

Harrington Takes Helm In Historic Year

Rob Harrington's long-range view as president of the Mecklenburg County Bar is rather impressive. All he has to worry about is the organization's first 100 years and the next 100 years.

That, and the construction of a new bar center.

Harrington, who practices with Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, assumed the leadership position on July 1. The date of transition catches the MCB in the midst of both a centennial celebration and the process of selecting a location for its new headquarters.

"In some ways I think I was fortunate in that it was right after all of the activity that took place around the first of the year," Harrington said in regard to serving this year. "It is a great honor."

A native of Florence, S.C., Harrington is a graduate of Duke University and the Duke University School of Law. His path to Charlotte followed an interesting route, beginning with a clerkship under Judge Martin L.C. Feldman of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, followed by a little over a year in Washington, D.C., and a second stint in New Orleans where he engaged in private practice.

His work on a case with attorneys from Robinson Bradshaw caught the attention of firm founder Russell Robinson and others, who ultimately lured him back closer to home where he has practiced the past 13 years.

"One of the things that we have to be conscious of," Harrington said in regard to the centennial, "as with any of our bars, be they state or local, is that there are lots of different lawyers with lots of different interests. I think the centennial is going well but one of the things we have to be thoughtful about while going through it is that we have activities that attract and benefit a big cross-section of lawyers."

"The headline is that it has been a great six months so far. Mark Merritt and former Superior Court Judge Shirley Fulton co-chaired the celebration, and we've had everything from a service month, where we really focused on getting Mecklenburg County lawyers out in the community, to a wonderful exhibit in the Levine Museum of the New South that will ultimately go into the new bar center."

Speaking of which, Harrington said the committee charged with selecting a site is getting close to making its recommendation. He expects a decision to be reached and ground to be broken in this calendar year with occupancy of the new bar center anticipated during the term of his successor, Tricia Morvan Derr.

Moving into an existing facility, Harrington added, was not a



viable option.

"The Mecklenburg County Bar has a number of functions. One major service we provide is CLE, so one of our goals for the new location is having a place to do CLEs without doing them off-site."

"The space needs for the building aren't the easiest to find, needing offices and some public space, and we want to be able to provide some space when it's available that some of our members can use."

One of the unique challenges of Harrington's role is that he presides over a man-

datory bar, one that has grown exponentially over the past two decades.

"We have to be very cautious and careful about where our dues are going," Harrington said. "For the most part, our functions can be supported with funds that include money from bar dues, but our bar is vigilant about guarding that line."

"Quite understandably, we have members of the bar who are keenly attuned to the difference between our mandatory and regulatory functions and other services that we provide for our members. The staff and volunteer leadership have been very good with these things and very cautious of them from a regulatory and financial perspective, and I think those are good discussions. You have to welcome those discussions with members about the various things you are doing as a bar."

On the other hand, Harrington said, it is very helpful and efficient to have one bar, and one facility.

"One of our challenges, and I wonder how this compares on a statewide level and other urban areas, is we grew so fast for a period of time. We went from 2,500 members to right at 4,500 in about 20 years, and that's just a pressure in and of itself."

Harrington traces his involvement in the MCB to the establishment of a special committee on diversity during John Buchan's term as president. Harrington and then-Immediate Past-President George Hanna co-chaired the committee, which continues to flourish.

"From there I got progressively more involved," Harrington said, "from the board to the executive committee. Five presidents have come from our law firm, and I believe Frank Emory was with the firm when he was selected president-elect. The firm has been a uniquely good place to be involved in the bar and to have the support to be active."

One of the laments of his or any other bar presidency, Harrington admits, is the fact that "you can't do it all in a year."

"Perhaps most important for an organization of lawyers," Harrington stated in his installation address, "we will work to improve

the delivery of legal services to the most disadvantaged residents of Mecklenburg County. We look forward to working with our partners in that effort — Legal Services of the Southern Piedmont, Legal Aid of North Carolina, the Council for Children's Rights,

and other organizations that work day-in and day-out to represent those for whom adequate legal representation is too often denied.

