Advocate Extraordinaire

Jenna Grubb | Chair, NABE Communications Section

The unofficial job description for chairing the NABE Communications Section could easily be condensed to a couple of bullet points: head cheerleader and ambassador.

That being the case, Jenna Grubb is supremely suited for the role she has undertaken in 2011-12. As director of communications and membership for the Toledo Bar Association, she is one of NABE’s strongest advocates, and that goes double for its Communications Section.

And she’s all about some bullet points.

“When communicating with lawyers, I always try to be clear and concise,” Grubb said. “I like things bulleted and I urge the attorneys who write for our publications to do the same thing. I try to make the official communications from our bar association as clear and uncluttered as possible. I never go into any sort of legal communication because I don’t have that background.”

Her background in education and public relations serves her well, both in her day job and the labor of love that is her involvement with the NABE Communications Section.

“Right now I am having the NABE workshop letdown,” Grubb said when interviewed shortly after the enormously successful Communications Section workshop in Nashville, Tenn.

“Seeing these people once a year reminds me how gifted and talented they all are. It is a special bond and a special group of people.”

Leading such a group, she adds, is simply a matter of standing on the shoulders of those who came before her.

“I think the tone has been set by those who came before us,” Grubb said. “I hope that we are all wise enough to continue the tradition.”

In that regard, she directs special recognition to Elizabeth Derrico of the ABA’s Division for Bar Services, her immediate predecessor, Kelley Jones King of the State Bar of Texas, and Mark Mathewson of the Illinois State Bar Association.

“One bit of wisdom that Kelley Jones King shared with me is that this is our volunteer job, and we only get to do it after we have finished doing those other things that we have to do. I remind myself that is what our attorneys are doing, that they are doing this after they are making a living.

“Anything we can do to ease that for them, to cut them some slack on a deadline, we do. Everybody has a day job. But one thing I have learned is that attorney volunteers are the cream of the crop and in almost all cases are easy to work with.”

Ditto, she adds, for the members of the NABE Communications Section.

HER | continued on page 2

Inside this Issue

3 | Wally #29... Mark Mathewson
7 | Section Spotlight: Yvonne McGhee
8 | 2011 Luminary Awards
13 | The Unconference
14 | Hey Mom! I Wrote a Song in Nashville!
16 | America’s Next Top Model Association
“I would say that this group of people is the most generous group of people I know, with their expertise and their knowledge,” Grubb said. “I think a lot of that comes from the fact that we are not in direct competition with one another. Anyone who knows anything generously shares it with everyone else. You will learn more by associating with members of NABE than you will learn in six months on the job all by yourself.

“It is so true, and especially for me as an advocate for the small bar. When you are the communications specialist in your workplace, you have to rely on others like you who are spread all over the country. They keep you up to date about trends and things that you don’t have time or the knowledge to find out on your own.”

The lines of communication, including the section LISTSERV, are always open.

But there’s nothing that compares to participating in a section workshop.

“I am thrilled with the workshop that the Tennessee Bar Association put on,” Grubb said. “They really outdid themselves. Everything was first class, well organized, informative, and the whole workshop ran like clockwork.

“And after our initial meetings with Heather Clark and Sara Crocker from the Colorado and Denver bar associations, I expect that next year’s workshop will be every bit as wonderful. We should all be grateful, and we are, that our bar associations allow their staffs to work on putting on these workshops and allow them to attend.

“Their support is so crucial to this.”

Jenna Giudici Grubb serves as chair of the NABE Communications Section for 2011-12. She is a 1976 honors graduate of Saint Louis University who received a master’s degree in liberal studies from the University of Toledo in 2003. Before joining the Toledo Bar Association in 1998, she taught school and served as director of public relations for Lourdes University, where she also studied fine arts.

Article contributed by Russell Rawlings
Rawlings serves on the NABE Communications Section Council and is the director of communications for the North Carolina Bar Association.
Mark Mathewson, director of publications for the Illinois State Bar Association, has received the E.A. “Wally” Richter Leadership Award from the National Association of Bar Executives. This award, given no more often than once annually, was presented to Mathewson at the annual workshop of bar association communicators held Oct. 21 in Nashville, Tenn.

