when, where, and from whom a plaintiff contracted COVID is extremely difficult. But that won't stop the plaintiffs' bar from filing suit. If you're wondering how to defend against these claims, the advice found in his article will put you on the right path. The other article in this issue of *For The Defense* demonstrates the breadth of our committee's practice experience. Stephen D. Palmer gives some practical advice for workers' compensation attorneys on what to do if your client faces paying the balance of the full fee for an air ambulance flight after workers' compensation paid its discounted amount.

Be sure to keep an eye out in next month's issue of *For The Defense*, as well. In April, two additional young lawyers flex their writing muscles. Michael Adams asks what attorneys defending failure to warn claims against the recreation marijuana industry can learn from revisiting claims against the alcohol and tobacco industries? And Wes Jackson explores the future of qualified immunity, using the lens of the summer of 2020 to open a detailed examination of the subject.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who participated in the YLC in 2020 for your hard work, flexibility, and resilience as we faced new challenges together. It was not an easy year by any means, but together we made the best of it.

And for those of you who are still lucky enough to be considered "young lawyers" this year, I invite and encourage you to get involved in the YLC. In a year that is sure to be so full of challenges and change, we can use ALL of your help and ideas to make this committee the best it's ever been.

Cheers y'all,
Stephanie

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