"I speak of this subject with emphasis because what these citizens need only lawyers can provide." *NCL*

YLD Honors Three Exemplary Members

The Young Lawyers Division of the North Carolina Bar Association elected officers for 2012-13 and presented three awards during its recent annual meeting, held Saturday, June 23, in conjunction with the NCBA Annual Meeting in Wilmington.

No election was needed, however, for the office of chair, which is assumed by John Buford of Greensboro who served as chair-elect in 2011-12. Buford practices with Brooks Pierce McLendon Humphrey & Leonard LLP in Greensboro. He succeeds Brad Williams of Raleigh who assumes the role of immediate past chair.

Clark Walton of Charlotte was elected chair-elect and Meredith Priestley of Claremont was elected secretary. Walton serves in the N.C. Attorney General's Office while Priestley practices with CT Management, Inc.

The Charles F. Blanchard Young Lawyer of the Year Award was presented to Jillian Brevorka of Greensboro; the NCBA Younger Lawyer Pro Bono Award was presented to Sherry Honeycutt Everett of Durham; and the Robinson O. Everett Professionalism Award was presented to Patti Ramseur of Greensboro.

"Jillian Brevorka is being honored for her selfless commitment to the Wills for Heroes program virtually since its first year as a YLD committee in 2008-09," stated Clark Walton in presenting the Blanchard Award, which is named for the first chair of the YLD who served in 1953-55.

"Her work as a committee member, and then as the committee's co-chair beginning in 2010 through this year, has helped bring free estate planning services to thousands of North Carolina first responders and their spouses. I have worked personally with Jillian at a number of these events, including one Saturday in Winston-Salem where our event collectively served over 425 individuals, and she is absolutely deserving of this honor."

Indeed, Brevorka has been a mainstay in a program that has provided immeasurable public service to some of North Carolina's bravest and most unselfish citizens. Over the past five years, 1,370 volunteers (lawyers, law students, paralegals and notaries public) have provided 9,956 free estate planning documents for 3,392 first responders and their spouses through the Wills for Heroes program.



Brevorka



Everett



Ramseur

Bryan Scott presented the Younger Lawyer Pro Bono Award to Everett, who just completed a two-year stint as chair of the NCBA's Solo, Small Firm & General Practice Section.

"We selected Sherry primarily for her work in conceiving, founding, and operating the Butner Federal Prison Reentry Assistance Program nonprofit organization since 2008," Scott said. "Sherry's nonprofit assists the former Butner federal inmates with resolving outstanding state criminal charges upon their release that would otherwise prevent their taking part in reentry assistance programs like halfway houses and other social services.

"As a result of Sherry's work, approximately 20 inmates each year since 2008 have been able to receive assistance where they otherwise would not have. In addition to Sherry's work on the reentry assistance program, she is a tireless volunteer attorney on domestic violence cases for Durham Legal Aid, she has participated in the 4ALL campaign each year since joining the bar, and she frequently takes calls through the Call 4ALL program."

Meredith Priestley presented the Robinson O. Everett Professionalism Award, created and named in honor of Judge Everett, a Duke law professor and former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, following his death in 2009.

"I cannot think of a more deserving person to receive this award," Priestley said in regard to Ramseur, a past chair of the YLD. "I met Patti through my involvement with the YLD, and her charisma and enthusiasm is electric. When Patti walks into a room, you can feel her energy and it spreads to others.

"Under her leadership, the YLD expanded the Wills for Heroes clinics, created and implemented a mentoring program to pair young lawyers with foster children, spearheaded a "Feeding Frenzy" food drive where more than 10,000 pounds of food were donated to the North Carolina Food Bank, and provided pro bono legal assistance to hundreds of disabled military veterans through its When Duty Calls pro bono program.

Ramseur has been involved in a number of NCBA activities, most recently serving as chair of the Young Lawyer Initiatives Task Force. *NCL*