The E.A. “Wally” Richter Award for Leadership is given for outstanding achievement in the field of communication, for extraordinary service to colleagues in NABE, and for distinguished leadership of the Communications Section, and is the Communication Section’s highest honor.

Mathewson is the 29th recipient of this recognition. A certified association executive (CAE), he served for a number of years on the leadership council of the NABE Communications Section, which has more than 200 members, culminating in chairing the section in 2007-08. He has also designed, moderated, and been a speaker for various seminars, and now serves on the programming committee of NABE. Mark was earlier recognized by his peers nationally with the NABE Peer Excellence Award.

Mathewson, a lawyer and a journalist, began work with the Illinois State Bar Association in 1988 after practicing law, writing for numerous publications, and teaching journalism. He now oversees all bar publications, including the Illinois Bar Journal, a variety of newsletters (both online and in print), and books. He is also the point person for helping Association members with online legal research.

Wally #28, Duane Stanley, presented the award. Below is an excerpt from his remarks.

“I could easily spend much longer up here describing each of the facets of Mark’s life and character than the planners will allow me. Mark, the lawyer and journalist, began work with the Illinois State Bar Association over two decades ago after practicing law, writing for numerous publications, and “professoring.” As director of publications, he now oversees all bar publications, including its books, the Illinois Bar Journal, and a variety of newsletters (both online and in print). He is also the go-to guy for helping members with online legal research with Fastcase. That term, “go-to-guy” seems to recur often when talking about Mark.

He is a longtime resident of the Springfield area, where he and his wife, Barb, raised their two daughters, Margie and Molly; he is a musician (an award-winning bluegrass song-writer) and currently sings with a group called the Sangama Stemwinders; a radio personality (for a decade the host of “The Bluegrass Breakdown” on Springfield’s NPR station); and a playwright (whose historically accurate musical recently ran at New Salem’s Theatre in the Park – an historical interpretive site in the place Abraham Lincoln began his working career). “New Salem Harmony” features historical music of the era as well as four of Mark’s own compositions in the style of the early 1800s. Mark and his daughter, Molly, have performed often since she was in her early teens, she the vocal and Mark on the guitar. I think it was a typo when Alexa wrote that Molly had “fallen” in her father’s footsteps. Nonetheless, I thought, “What a great place to fall” (assuming she didn’t also get lured in by the St. Louis Cardinals, of course).

I never once questioned whether Mark fulfilled the criterion of making a significant contribution to NABE and particularly its communicators through the years. But I found when I went to put my finger on specific “big projects” Mark accomplished, I really couldn’t. Then I realized that I couldn’t do that for any of our recent awardees, including for me. But what I took note of was that
it was the continuous, valuable service in a wide range of responsibilities that distinguishes Mark’s service. I think David Anderson (Asst. Exec. Dir. at Illinois), expressed that appreciation well:

[He is one] who can be relied on to bring his best effort to whatever task is at hand. He combines a lawyer’s insightful judgment with the sensibilities required to navigate the often complex issues that arise in bar work. He is viewed as the voice of reason when differing opinions threaten to stall progress on important projects, and he can always be depended on for his calm and thorough analysis of the issues. I often find myself seeking out his counsel on matters large and small.

After serving on the NABE-Comm Council for a number of years (including being a trusted support for me during the time I served as chair), Mark chaired the section in 2007-08. Today is not the first time NABE has recognized Mark’s service; in 2009 NABE awarded Mark its Peer Excellence award.

That peer excellence has been recognized by most of us. It is Mark’s wisdom, encouragement, wit, and personal partnership, whether on the list serve, at conferences, or when called or e-mailed by every other leader to take on some additional task when needed. In that, Mark really needs no particular introduction, for that is the “go-to guy” we all know.

That same supervisor who hired Mark, and who later recognized his leadership characteristics, was Isolde Davidson. Of Mark Mathewson, “I hired him over 20 years ago and I really don’t know why. He turned out to be the nicest, most honorable, smart, competent and hardworking, funny, and much too-humble-for-his-own-good human-being I’ve ever encountered.” She concluded her list of descriptive accolades with, “not to mention, a CPL,” and then explained that CPL stands for Cool Pal for Life.

Congratulations, Go-to-guy, CPL, Wally: Mark Mathewson.

