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'Noon in June' welcomes summer help

06/21/2010

by [Joe Wilhelm Jr.](#)
Staff Writer

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At first glance, the Jacksonville legal community can be intimidating, but The Jacksonville Bar Association's Young Lawyer Section created the "Noon in June" event to make that introduction a little easier.

Summer associates, or interns, are currently working at law firms throughout Jacksonville to gain a better insight of the field they hope to join one day. But knowing where to go and who to talk to once people get to where they are going can be daunting.

The "Noon in June" program was created to give summer associates a guided tour of the courthouses and City Hall to better acquaint them with their temporary

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surroundings.

"I was born and raised here, but I really wasn't familiar with the ins and outs of the courthouses and City Hall," said Patrick Bennett, a student at Florida State University College of Law interning at Brennan Manna & Diamond. "It's good to get the insider perspective."

The afternoon began with lunch at The Carling and speeches from "Noon in June" Chair Pat Kilbane, YLS President Lee Wedekind, JBA President-elect Courtney Grimm and Fourth Judicial Circuit Court Judge Mark Mahon.

The next stop was the Bryan Simpson U.S. Courthouse and a meeting with U.S. District Court Judge Timothy Corrigan. The group then journeyed on to City Hall to meet with Public Defender Matt Shirk, Chief Assistant State Attorney Dan McCarthy and City Council member John Crescimbeni.

Crescimbeni explained how City government works and how consolidated government is different from most other forms of government.

Crescimbeni compared City government to a board of directors. "We set policy and budget and let someone else enforce those decisions," he said.

When asked about the most pressing issue facing the City government, he said the budget.

"Both Ms. Corey and I are trying to make the court more efficient and we are trying 70 percent more cases than before," said Shirk, "so if you want trial experience, the State Attorney's Office or the Public Defender's Office are great places to start."

McCarthy compared his experiences as an attorney for Holland & Knight, a large private law firm, and the State Attorney's Office.

"I was paid very well, but I didn't have a sense of purpose," said McCarthy. "When I drive home at night now, I think about the lives I've touched each day and I'm pretty satisfied with the job that I do."

McCarthy also threw in some tips for those who may soon be contacting his office for employment.

"First, you have to have good grades. They show me that you know what you want to do and you are committed to it," said McCarthy. "Identify what you want to be through internships and become CLI."

A Certified Legal Intern (CLI) is a student or graduate who has participated in a University of Florida Law clinical skills program. Through the clinic, the student becomes certified by the Florida Supreme Court to represent clients in court under the supervision of a Florida licensed attorney pursuant to Rule 11.

Upon graduation and before being sworn into the Florida Bar, the CLI status can be renewed on the student's behalf by his or her employer to permit them to represent clients in the Florida public sector, such as state attorney, public defender, legal aid or municipal attorney's offices, according to the University of Florida Levin College of Law.

"But the most important thing you can do to prepare yourself is go to the second floor of the Duval County Courthouse and sit in the courtrooms," said McCarthy.



Photo release

Public Defender Matt Shirk talks about how his office has been able to handle an increased caseload through more efficient work practices.

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"You can learn so much about a community and its people from sitting in court.

The tour finished at the offices of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, where Christa Figgins talked to the group about the services JALA provides to the commun-ity.

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