



‘Doing What We Can, When We Can, Where We Can’

GROWING UP, I WAS ACTIVE IN THE SCOUTING PROGRAM. I was the beneficiary of many kind and dedicated Scout leaders along the way, but the one who most often comes to mind is Don Dale, a quiet man of inner strength and faith. One of the things that Mr. Dale often did as we were traveling to and from Scout camps was stop the van and make the Scouts pile out and pick up any debris that he spotted along the road. On one occasion, I grumbled that it wasn't our job to clean up someone else's trash along the highway. Overhearing me, Mr. Dale asked me what I thought my "job" was. I started listing off my responsibilities in the Scout troop, but Mr. Dale stopped me and said, "Steve, you have only one job, and it's the same job we all have: to do what we can, when we can, where we can."

The last week of July, it was my pleasure to attend the State Bar of Texas Local Bar Leaders Conference in Houston, along with hundreds of other Texas attorneys. This annual conference offered inspiring educational sessions and lively networking opportunities for leaders in the more than 275 local, regional, and specialty/affinity bar associations across the state. Congratulations to Chair Leslie Dippel and the Local Bar Services Committee for putting on this successful and well-attended event. At the conference, I found it so refreshing to spend time with attorneys who had just begun their service to the profession in their communities, working shoulder to shoulder with other local lawyers on a variety of projects.

The State Bar of Texas is a self-governing bar. It is volunteer-driven, at both the local and the statewide level, inviting lawyers—wherever they work and live—to roll up their sleeves and participate in the governance and good work of the legal profession. For all of us, it would be easy and tempting to keep our eyes on our cases and matters and to do little or nothing involving our profession that cannot be billed to a client. But, in doing so, we would miss the greater role of lawyers in our society, which is, as Thomas Jefferson described it, to be a "public citizen," using our education and experience to promote the public good.

The wide variety of programs and activities offered by local and specialty bar associations throughout Texas offer endless avenues for attorneys to volunteer in meaningful ways. Such opportunities for service include providing pro bono legal assistance to veterans and low-income Texans; mentoring young and newly licensed lawyers; speaking and writing on CLE topics; participating with other local lawyers in community service projects such as building homes for the needy, delivering meals to shut-ins, or working in area food banks; speaking in local schools about legal careers and the rule of law or coaching mock trial/moot court teams; organizing health and wellness activities for area attorneys; facilitating social gatherings and networking opportunities; and participating in the leadership and governance of bar associations.

Local bar associations offer something for everyone! So, if you are not already engaged with your legal community, I invite you to take a break from your billable hours, reach out to a local bar association, and dive right in. If you don't know how to connect with a bar association in your area, then go to texasbar.com/localbars for an alphabetical roster (with links) of all local, regional, specialty, and statewide bar associations in Texas, or simply email localbars@texasbar.com.

Do what you can, when you can, where you can!

STEVE BENESH

President, 2024-2025

State Bar of Texas



ABOVE: Steve Benesh and State Bar of Texas Immediate Past President Cindy Tisdale (left) with Leslie Dippel, chair of the State Bar's Local Bar Services Committee. PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE BENESH