Article contributed by Duane Stanley
Stanley, a longtime member and contributor to the NABE Communications Section, is Wally #28 and a past chair of the section (2005). He serves as the assistant executive director of the Hennepin County Bar Association in Minneapolis, Minn.
John Sirman | State Bar of Texas

Anne Charles Award for Distinguished Service Honoree

The Anne Charles Award for Distinguished Service is not an annual award, but one that’s given when a member of our section really stands out, having made significant contributions to advancing the goals of the Communications Section through committee service or other volunteer efforts. The award recognizes the “unsung heroes” who have shared their time and expertise on behalf of the Section.

John Sirman has certainly contributed. The award, presented by David Simms, recognizes Sirman’s “willingness to share [an incredible] breadth of experience with others.”

Simms’ presentation says it all.

“I am happy to present this award to a section member who perennially makes significant contributions not only to this section, but who is also active in NABE’s Information Technology Section.

For example, I personally have joined this year’s recipient in the past to conduct the website reviews that were once a mainstay at these workshops; and we all benefit from his individual’s behind-the-scenes efforts each time we visit the NABE website as this person was instrumental in its development and the inclusion of many features which, at the time, were new to the site.

Being not only a communicator, but also an attorney who is actively involved as a Bar member, this year’s recipient brings an invaluable perspective and expertise to our community – an expertise showcased by regular appearances on conference panels. And never have this individual’s contributions benefitted us more than in 2008 during the production of the Communications Workshop in Austin.

But this year’s winner is set apart by more than just an incredible breadth of experience. It is also a willingness to share that experience with others, a willingness I personally benefit from each time I call down to Texas to inquire about how they’re doing something. This selfless generosity was summed up perfectly in the words of one nominator who, in nominating this person for the Peer Excellence award, wrote...

‘it’s more than his expertise, creativity and innovative spirit that make him such an in-demand guy. It’s his approachable manner and disposition to help. “No” does not seem to be in his vocabulary. Part of peer excellence is being an excellent peer. Through his NABE service; through his leadership by example; but most of all through his willingness to help his colleagues one-on-one, John has made himself a peer without peer.’

Who is Anne Charles?
The award is named for the late Anne Charles, director of communications at the State Bar of California, who served the Section by chairing committees, serving on the Executive Council, mentoring new members, and representing the Section’s interest with the NABE Board of Directors. In addition to Sirman, recipients include:

2009 | David Simms | D.C. Bar Association
2008 | Ken Brown | Ohio State Bar Association
2006 | Toby Brown | Utah State Bar
2005 | Yvonne McGhee | Fairfax Bar Association (VA)
2004 | Ann Scarle | Baton Rouge Bar Association (LA)
2003 | Roger Parris | Bar Association of Erie County (NY)
2002 | Paul Nickell | Oregon State Bar Association
2001 | Arlene Abady | Colorado Bar Association
What one word would I use to describe this city? **Optimistic.**

Mayor Karl Dean | Nashville, TN

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**Nashville Etiquette:**

After you holler, you drink your beer and you tip the band.

Butch Spyridon, president/CEO of the Nashville Convention & Visitor’s Bureau on woo-hooing

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**Communicate clearly, often, and do what you say.**

Butch Spyridon

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transparency, transparency, transparency.

Dave Kloeppel, Gaylord Entertainment

---

“when it comes to ideas, never edit yourself. dare to suck.”

Victoria Shaw | Producer/Songwriter

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You only have **10 seconds** to show your value to your online audience.

Janan Compitello | Senior Consultant NimbleUser, Pittsford, NY

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There is no such thing as the general public.

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Nashville Etiquette:

We communicate in **pixels, in PRINT, and in person.**

Brad Carr | Director of Communications, Alabama State Bar

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The dominance of daily newspapers as the primary source for news and information is coming to an end... the decline of daily newspapers is not the same as the death of **print** — it’s a medium that still works.

Chris Ferrell | CEO SouthComm Inc., Nashville
Let’s shine the Section Spotlight on …

Yvonne C. McGhee, who serves as executive director of the Virginia Bar Association, is a valued contributor to the NABE Communications Section. However, in typical Yvonne fashion, she proclaims to have received much more from the section than she has put in.

“I always call myself the neediest person on the LISTSERV.”

