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**BAR ASSOCIATION OF ST. LOUIS  
YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION  
CELEBRATION OF CITIZEN PROJECT**

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**I. Project Description**

This program was developed as a joint project between the YLD of the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis (“YLD”) and the Federal Courts, to take place on May 1, Law Day. This program can be carried out once per year on Law Day, but may also be held on multiple occasions if the affiliate chooses. The Bar Association of St. Louis partnered with the federal courts to host a welcoming reception for newly naturalized citizens after an immigration and naturalization ceremony. It is hard to attend such a ceremony and not be moved by the magnitude of these individuals' commitment to living in a land of freedom. The affiliate paired with the Clerk of Court and the Communications and Public Relations staff to develop a post-ceremony reception that not only provided refreshments and heavy appetizers, but also the opportunity to receive the local bar association's public service literature, the opportunity to register to vote, and information on Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, a local legal aid service. The YLD was responsible for coordinating the food and beverages, setting up and obtaining information and service tables for the reception, and advertising the event in order to garner the participation of the affiliate's Young Lawyers Division and Immigration Law Committee.

**II. Project Planning/Development**

**A. Identification of Need**

The Executive Committee of the YLD generally schedules a long-range planning meeting in the weeks prior to the commencement of the new bar year. The purpose of the planning meeting is to examine existing programs for viability and continued offering to YLD, as well as attempt to identify new projects to offer. In order to conserve funds, as the affiliate does not have a separate source of income for YLD programming, new partnerships with other bar associations, courts, and local groups are considered.

With that goal in mind, the need for this project was identified by a request from the Federal Courts to celebrate Law Day in a nontraditional manner. The ABA theme for the year was equal access to justice, and the naturalization ceremony was a natural fit. The question for the St. Louis YLD was how to provide assistance in providing information to new citizens on public services such as voter registration, legal aid, and other agencies in which they may have an interest.

The need was met by scheduling a number of planning meetings, in which a core group of young lawyers participated. After planning the basic event, division of labor and financial responsibility was determined and delegated. Any number of young lawyers can participate in this event, although for planning purposes, the number of core members attending planning meetings should be limited to two or three.

**B. Determination of Project Goals and Design**

**1. Decisions to be made**

**a. Options - Project Goals**

One goal was to embody the idea of “access to justice” for all people, and facilitate an easier way for newly naturalized citizens to find out about the services available to them. In order to do so, the St. Louis YLD set a goal of securing representatives from the legal community, as well as those from other agencies to provide information tables at the reception following the ceremony. The YLD contacted the League of Women Voters, as they had previously been involved in the ceremony then determined what committees within the Bar Association offered programs that would benefit new citizens. Some of the Legal Aid representatives also suggested their contacts within the community as to issues of public housing, financial assistance, or other relevant programs.

The goal is to provide a forum for the citizens to register to vote, obtain information about legal services and free legal assistance, and obtain information from other interested agencies or not-for-profit groups that provide assistance in the areas of housing or other concerns.

**b. Options - Project Design**

*Format.* The Courts were able to determine the number of attendees with some certainty, due to the registration of those involved in the actual naturalization ceremony. Within the invitees letter was a request for RSVP with the number attending the reception with them. No planning was required on the part of the YLD as to the ceremony itself, as time-honored traditions of the Court were already in place.

The planning by the YLD was relative to the reception scheduled after the ceremony. Determining the flow of people, the type of food and beverage desired and/or allowed, and the appropriate groups to involve in the information tables was the responsibility of the YLD with the assistance of the Clerk of Court.

The reception was designed to last no more than one hour. The real determinate for the length of the event is how long the citizens will remain in order to obtain the information provided by the

various groups. Food and beverages should be replenished consistently during that time by the caterer.

*Selection of Speakers.* The format of the ceremony itself was in place based on the Court's historical model. It was the option of the Court as to allowing a representative of the Bar Association to speak. No speaker from YLD was added to the program, in that the President-Elect of the senior bar was already a part of the existing program.

At the reception, a very brief welcome was given by the YLD Chair, with an invitation to obtain food and beverages, and peruse the information tables.

*Choice of Date.* Law Day was the choice in the first year YLD presented this project. The date chosen was at the request of the Court, in an effort to meet the ABA theme for the programming year. In future years, this program could be presented on any regular date on which a naturalization ceremony is otherwise scheduled.

*Audience.* The audience was predetermined due to the nature of the program. Included with the newly naturalized citizens, however, were their family and friends. It was determined that any of these individuals may have a potential interest in the information provided at the reception.

*Choice of Facility.* By default, our beautiful, brand new Eagleton Federal Courthouse was the site for the event. Due to this location, the YLD was able to defer most of the administrative tasks involved, such as set-up, caterer, and invitations to the invitees to the Clerk of Court's staff and Communications committee. The YLD then was able to focus its efforts on advertising the event within the bar.

## **2. Decision Making Process**

The YLD was represented by their Executive Committee's Chair and Chair Elect. The YLD also had the assistance of the staff of their local bar association in the advertising of the event within their membership and that of the Immigration Law Committee. Most of the decisions in planning the project were made by these individuals, along with substantial input and guidance from the Clerk of Court and the administrative and public relations head at the Court.

The role of the YLD was primarily to assist with word-of-mouth or other advertising as the event date was approaching. Additionally, the St. Louis

YLD created the flyers that were distributed to the invitees to advertise and invite them to the reception.

Due to the nature of the project, approximately three (3) meetings at the Court were required. Most of the preparation was able to take place via telephone and facsimile.

