

# Stepping Up in Service to Our Communities

State Bar of Wisconsin members and staff play essential roles in their communities by volunteering in a variety of ways.

Recently I read a newspaper article that reported that volunteerism in the United States is on a long-term decline. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and AmeriCorps survey, formal volunteer participation across our country was only 23.2%, dropping seven percentage points just in the last few years.

Thankfully, that has not been my experience working with Wisconsin's legal community, as well as my colleagues at the State Bar of Wisconsin.

Volunteerism and elected volunteer leadership continue to be the lifeblood of our association. It takes a legal village to run our organization. Thanks to over 800 members annually serving in various capacities, we remain a strong, member-driven organization.

I have always believed that there is nothing more sacred that a person can give than their labor. It is not lost on my colleagues and I that the people we work for, through their volunteer efforts, are an integral part of the civic, social, and political life of their communities. Observe any community in Wisconsin to see who is serving on local nonprofit boards, religious organizations, civic groups, or governmental bodies, and you will find lawyers giving of their time, talents, and treasure.

It is not surprising then that those individuals who work for you share the same ideals and commitment to giving back, whether it is through local community service or as elected and volunteer leaders in professional organizations. Allow me to offer just a few examples.

Annette Ashley, our director for professionalism and engagement, just finished 12 years on the Middleton-Cross Plains School Board, including a stint as board president. I don't think there is a tougher elected job than overseeing the education of children, while managing the spending of property taxes.

Jennifer Peters, our chief human resource officer, and her family annually volunteer at the Special Olympics track meet; and Shannon Green (communications writer) gives of her musical talent performing at Make Music Madison each June. She's even been known to fiddle a tune at the State Bar Center on Saint Patrick's Day.

Jackie Jacobson (finance manager), Megan Meyer (CLE program coordinator), Mike Wiltse (public relations manager), Devin Martin (grassroots outreach coordinator), Margie DeWind (attorney editor), Tom Mixtacki (facility assistant) and others help as poll workers on election day.

Each year, just ahead of Memorial Day, our Marketing Team walks through a local cemetery, marking veterans' graves with U.S. flags. They started doing this in honor of one of our long-time colleagues, Tod Florey (graphic designer), who served our country in the Army Infantry in Vietnam.

As for me, I recently joined the board of Old World Foundation, which supports Old World Wisconsin. Not surprisingly, the board includes an attorney, Jennifer Johnson, also on the State Bar's Board of Governors.

Like so many of you, your State Bar staff is helping make our corner of the world a better place. I could not be prouder of each of them as they serve others. **WL**

BY LARRY J. MARTIN

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Larry J. Martin is the executive director for the State Bar of Wisconsin. Tweet him @LarryJMartinED. View the digital article at [www.wisbar.org/wl](http://www.wisbar.org/wl).

[lmartin@wisbar.org](mailto:lmartin@wisbar.org)



Just prior to Memorial Day, State Bar staff place U.S. flags at veterans' graves at Forest Hill Cemetery, Madison.