Though greatly appreciated, her sentiments do not pass the litmus test of bar service, be it within the Communications Section or the NABE universe as a whole. It is she who has provided so much service and leadership to both the section and the association. To wit, she has been honored numerous times, as the 2005 recipient of the NABE Communications Section Anne Charles Award for outstanding volunteerism, the 2006 NABE Peer Excellence award, and the 2009 recipient of the NABE President’s Award.

In a previous life, when she served as executive director of the Fairfax (Va.) Bar Association, she was honored no less than three times as the recipient of the FBA President’s Award.

McGhee left the FBA in July to take on a new challenge as the executive director of a statewide voluntary organization with 5,500 members, but her involvement in NABE matters will scarcely miss a beat. She recently attended the annual meeting in Toronto and plans to attend the midyear meeting in February in New Orleans, which is to be expected since she is president-elect of the NABE.

She will take over the reigns as president of the National Association of Bar Executives at the 2012 NABE Annual Meeting in Chicago.

“Working for a small bar,” McGhee recalls from her early days at the FBA in 2000, “we didn’t have anyone dedicated to communications. I was fortunate to get a scholarship to attend a Communications Section Workshop in Lake Tahoe. That was my first Communications Section workshop, and it was an invaluable experience.

“From that point on I knew this was a giving, wonderful, supporting group. Everything I know about communications, I learned from the Communications Section.

“It takes a village!”

And now that she has taken on a new role as executive director of the Virginia Bar Association, her NABE experiences will continue to pay dividends.

“This is a great opportunity,” McGhee said. “I had no idea about the enormous difference from a local bar. But now that I am traveling across the state, meeting people and gearing up for the legislative session, I realize that there is a big difference.”

The biggest difference, perhaps, is her participation in the association’s lobbying efforts at the Virginia General Assembly.

“The Virginia State Bar, as a state agency, cannot lobby,” McGhee said. “We consider ourselves the independent voice of Virginia lawyers; we are bipartisan and address those issues that are important to all of our members.

“We have a team of lobbyists that will represent us. I will work with the infrastructure here to help communicate with our members. I am really looking forward to my first legislative session.”

If her track record within the NABE is any indication, McGhee will quickly gain the respect of lawyers and legislators throughout her native Virginia. She grew up in Martinsville, earned her bachelor’s degree from just over the stateline at King College in Bristol, Tenn., and graduated from the University of Richmond School of Law in 1987.

She practiced law in Virginia and Texas before going to work for the Fairfax Bar, which she left for brief period to develop the first pro se self-help center in Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Good luck, Yvonne. We look forward to hearing from you on the LISTSERV. We’re proud to say that we knew you when, and we know you now, too!

Column contributed by Russell Rawlings

Rawlings serves on the NABE Communications Section Council and is the director of communications for the North Carolina Bar Association.
2011 Luminary Awards

Luminary awards recognize outstanding work among bar communications professionals nationwide.

Our proud sponsor says it best – “Every year the Luminary Awards Committee searches the country for top talent based on the insight and guidance of those working in the field. The winners this year were selected based on their innovative and thoughtful work that raises the bar—pun intended, in both functionality and aesthetics.”

To see the online report, visit http://www.fastcase.com/2011-fastcase-luminary-award-winners/.

Congratulations to this year’s winners!

Excellence in Public Relations

Louisville Bar Association | Small Bar
Recognized for their rebranded campaign to reposition the bar association as a learning/resource center for the community and to reinvigorate members’ energy and excitement by taking a fresh, modern approach to a century-old organization.

From the Judges: “Great Graphic design. The materials are fresh and appealing. A 30 percent increase in public service program enrollment is impressive.”

Connecticut Bar Association | Medium Bar
Recognized for its “Spotlight on Civics,” a yearlong civics engagement campaign.

From the Judges: “This is an exceptional example of a comprehensive public relations campaign. From research, to involving all the right players, to materials development and resulting media coverage, just an outstanding effort to increase awareness about the importance of civics education. Well done!”

Virginia State Bar Madonna G. Dersch | Large Bar
Recognized for its “Spare the Child” video, which educates the public to better understand and navigate the process of family dissolution.

From the Judges: “Great job producing a video that speaks to an issue many families are facing today. The quality of the video was impressive, as was its message. Nothing lacking in this entry.”

