

Valuing Our Community

The State Bar of Wisconsin continues to be a community where lawyers and other legal professionals can find common ground regardless of individual beliefs and backgrounds.

BY LARRY J. MARTIN



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Beginning in the 1930s, my Grandma Martin began collecting little cardboard houses and lead molded figurines from local five and dime stores, to place under the family Christmas tree. Over the years this became known as “Martinsville.” As a child I would lie in front of the tree and imagine various stories of the people who lived in the “village.” After my grandma passed away, I inherited her village, and each Christmas, I lovingly spend hours reassembling this tranquil setting.

As I have gotten older, I have come to see the village as more than just a nearly 100-year family tradition. Each house, each figure has its place. Together, they make up and represent something that I have come to highly value in life – community.

The holidays, for me, have always been a time of reflection. It’s a time to think about all that has happened in the past year, the good and the bad, the happy and sad. Inevitably my thoughts turn to the various communities of which I am a part: my family and friends, my neighbors, and the people I work for and with.

I have always believed that the State Bar of Wisconsin is more than a fee-for-service non-profit. It is a community and one I highly value. In the age of Zoom calls and virtual meetings, it is still vitally important that we take time to connect with each other in person, rather than as one-dimensional figures on a screen.

Being able to connect on a personal level at the Wisconsin Solo & Small Firm Conference or our Annual Meeting & Conference brings value beyond simply earning one’s continuing legal education credits. It is an opportunity to connect with colleagues and build friendships across practice areas and across the profession.

It takes a community of over 800 members, coming together each year to keep the State Bar moving forward. I marvel at the relationships that are built and the professional connections made while in service to the profession. Throughout Wisconsin are vibrant local and affinity bars that also bring members together, building interconnectedness.

In an age when our politics and social discourse have become more divisive, we need to work together to build community and find common ground. Now, more than ever, we must seek and create opportunities that allow us to better understand each other and how each of us views the world.

In whatever way you celebrate the season, I hope you take time to relax, unwind, and reconnect with the communities most important in your life. Spread a little kindness along the way and seek opportunities to learn about the cultures and traditions of others. Our village will be better for it. **WL**

