

Health & Wellness, Public Awareness, and the Law Seminar in Fort Myers, Florida

Ita M. Neymotin, Regional Counsel, Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel of the Second District Court of Appeal, with and Mr. Henry Lee Paul esq., hosted a Health & Wellness, Public Awareness, and the Law Seminar on November 15, 2019, in Fort Myers, Florida, with several wonderful guest speakers. The presentations by the speakers were educational and inspiring.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard opened the seminar by parading and presenting the national and State Colors.

Ms. Dori Foster-Morales, Esq., the incoming President of the Florida Bar Association, started the program by discussing the importance of mental health and the need to be both sensitive to potential problems and being willing to ask for help.

Dean Rachel Janutis, from Capitol Law School in Columbus, Ohio, discussed observable changes in mental health that begin when a student enters Law School, all the way up into the first few years of practice.

Mr. Eugene Pettis, Esq., a past President of the Florida Bar Association, spoke on the need for an attorney to be conscious of the responsibility they have to contribute to the larger community around them by giving of their time and energy; and the personal growth and mental benefits of doing so.

Mr. John Webb, Esq. the President of the Lee County Bar Association, spoke about how the Lee County Bar Association assists its members who might be having problems with mental health issues, and what kind of assistance is available to those same people.



Left to right: Mr. Henry Lee Paul, Esq., Dean Rachel Janutis, Esq., Ms. Ita M. Neymotin, Esq. Ms. Dori Foster-Morales, Esq., Ms. Jennifer Lucas-Ross, Esq., Ms. Kelly Fayer, Esq. Rear – Lee County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard

Mr. Henry Lee Paul, Esq., spoke about the importance of Standards of Professionalism, and how standards for behavior are becoming part of disciplinary proceedings. He also discussed various Florida Bar resources to help new attorneys and ones encountering difficulties, and emphasized the need for attorneys who are encountering difficulties to be willing to ask for help. He also discussed how various mental Health issues might lead to disciplinary problems, and emphasized that mental health issues can never excuse disciplinary infractions, but might help in mitigation.



Left to right – Mr. John Webb, Esq., Mr. Eugene Pettis, Esq. Ms. Ita M. Neymotin, Esq., Dean Rachel Janutis, Esq., Ms. Jennifer Lucas-Ross, Esq., Ms. Adriennette Williams, Esq., Mr. Henry Lee Paul, Esq.

Mr. Jonathan Martin, Esq. the past President of the Hendry-Glades Bar Association, gave a quite humorous lesson comparing and contrasting the attributes of both Attorneys and Politicians and how they approach certain professional challenges, responsibilities, and challenges. He then went into further detail about the expectations the legal profession lays upon an attorney and the best way to live up them.

Mr. Michael Higer, Esq., a past President of the Florida Bar Association, spoke on the the various ways stigma attached to mental health illnesses can affect the likelihood of Attorneys asking for or accepting professional help. He also discussed various stressors unique to the Legal Profession and how they can impact an Attorney in the execution

of their duties. He related several examples of how professionalism was declining and disciplinary issues were increasing before the mental health of its attorneys became a priority of the Florida Bar, and emphasized the importance of developing a meaningful life with concurrent mental health benefits.

Ms. Jennifer Lucas-Ross, of Ave Maria School of Law, spoke on the unique challenges that law students and new practitioners face. She provided statistics on anxiety, chronic stress, and depression afflicting young attorneys, and discussed how necessary it was for those same your attorneys to be willing to reach out to both mentors and peers for assistance, without fear of stigma.



Left to right – Mr. John Webb, Esq., Ms. Ita M. Neymotin, Esq., Mr. Michael Higer, Esq., Mr. Jonathan Martin, Esq., Ms. Ita M. Neymotin, Esq., Mr. Henry Lee Paul, Esq.



***Left to right – Ms. Ita M. Neymotin, Esq.,
Ms. Diana Golden, Ms. Lauren Baugh.***

Ms. Adrianette Williams, Esq., former Assistant Director of the Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism at the Florida Bar Association, discussed how responsibilities freely accepted can affect a person, and how decisions can have unforeseen consequence as well as affects then can be planned for.

Ms. Kelly Fayer, Esq. past President of the Lee County Bar Association, discussed the tools and strategies available to employers of persons in the Legal Profession to address the needs of their employees, such as deliberately creating cultures of acceptance; open and honest communication and a genuine sense of belonging, and maintaining flexibility with non-traditional work hours and time schedules.

Ms. Lauren Baugh, the Executive Director for the Fort Myers Bar Association, was present to show her support of the Mental Health message, as well as to enjoy the lectures and presentations for herself.

Ms. Ita Neymotin, Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel for the Second District Court of Appeal, spoke about professionalism, mental health and well-being as well as our justice system. Her presentation discussed the differences between the Soviet system she escaped from and our own. While the Soviet System was seen to be based only on luck and chance, and the accused were presumed guilty; our system has rights for the accused to prevent abuse and reduce injustices, and a presumption of innocence.

Dean Kevin Cieply, of the Ave Maria School of Law in Naples, Florida, discussed how maintaining a healthy body can affect the health of your mind, reduce the effects of stress, and create a general feeling of well-being. His lecture was informative and contained an in-depth discussion of the bio-chemical pathways and feedback mechanisms of the brain.

Staff Officer Scott Griffin, the head trainer for the Fort Myers Sheriff's department, spoke about the need to maintain situational awareness, and certain basic self- defense techniques that can be employed to prevent becoming a victim of crime violence. He also stressed the importance of a realistic approach to self-defense and being as aware of your own capabilities as possible.



Left to right –Ms. Jennifer Lucas-Ross, Esq., Ms. Ita M. Neymotin, Esq., Dean Kevin Cieply, Esq. Ms. Diana Golden.



***Left to right – Ms. Ita M. Neymotin, Staff
Officer Scott Griffin.***