Excellence in Marketing

Tarrant County Bar Association Director of Communications – Pat Leake | Small Bar
Recognized for special marketing promotion of its annual Bench Bar Conference.

From the Judges: “Very integrated branding effort; I love it when a plan comes together…EVENT SOLD OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME!”
New Hampshire Bar Association  
**Communications Department | Medium Bar**  
Recognized for its “Kickstart Your Recovery Campaign for Advertising Development.”

From the Judges: “Making money in this economy is almost a miracle and the two staffers did it. A super (and courageous) idea to cut ad prices, offer more, and then market the heck out it with good looking pieces. A winner in my book.”

**Colorado Bar Association**  
**Communications & Marketing | Large Bar**  
Recognized for its successful Membership Campaign.

From the Judges: “This campaign is the epitome of a well-done marketing campaign. It is extremely well thought out, designed, and effective. Facing the challenge of membership during economic hardship head-on, the bar created a model example program.”

**Excellence in Website Design**

**Fairfax Bar Association | Small Bar**  
From the Judges: “Overall the site has a very clean look to it (and just to try it, I looked at it on my iPhone & it was so easy to read & move around – great job!) and easy to navigate. Excellent use of featured content sections on the homepage to highlight services and content.”

**San Diego County Bar Association | Medium Bar**  
From the Judges: “Overall the website is really clean, with great use of white space, while still getting the massive amount of information that all bar associations seem to have across to the audience. I REALLY like the upcoming calendar of events on the right-hand side of the pages, and the CLE calendar is pretty integrated & it’s great that you can add the event into your outlook calendar.”

**State Bar of Arizona Rick DeBruhl | Large Bar**  
“Nicely organized, attractive site. Very nice handling of the site’s dual audiences — members and the public. Compelling visuals and type with an easy-to-navigate structure; has zero visual clutter, a strong hierarchy and no information overload to slow access to the content; good color contrast.”
Excellence in Electronic Publications

Contra Costa Bar Association CCCBA Communications Committee & Kerstin Firmin | Small Bar
From the Judges: “Wow! This publication could easily hold its own with the largest bar associations. The fact that it cost $800 to produce is astounding. The design is very appealing and is a really interesting example of how to make a blog more magazine-like. This nomination truly deserves an award and it would be a benefit to the NABE community at large to see it.”

Denver Bar Association Communications & Marketing (Medium Bar)
“Nice design. They did a nice job of mixing in information beyond just bar news in the issues that I browsed. I liked the writing tips from a Hollywood scandal.”

Colorado Bar Association Communications & Marketing (Large Bar)
“This e-publication is a clear winner, and I can think of no improvements. The articles are written by lawyer volunteers (great for increasing a feeling of ownership of their bar) and of good quality. The masthead is magnificent, beautifully bridging between the solo state of mind and the big city feel of a bar association. Love the tagline: Practice as One; Connect as a Community.”

Special Publications

Oakland County Bar Association | Small Bar
Recognized for the Military Veterans Speaker’s Bureau.

From the Judges: “Very worthwhile project and one that can easily expand! Great use of resources in keeping it primarily web-based. Informative, nice & clean. Good logos/colors. Easily met objectives.”

Indiana State Bar Association | Medium Bar
Recognized for the Indiana State Bar Association Young Lawyers Section.

From the Judges: “Solid product with a lot of good information for the public. Interior has clean, easy-to-read layout. Good, helpful information and great topics — perfect for its audience.”
Greetings to everyone.

I am working on creating a column for our NABE Communications Section newsletter on best practices and worst practices.

We hear so much about the former and very little about the latter, although often we learn the most from our biggest mistake or, better still, someone else’s biggest mistake.

On either front, what has worked best for you, or what didn’t work, I would love to hear from you.* We plan to make this a regular feature for Communicators Talk, and we need your help.

Your submissions do not have to be formal, a simple email will more than suffice.

Please send all submissions directly to rrawlings@ncbar.org.

Thanks so much for your help. I look forward to hearing from you.

* Requests for confidentiality will be honored.

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rrawlings@ncbar.org
Make new Friends...

Welcome first-time attendees!
It was nice to meet you in Nashville – and we hope to see you again soon!

