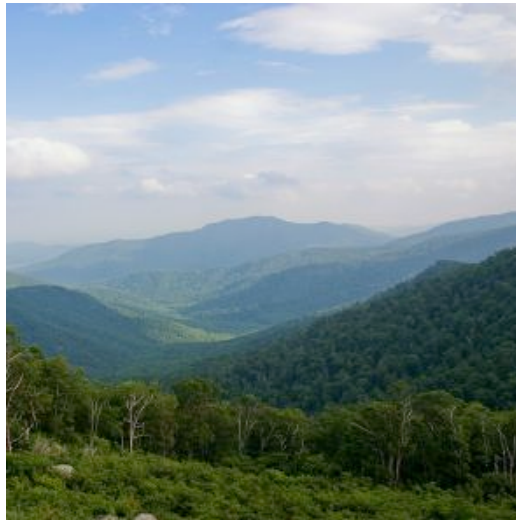




2014-2015 Lunch Schedule

Mark your calendars for this year's upcoming luncheons

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VWAA Article in the RBA Newsletter

Preview an excerpt of our RBA Bar Review article on our chapter's history

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VWAA Mission

- To advance the interest of women attorneys in Virginia;
- To encourage their mutual improvement and social interaction;
- And to promote the interests of women under the law.

Looking to the Year Ahead

Jennifer Dean, VWAA Roanoke Chapter President

There is a lot to look forward to in the upcoming months. The 2014-2015 year will be focused on connecting our members with one another – online and offline – to strengthen our professional ties within our chapter. We have a number of activities planned to build our presence in the Roanoke legal community, including continuing our very popular luncheons, annual Judicial Reception, as well as exploring the possibility of giving back to our community through a service event.

Some of the new features of our Roanoke Chapter include this newsletter, which will be published monthly, as well as a Roanoke Chapter Facebook group and a Member Case Referral Chart. It is my hope and goal that we engage these resources in a way that highlights our shared experiences and taps into the potential we hold as a community of women lawyers.



ROANOKE BAR REVIEW

Excerpts of VWAA Article in the RBA Bar Review written by Leigh Strelka and Jennifer Royer

At the time the VWAA was created, only one thousand women attorneys were licensed in Virginia. None of the Commonwealth's 108 Circuit Court Judges were women; there was only one female General District Court Judge and two Juvenile and Domestic Court Judges (for a total of 3 women out of 277 judgeships).

Today, diversity has increased in the bar and on the bench and there are multiple VWAA chapters throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, to include chapters in Roanoke, Northern Virginia, Richmond, Hampton Roads, New River Valley, Loudoun, Fredericksburg, and Prince William. VWAA has sponsored and supported events such as a reception for the then newly appointed Supreme Court Justice

Sandra Day O'Connor in 1981 all the way to a CLE and program on human trafficking to be held in June 2014 at the Virginia State Bar Annual Meeting. The Roanoke Chapter of the VWAA, which was then known as the Roanoke/New River Valley Chapter, was officially recognized as a chapter by the state organization in 1987. Over the years, the local chapter has grown from informal lunch meetings of four to five women in the mid to late 1970s to a chapter proud to boast 46 current members.

In the 1970s, women attorneys in the Roanoke Valley met as a means of support: to discuss the unique challenges of practicing in a career field long dominated by their male counterparts, to find support in their endeavors to balance the needs of their families with the

demands of their profession, for professional support and practice tips, and for simple social camaraderie. Networking, mentorship, and professional and personal support continue to be the hallmarks of the Roanoke chapter.

Over the years, the Roanoke chapter has offered its members unique programming opportunities, including topics on financial planning, maintaining a life/work balance, time management skills, communication styles and effective communication techniques, and stress reduction in addition to topics on current legislative issues, legal ethics, legal research tips, mediation, bankruptcy, and representation of children in the courts, among others.

To read the full version of the article, see the [RBA Bar Review June 2014 issue](#).



Get to Know Robyn Ellis, Esq.

A graduate of Salem High School, the University of Virginia and the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at the College of William and Mary, Robyn was a partner with a large law firm in downtown Roanoke, Virginia before establishing Robyn Smith Ellis PLC in the spring of 2008. Her practice centers on wills, trust and estate planning. Robyn's interest in working with older people developed out of her strong relationship with her grandparents.

Q: What made you decide to practice law in the Roanoke region?

A: I am Salem born and Salem bred, and I always knew I would come back to Salem after I was done with school. Family is very important to me, and I have a very close relationship with my mother, siblings, nieces and nephews, and now even a grand nephew. My husband's parents also live here. Practicing law is much easier with the kind of support network I have.

Q: What is the most challenging aspect of your practice?

A: I work a lot with families where a loved one is suffering from a serious illness or needs nursing home care. I also work with families where a loved one is recently deceased or is suffering from mental illness. Many days my job feels like social work.

I always have a plentiful supply of tissues in my office because many clients are tearful and emotional. Some days can be rough, and I

have a lot of empathy and sympathy for families going through tough times. I think it can be challenging to respect a client's delicate emotions while pushing them forward to do the work that needs to be done.

Q: What is the most rewarding aspect of your practice?

A: I remember Professor Donaldson at William & Mary talking about how rewarding a wills, trusts and estates practice can be. It is generally true that the people that I work with are united in a common goal. I do not get involved in litigation and am only sometimes involved in family squabbles. My clients frequently express their gratitude for helping them. I get lots of hugs.

Q: If you were to write a book, what would the title be and what would it about be?

A: My favorite books ever were the books written by Judy Blume. If I wrote a book, it would probably be for the same audience, young girls

and teens. It would be about a young girl triumphing over some adolescent difficulty. I could call it "Pretty is for Now, Smart is Forever." (This is something my mother used to tell her daughters.)

Q: What is one of the bravest things you have ever done?

A: The bravest thing I think I have ever done was making the decision to quit my big firm job to take a chance on hanging out my own shingle. It is something I always wanted to do, but never thought I would do. Looking back at the circumstances when I opened my own office, sometimes I think I was crazy that I did it. (I had three children who were 6, 4 and 5 months at the time.)

Taking that chance was a great decision for me personally and professionally. It changed the way I looked at myself from an anonymous worker bee in a big firm to a business owner in the community who is recognized and associated with wills, trusts and estates and elder law.

We will be featuring a Q&A with different members of our local chapter in each monthly newsletter. If you are interested in being featured, please contact Jennifer Dean at Jennifer@poarchlaw.com



+ Event Schedule 2014-2015

September

Wednesday, September 3rd
Noon Luncheon at Carlos

October

Wednesday, October 1st
Noon Luncheon at the Quarter

November

Thursday, November 6th
Noon Luncheon at Blue Apron

December

Thursday, December 4th
Evening Judicial Reception at Schaal's

January

Wednesday, January 7th
Noon Luncheon at Carlos

February

Thursday, February 5th
Noon Luncheon at 202 Market

March

Wednesday, March 4th
Noon Luncheon at Blue Apron

April

Wednesday, April 16th
Noon CLE Luncheon at Schaal's

STAY CONNECTED ONLINE

FACEBOOK: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/VWAARoanoke](https://www.facebook.com/VWAARoanoke)

TWITTER: [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/vawomenattys](https://twitter.com/vawomenattys)