

Get to Know the YLD Chair, Jonas Seigel

Katrina Homel (KH), assistant editor of Dictum:

How would you describe your current practice?

YLD Chair Jonas Seigel (JS): Seigel Law is a small firm focusing on catastrophic injury, wrongful death, and medical malpractice matters in Ridgewood and Red Bank, New Jersey. Unlike most firms with similar practice areas, we only take a small number of cases, which allows us to provide the personal interaction that clients/families need after experiencing serious injury or death. Our trial attorneys are all certified and our doctor-lawyer is always available to explain the most complex of medical conditions. In addition to priding ourselves on the work we do in the courtroom, we are equally as proud of the community service and charity work we accomplish out of the courtroom.

KH: What were your first steps out of law school?

JS: My first steps out of law school were unforeseen and spontaneous—after Hurricane Katrina destroyed most of the Gulf Coast I headed down to New Orleans and volunteered with New Orleans Habitat for Humanity. I planned to stay for a week, but ended up staying for several months, living in a tent and supervising a roofing crew. Once I returned to New Jersey, my goals were simple: 1) learn medicine, 2) gain courtroom experience by litigating every case I could get my hands on, and 3) get involved with the county bar associations, as well as the New Jersey State Bar Association.

KH: How did you first become involved in the Young Lawyers Division?

JS: Because I did not go to law school in NJ, clerk for a judge in NJ, or work at a large firm, I knew that I would have to rely on myself to market and build relationships. Back in 2008, I begged my supervising attorney to let me attend the New Jersey State Bar Association Annual Meeting in Atlantic City and was allowed to go. As a young attorney, it was by far the best decision I ever made. To this day, I am extremely close with many of the lawyers I met at my first Annual Meeting. I began attending YLD events and worked my way on to the YLD Executive Committee, as well as serving as chair

of the Young Lawyer Division and section of the Bergen and Passaic County bar associations.

KH: How has the YLD helped you in your career?

JS: Being active with the YLD has helped me get to know my adversaries and the judges on a personal and social level. It's always nice to walk into a courtroom or an arbitration having planted trees in Newark together or having been introduced at the Far Hills Race. The marketing component has also been extremely helpful. Many of my best referral sources were born out of the YLD.

KH: What made you want to become chair of the YLD?

JS: I never wanted to be chair of the YLD. I just wanted to catch up with friends and do my part. As I see it, the YLD/NJSBA is my union, and I have a responsibility to help my fellow members and staff make the practice of law better for tomorrow than it is today. My philosophy really stems from the idea that there were so many lawyers and bar association staff who helped me get to where I am and I could never pay it all back, but I could pay it forward.

KH: What has been the most rewarding experience you've had while being involved with the YLD?

JS: I have had several rewarding and humbling experiences while being involved with the YLD, from starting the Young Lawyers Symposium to donating weekends to write wills for our first responders through the Wills for Heroes program. However, the most rewarding experience I had was when I received the Young Lawyer of the Year Award. The accomplishment had stemmed from my community service and work with the bar associations, but more importantly from a motorcycle death case. What made the case special was that the deceased motorcyclist's family was denied representation by several of the larger PI firms because the police and insurance companies attributed fault to the deceased motorcyclist. I believed in the family and was able to find surveillance footage identifying the at-fault motorist and a receipt for an industrial piece

of equipment connecting the motorist to his corporate employer. Not only was I able to identify the man who killed the motorcyclist, I was able to obtain a large seven-figure settlement via *respondeat superior*. Resolving the case and providing the family with a better life was a blessing and, to be recognized by my colleagues in the YLD, my most rewarding experience.

KH: What goals do you have for the YLD this year?

JS: My goals this year are to take the YLD Executive Committee meetings out of the Law Center and on the road to parts of the state that have been overlooked for years. I attend YLD events at the county and state level, as well as new lawyer events in other organizations, and I have learned that young lawyers want to have a voice and want to get involved. It's tough when we only have meetings in New Brunswick with fellow executive committee members. So I am excited to meet throughout the state this year and give young lawyers the opportunity to join their union, or at least have their voice heard. I am also excited to get out of the conference room and in the trenches. This year I have reduced the number of executive committee meetings in order

to cultivate the relationships of our county brothers and sisters. I have noticed a strong disconnect between the county and state bar leadership. By spending less time in a conference room talking about how to grow our membership or what young lawyers want, we can actually do something about it. Less talk and more action goes a long way in my book. Lastly, I look forward to our Young Lawyers Symposium, Far Hills Race, community service projects, but most importantly the opportunity to listen to the next generation of attorneys on how we can better a fantastic organization.

KH: How can new members get involved with the YLD?

JS: New members can get involved by attending one of our events, checking out our website/social media posts, or by simply emailing me at JSeigel@SeigelLaw.com.

KH: Is there anything else you would like the YLD to know about you?

JS: I enjoy southern cooking, cheap beer, and a good fight...often in that order. ■

Do You Have Something to Say?

Do you know something that you think other members of the YLD should know? Why not submit an article or announcement to the YLD's newsletter, *Dictum*?

In the future, we would like to publish articles about:

- Professional development tips
- Law school debt: Living with it, and paying it off
- Mental health issues faced by young attorneys and resources available for those who need help
- Diversity: What does it mean for young lawyers?
- Clerking: How did you get your clerkship and how did you make it a success?
- *Pro bono* experiences: Do you have a story about your experiences to share?
- E-filing and bail reform: Are these topics impacting your practice or your clients?

We are also open to publishing other submissions of interest to young lawyers, so don't let this list of topics limit your writing. Submissions to *Dictum* should be around 1,500 words or less, and concern something of interest to young lawyers. **The deadline to make it into the next edition of the newsletter is Nov. 27.** Please email anything you would like considered for publication to *Dictum*'s editor, [Emily Kelchen](#), with *Dictum* in the subject line.