Christina Alberts | State Bar of Nevada
Stephenie Beougher | Ohio State Bar
Daniel Black | Idaho State Bar
Susan Brennan | State Bar of Texas
Melanie Connatster | Knoxville Bar Association
Sara Crocker | Colorado & Denver Bar Associations
Sarah Curran | Columbus Bar Association
Barbara Davis | Albany County Bar
Kallie Donahoe | Bar Association of San Francisco

Kerstin Firmin | Contra Costa County Bar Association
Karen Holub | State Bar of Arizona
Kathryn Holub | Maine State Bar Association
Lenny Lun | Bar Association of San Francisco
Kylie Moran | South Carolina Bar
Pat Sears Doherty | New York State Bar Association
Marilyn Shaw | The Virginia Bar Association
Jessica Smith | Dallas Bar Association

Marcia Smith | Columbus Bar Association
Peggy Storch | Orange County Bar
Patrick W. Tandy | Maryland State Bar Association
Meg Wickham | Kansas Bar Association
Stephanie Wilson | State Bar of Georgia
Patricia Yevics | Maryland State Bar Association
The Unconference
(the act of consulting together)

The theory behind unconferences is based on several points of view. First is looking at what the planners want conference attendees to do. Planners want attendees to sit in the programs (hiding their smart phones and newspapers) and meet with vendors. Combine that with the basic challenges for conference planners such as costs, finding plenary speakers, and marketing deadlines. Then there are the wants and needs of the conference attendees, such as a hotel bar and amenities, and sleep time. At the hotel bar is where attendees meet up with their colleagues to share experiences and ask questions. It’s a valuable time for attendees and sometimes we’re they glean the most useful information.

Unconferences have been around since the 1930s and were started in California. In most, if not all, conferences there are cliques. One such clique decided to have their own conference where they could meet up and discuss whatever the attendees wanted. When one attendee asks a question, other attendees step up and become the expert answering the question. This is the most basic form of an unconference but there are many other types.

Two-Minute Rounds | This is where each presenter gives a two minute preview to a room full of potential audience members in an attempt to pull them to their full 15 minute presentation immediately following.

Speed Geeking | Speed geeking gets its name from speed dating. In this format, all the presenters are arranged in a large circle along the edge of a large room. The attendees stand at the center of the room. A facilitator rings the bell to start. Then attendees split up into groups and visit a presenter. Each presenter has approximately five minutes to give their presentation and answer any questions. At the end of the five minutes, the facilitator rings the bell and attendees move on to the next presenter.

Lightening Talks or Ignite Presentations | There aren’t too many rules. Inspire your audience or scare it. As long as it can be captured in five minutes, 20 slides, with 15 seconds per slide. Typically there are four to six to ten presenters, sometimes with a break in the middle. But always time for questions and mingling with the speakers informally after the presentations.

White Board Camps | In this style of unconference attendees can add topics to the conference’s agenda and then grab a room, create a hashtag, and they’re off.

Fish Bowl | In the fish bowl there are five chairs, all of which are occupied by audience members except one. At any time an audience member can take that open chair. When that happens one of the other four must volunteer to return to the audience.

In all styles of an unconference it is crucial that a strong facilitator is present for the program to be beneficial to attendees. Unconferences typically are free to attendees, unless the attendees wish to receive continuing education credit for attending.

Article contributed by Heather Clark
Clark is the Director of Communications and Marketing at the Colorado and Denver Bar Associations, where she has been employed for 11 years.

Our workshop would not be possible without the help of our sponsors!

Fastcase | Our PLATINUM sponsor this year, the leading sponsorship for the NABE Communications Section Workshop. A long-time supporter of the section, Fastcase co-sponsored our Wednesday night event at the Loveless Cafe and was also our exclusive sponsor for the Luminary Awards and Luminary Awards Luncheon.

Legal Directories Publishing Company | A continual NABE supporter, co-sponsoring our night out at the Loveless Cafe.

LawPay and Walsworth Print Group | Both Silver Level sponsors, we are grateful for your support.

