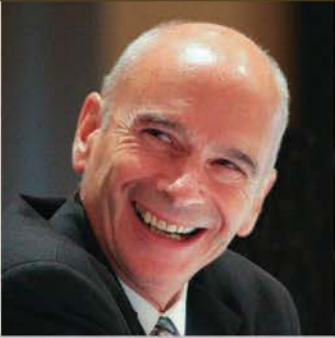




# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## Professionalism in the Legal Profession

Thomas R. Tinder, Executive Director  
West Virginia Bar Foundation

Thomas R. Tinder is the executive director of the West Virginia Bar Foundation, the state's philanthropic organization for the legal profession and the justice system. His work experiences include almost a decade with profit and non-profit businesses, more than a decade with county and state governmental entities and more than two decades with legal professional organizations.

Mr. Tinder's community service experiences include international, national, state and local non-profit groups, philanthropic activities and involvement in education, humanitarian and law related initiatives, as well as pro bono legal work. His civic engagement experiences include appointments to boards and commissions with local and statewide responsibilities, in addition to serving as a mediator in more than 250 cases. He has been honored for service leadership by national, state and local entities.

He received his undergraduate degree in business management and his law degree from West Virginia University College of Law.

Lawyers are leaders in every community.

That is a seemingly outrageous and bold statement; but, nevertheless, it is true and correct. Without valid contradiction, it can be stated that every single one of the 4,857 active, practicing lawyers here in West Virginia is involved in at least one activity, service or program that benefits the community, as well as engaged in some worthwhile civic endeavor.

As women and men enter law school, they learn that every person is "innocent until proven guilty," that the scales of justice are evenly balanced and that everyone should be treated in a fair and equitable manner. They are taught that lawyers provide a service by representing the interests of their client, whether their client is an individual, a group of people, an organization or a governmental entity. They realize that they will become members of the legal profession and that

they must have high standards of ethical conduct and professionalism.

After graduating law school and being admitted to the practice of law, they have an understanding that West Virginia, and the entire United States of America, is a society of laws. Our democracy is built on a legal foundation and every citizen is bound by the rule of law. The legal system protects each of us from the harmful acts of other individuals or our government. It logically follows that lawyers extend their commitment to fairness and justice beyond their work responsibilities, to their own personal areas of interest and commitment.

So, they participate in every type of community endeavor that is available – assisting groups, organizations and individuals of every age and socio-economic demographic. And they serve in every conceivable capacity: as leaders,





as followers, all-in, as needed, once in a while, as founders, advocates, advisors, committee members, etc.

With lawyers located in every one of West Virginia's 55 counties, they use their legal experience and expertise to provide pro bono (free) legal assistance, guidance to students at West Virginia University College of Law and participating in public presentations and speeches. There also are many programs and services presented to the public by the West Virginia Supreme Court, local Circuit Court and Family Court Judges and various statewide and local bar associations.

In addition, it is a rare local school activity or local school sports event, social or cultural program, work of a non-profit group or a religion oriented project that does not receive financial contributions, and personal participation, from lawyers and law offices to help guarantee its success.

West Virginia's lawyers are working every day to improve the quality of life within the state. They represent their clients' interests in accordance with ethical and professional guidelines. Then, they leave their work environment and give their skills and abilities to their communities in

order to, again, enhance the lives of their fellow citizens in their own neighborhoods, from Berkeley Springs to Bluefield, from Williamson to Wheeling, and all areas in between.

The first sentence of this article stated: "Lawyers are leaders in every community." Check it out. You will undoubtedly find lawyers as officers and board members in almost every group and organization, providing free or reduced cost legal services for people in need, volunteering for worthwhile activities, financially supporting charitable events and giving their attention to leadership opportunities to benefit their neighbors.

So, when you hear someone take Shakespeare out of context: "The first thing we do is kill all the lawyers," stop and think about how much worse people's lives and civil society would be without lawyers and the time, effort, expertise, and financial support that they give to every aspect of community service and civic engagement here in "Almost Heaven," West Virginia and across our great nation.

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## CONTRIBUTING TO THE VITALITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES



**Sandra M. Murphy**  
Charleston, WV

Sandy invested hundreds of hours as the chair of the Partners Implementing an Early Care and Education System (PIECES) Advisory Council, which issued a detailed report on the governance of early childhood, developed quality standards and examined financing of an early child care and education program. She also is a member of the Citizen's Council on Children and Families and the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation Development Committee.



**Stuart A. McMillan**  
Charleston, WV

Stuart is chairman of the YMCA of Kanawha Valley and a member of the dean's advisory council at the West Virginia University College of Law. He also is chairman of the Lawyer Referral and Information Service, a program of the West Virginia State Bar.