**3. Considerations in Project Planning**

**a. Community Resources**

The community resource most utilized was the word of mouth, blast email, and personal contacts by the BAMSL YLD. The YLD was responsible for contacting the Immigration Law Committee and inviting their membership, as well as Legal Services and the Bar Association for their informational materials. Contacts to the League of Women Voters and the International Institute were made by the Court.

**b. Personnel**

YLD worked with their association support staff to coordinate advertising. YLD worked closely with the Clerk of Court and his staff for purposes of organizing and arranging the reception.

On the evening of the actual event, YLD members staffed the respective information tables as necessary.

**c. Revenue Ability/Fund Raising**

The YLD has no independent budget. Most of the events are considered “break-even” by way of grants from the ABA or local sponsorships of our events. Due to these budget constraints, YLD sought the assistance of the Court, who had a healthy public relations budget available. YLD committed to the advertising funding, which was under \$500, due to the availability of blast email to the membership. The flyers advertising the event to the ceremony invitees were direct costs to our association.

The other funding consideration was how to pay for an elegant reception for the attendees and their families. The Courts committed to pay the balance of the event’s food costs, over and above a \$1,500 commitment made by the St. Louis YLD. In order to cover that \$1,500 expense, the YLD obtained personal and law firm sponsorships underwriting the cost of the event.

**d. Other (Equipment/Physical Needs)**

This program required only a few long tables for the reception itself, both for service of the food and beverages, and the set up of information and pamphlets from the civic groups.

**III. Implementation ... How to Replicate this Project**

## **A. Timetable**

An affiliate should begin planning this project approximately four to five months in advance.

### **Five Months Prior to the Event**

1. Identify committee members.
2. Meet with Court representatives and identify a tentative date and time for the program (or determine if you will host the event on Law Day).
3. Request that YLD members indicate whether they would be interested in attending and/or assisting in the planning of the program.
4. Identify two co-chairs to head the project, one to maintain the personal contact with the courts, and the other to maintain contact with the bar association;
5. Determine whether the program will include food or beverages, and if so make sure food and beverages are consistent with the time of the event.
6. Identify and contact potential participants in the information-forum. Maintain a goal of meeting the anticipated interests of the invitees as a community.
7. Determine funding for the project and the probable budget. Determine what financial commitment YLD will make, and how to meet that commitment.
8. In conjunction with the financial commitment, identify potential co-sponsors for the program. Consider firms practicing immigration law.

### **Four Months Prior to the Event**

1. Confirm and coordinate invitations to the ceremony participants.
2. Identify venues for advertising within your bar.
3. Determine status of funding for the program, including necessary advertising funding.
4. Confirm costs with caterers or bar association if providing printed materials.
5. Design/draft advertising information.

### **Three to Two Months Prior to the Event**

1. Contact caterer or program location and plan menu, if necessary. Confirm location's ability to meet special dietary needs of attendees and speakers.
2. Confirm that the program is still within budget.
3. Confirm funding for YLD commitment and sponsorships.
4. Determine advertising timeline and deadlines.
5. Contact advertising sources (such as bar association publications) to confirm advertising ability and deadlines.

6. Place advertisement/announcement on affiliate web site and in affiliate publications if possible.

### **One Month to Two Weeks Prior to the Event**

1. Secure volunteers to staff the information tables at the reception.
2. Determine participants in the naturalization ceremony, if any are to be provided.
3. Confirm provision and anticipation of tables, chairs, microphones and other set-up needs.
4. Continue to advertise by sending direct mailing or fax to targeted advertising group.

### **After the Event**

1. Analyze program and assess whether any changes need to be made for future programs.
2. Send thank you letters as appropriate.
3. Submit project write-up to appropriate publications and/or place follow-up write-up on affiliate web site. Thank event co-sponsors in any publications and on website.

## **B. Recruitment and Training of Volunteers**

No volunteers or specialized training is needed for this project.

## **C. Publicity**

For the Community at large: Media coverage was arranged as a desirable outlet to increase public perception of the legal communities services and programs available, not only to these new citizens, but to all community members.

For the Membership of the Bar/YLD: The “blast-email” seemed to be the easiest and most effective method of advertising. The email was sent by the bar association’s administrative staff to all YLD members and the Immigration Law Committee.

Additional informational articles were placed in the local bar association publication, “The St Louis Lawyer” in the two issues preceding the event.

## **D. Day-To-Day Operations**

The project is not ongoing, and does not require day-to-day operations. The project was so successful in year one that YLD planned to continue the partnership as an annual event. Although our partnership each year specific to Law Day may not include the naturalization ceremony, our jurisdiction offers

ceremonies every 60 days. Depending on budgetary considerations and the respective master calendar for each group, this could be repeated at least once each calendar year, exclusive of the Law Day commitment.

#### IV. Evaluation and Impact

The Celebration of Citizenship presented a unique opportunity for attorneys to experience the awe and inspiration that is a part of the naturalization of new United States citizens. It also provided an opportunity for the lawyers to intermingle with federal judges, and the court personnel instrumental in providing smooth access to justice in their courts.

One result of this project was a new and vital partnership between the metropolitan young lawyers and the Federal Court system.

If a more formal evaluation of this program were desired, it could be by way of a follow-up letter or survey to the newly naturalized citizens. The letter would inquire as to the benefit the citizen derived by way of having the various services and agencies available on the premises immediately after the ceremony. Additionally, a review of the voter registration or other "sign up" sheet from any of the participating entities would give an immediate numeric response as to the citizens availing themselves of the offered information.

#### V. Bibliography/Other Resources

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