Elections Online, the State Bar of Texas and the Tennessee Bar Association | A big thank you for your in-kind support.

thank you | gracias | merci | danke schoen | vinaka | thanks
A Communications Section Workshop offers plenary sessions that bring accomplished people with the bigger picture view or forward-looking insights. Then there are small-group break-outs with our peers addressing the nuts-and-bolts of what we do every day. Plus lots of informal conversations with colleagues that inspire us to import ingenuity or refresh our dedication to our jobs.

Admit it, though, sometimes it’s just a lot of “ya-da-ya-ya” up there at the front of the room. At our seats in the audience, we’re unwrapping mints, coveting our neighbor’s IPad, checking emails, or wondering what’s going on at home.

Fortunately, the Tennessee Bar Association, organizers of the 2011 Communication Section Workshop added something really fresh to the agenda. Nashville is Music City after all, and they scheduled a workshop with four Nashville song-writers with impressive hit-song credentials – Jim Photoglo, Victoria Shaw, Mike Reid and Gary Burr.

I agreed in advance to write about the session for Communicators Talk. When the session began, it dawned on me that the songwriters intended to involve us in the writing of our own song. The group of roughly 80 people was divided into two, and each group would write a song for the same title, which was: “I drink because…”

Uh-oh. How I will produce an uplifting article out of that? Sounds like too much fun. (“Our bar dues at work…for this?” my internal bar gadfly sneers.)

It was fun. It was not about bar associations or the law, it wasn’t about some trend or gadget. It was an experience, it made us think, share ideas, and smile together at the end. I did not learn so much about songwriting as I glimpsed a different view of how we all go about the business of creating, and how to keep the creative juices flowing – not just our own, but our creative partners’ too – whether they are fellow staff or volunteers.

In talking about it afterward, it was clear that the two groups had different experiences working with the professionals. I think my group had the better experience, and the better song. Some of the insights I took from the session came from reflecting later on those differences. These are five lessons I took away from the session.

Dare to suck. Don’t be afraid to share what your brain has coughed up. Victoria Shaw, one of the songwriters, started us off with that liberating credo. Some very good ideas start out as ugly ducklings that, with preening and maturing, become beautiful.

Don’t let cleverness overcome content. Don’t let that fetching turn of phrase divert you from the task. Several times our songwriters, Jim Photoglo and Gary Burr, sorting through the suggested lyrics being tossed out, made us decide on the “sense” of the song or the persona of the narrator – what was his/her viewpoint, what’s the tone we are going for? While some rhymes naturally suggested themselves, did they fit?

Entertain all ideas. Listen to all contributions, and value them. I remember Gary Burr receiving a suggestion that was off-point. He gently said something like, “That’s a good one, but maybe that belongs on another branch of the tree…” The person’s suggestion was considered and then set aside, not discarded or rejected. I liked how that was handled.

After you create, fit and finish. We came up with some great
verses and then the songwriters took us back over them again and again, fitting and shaping the words. While we all are aware of the value of revising and editing, it was interesting to see the revision process at work in a different setting. We then sang the verses, teaching it to ourselves so we could perform it at the end, and own the song.

**Value the process as much as the product.** No, we weren’t going to be able to take our experience of writing a song about drinking back to our bar associations and implement it as a program for new lawyers. Experiencing the creative process from a new vantage point, seeing an entirely new group work together, feeling the energy generated by accomplishing a task in a short time – priceless. It left me thinking about how I could replicate the satisfaction of accomplishment in an experience I provide for members or staff. Maybe sometimes we need to think about the activity we provide to our members, rather than the topics we’ll cover.

*Article contributed by Dan Wise*

Wise is communications director of the New Hampshire Bar Association. Before joining the Bar Association in 1996, he worked in a variety of writing and editing positions, and was a freelance writer and public relations consultant for five years. He is a faithful NABE Communications Section Workshop attendee.

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**I Drink Because (1)**

I can’t help but notice  
There’s bottles on the lawn.  
Six pack in the icebox –  
Every can is gone!

Johnny Walker’s missing  
And so is all my dough  
There must’ve been a party  
I surely ought to know

I drink because I’m thirsty.  
I drink because I’m not.  
I drink because I’m chilly.  
I drink because it’s hot.  
I drink to ease the pain  
I drink get a buzz  
Now that I think about it,  
I just drink because.

There’s a stranger on the sofa  
Sleeping in his drawers.  
Another in the bathroom  
Crawling on all fours.

There’s pizza on my forehead  
Oh Lord what have I done?  
There must have been a party  
I hope I had some fun.

I drink because I’m busy  
I drink because I’m bored.  
I drink because I bought it,  
I drink because it’s poured.  
I drink because it makes me even cuter than I was -  
Now that I think about it  
I just drink because.

**I Drink Because (2)**

Gin and vermouth  
Shot of the truth  
Jones on the stereo  
Walked out that door  
Threw the ring on the floor  
And I thought to myself as I watched you go

No more picking up your messes  
No more cooking all your meals  
Headline! Stop the presses  
Can’t tell you how good it feels

Pour me another shot of freedom  
Par-tay all night long  
Memories, honey I don’t need ‘em  
I drink ‘cause you’re finally gone … finally gone

I called your mother, I told your brother  
Come get your shit off my lawn  
Keeping the Harley, my pitbull Marley  
I’ve been kissing your ass for way too long

No more picking up your messes  
No more cooking all your meals  
Headline! Stop the presses  
Can’t tell you how good it feels

Pour me another shot of freedom  
Par-tay all night long  
Memories, honey I don’t need ‘em  
I drink ‘cause you’re finally gone … (repeat)
With the unveiling of its new website in April 2011, NABE leaders have made the call to take its next big evolutionary step of rebranding the Association as part of efforts to market its changing look.

In late 2011, the board tasked a select group from within the Communications Section, headed by Steven Valdez, Communications Director for the Louisville Bar Association, and a committee of NABE communications professionals from across the U.S., to move forward with the biggest piece of the rebranding puzzle, creating a new identity.

Valdez is no stranger to rebranding projects after just completing an award-winning redesign of the Louisville Bar Association’s logo in 2010. He commented, “It was a major undertaking but with the right team in place, we were able to accomplish a great deal in a short amount of time.” Jenna Grubb, NABE Communication Section chair, stated, “I was delighted to entrust the project to Steve and his excellent committee. Thanks to all for responding to NABE’s needs.”

“While rebranding is often a timely and expensive (and sometimes risky) endeavor, we are fortunate that NABE leaders have thrown caution to the wind and tapped the creative talent within its own membership to tackle this daunting task,” stated Valdez. The goal set forth by the new committee is to eliminate the current inconsistencies and “build a unified image that will convey the diverse and unique nature of NABE in its work, people and mission.”

The problem of inconsistency in any branding effort often brings mixed messages, confusion and loss of interest amongst members, vendors and more importantly, the general public. As any communication professional understands, and as Andre Agassi so eloquently stated in his Canon commercials of the early ‘90s, “image is everything.”

Image is a succinct but complete embodiment of everything an association stands for. The best brands are recognizable, memorable and let you know what they’re all about with just a glance; it’s what brings us together as one.

That’s what we’re all about, right?

In its 70-plus year history, NABE has provided countless hours of training and enrichment opportunities to bar executives across the country. In that time, NABE has also experienced numerous changes within its ranks as well as rapid growth in technology and other areas.

This constant change has brought forth the need for an image makeover, a makeover that will exemplify the new ideals, the creative prowess and technical savvy that a new generation of ‘NAB-sters’ brings with them; a modern approach that will transcend time and embody the eagerness and enthusiasm of a growing membership while meeting changing member demands and to remain relevant and profitable.

Today, bar associations across the country are working harder than ever to serve the ‘greater good.’ As staff and resources are stretched to the limit and budgets continue to shrink, you can be confident that the new and improved NABE brand will remain true to its mission of providing support and services to enhance the skills and enrich the professional lives of ALL NABE members.
For more conference materials and links to more photos from NABE Comm in Nashville, visit http://www.tba.org/nabecomm/

Meet ‘n’ Three Roundtable

NABE KNOWS NASHVILLE

Mayor Karl Dean

Mad Men (& Women)

Presentation Skills

The Title Fight: Print vs. Digital
Join us in the Mile High City for the 2012 NABE Communications Workshop

October 9–12, 2012
At the Curtis in Downtown Denver

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After you’ve enjoyed the conference, stay for the Great American Beer Festival, Oct. 11–13, only a couple blocks from The Curtis Hotel. More information to come on group ticket possibilities.