

**APPLICATION FOR JETT AWARD  
LESSONS IN LAW  
(Court Observance Day Activities)**

**I General Description of Your Program:**

- A. Official Title of Program:** Lessons in Law
- Classification:** Medium Chapter (26 members)
- Category:** CLE Series of Related Topics (Court Observance Day Activities)
- Chapter:** RLSA . . . *the association for legal professionals*
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**B. Brief Description of Program:**

A legal education program for local high school students highlighting the NALS Education Committee's Court Observance Week theme of "Justice – How Can You Make A Difference?"

**C. Brief Summary of Program**

In recognition of Court Observance Week, **RLSA . . . the association for legal professionals**, created and sponsored the third annual "Lessons in Law" program at the John Marshall Courts Building. As in prior years, the program was marketed to local high school students who participate in a legal curriculum. A 45-minute interactive legal education session on the differences in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems was presented by the Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney from the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Division, using the "Lessons in Law" video series. The series utilizes video clips from the television show *Homicide: Life on the Streets* to bring attention to controversial legal issues. The students participated in group discussions, played the roles of prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges in a murder trial and completed student worksheets dealing with the subject matter. In addition to the legal education session, the Clerk of Court welcomed the students and provided an overview of the Circuit Court, a court reporter presented information on the role of the court reporter in a legal proceeding and provided a demonstration of real time reporting using testimony from a trial transcript read by students. The Sheriff's Department also provided an overview of security

issues affecting the courts building as well as a tour of the courts prominent areas, including the jury deliberation rooms and the prisoner holding cells

## **II. Judging Criteria**

### **A. Needs Assessment**

1. During review of Court Observance chapter activities, a decision was made to improve upon the practice of providing pastries and notes of appreciation to the local Court Clerk's offices. This practice did not adequately match the themes selected for court observance programs. Educational programs were researched and developed and the Lessons in Law series was adopted.

2. The content of the legal education program provided an opportunity for students in legal curriculums to expand their knowledge of court functions and procedures. It also gave them access to a real courtroom environment and encouraged discussion on choices and consequences in various legal scenarios.

### **B. Planning and Design**

1. The curriculum of the Lessons in Law series not only provided exceptional legal information in an understandable format, but was designed to lead students to consider choices and consequences of actions/behaviors which may need to be resolved through the court system. In addition to the 45-minute legal education session, a welcome and overview of the Circuit Court by the Court Clerk, a demonstration by a court reporter and a tour of the court facilities by the Sheriff's Department were planned to give the students a well rounded overview of the court system.

2. As in years past, planning for the event began several months in advance of the actual event. As the event was held in an actual courtroom of the John Marshall Courts Building, permission to use the facility was requested from the Chief Judge. At that time, invitations were provided to local schools to identify students who would benefit from the legal education program. Legal speakers were identified and local agencies, including the Virginia State Bar and Supreme Court, were contacted to provide interesting and relevant brochures and handouts to be included in student packets. Several law firms were contacted to provide folders and colorful pens as an added item of interest for the students and nametags were prepared for each presenter.

### **C. Logistics and Production**

1. The program was presented at the John Marshall Courts Building and the students were seated in an actual courtroom. As each speaker presented the various programs, the students were instructed as to the usual process, seating arrangement and equipment used during a legal proceeding. During the session, the students participating in the role play as the prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges, were introduced as such, giving more authenticity to the role play.

2. Each student was provided with a packet of basic legal education materials, including Judicial Circuits and Districts maps, the Virginia State Bar publication designed for young adults entitled “So You’re 18,” and the Supreme Court publication “Virginia Courts in Brief.” Program handouts and referenced code sections were also included in the student packets. The guest court reporter also provided information on the court reporting profession and schools offering training. (See attached copies)

#### **D. Budgeting and Finance**

1. The annual income/expenses of RLSA is approximately \$1,600.00.
2. The program was not funded in whole or in part by a grant from the NALS Foundation.
3. The program was not designed as a fundraising event. The program was offered strictly to provide legal education to local students and to encourage their future participation in the legal profession.
4. The budgeted amount for this year’s event was \$50.00, however, due to the need for copies of relevant code sections for use with the legal education session and the increased cost of speaker gifts, the budget was exceeded by \$70.00. The budget for the first year’s event was larger to account for the initial purchase of the Lessons in Law Video tape series.
5. Expenses for the program were as follows: Copy expense (\$50.00), speaker gifts (\$35.00), food and refreshments (\$30.00) and postage (\$5.00). Seven members were present at the event to set up and welcome students, distribute materials, serve refreshments, guide students during the tour of the courts building and provide clean up at the conclusion of the program, representing approximately 21 hours of service. Time was also spent by the Chairman in corresponding with speakers and agencies, contacting schools, preparing program materials and packets and purchasing speaker gifts and refreshments. This effort represents approximately 40 hours of service.

#### **E. Marketing, Promoting and Advertising**

1. Invitations, along with the program agenda were distributed by e-mail and/or mail to various local high schools. The program was also marketed, through the responsible attorney, to a Law Explorers program currently offered by McGuireWoods and Troutman Sanders. Their program and literature was made available at our event.

#### **F. Evaluation**

1. Students willingly participated in the group discussions, activities and tours. Participants in the program this year, as well as in past years, have expressed their appreciation for the program and have indicated that the topics covered were timely and relevant

and coordinated nicely with their classroom curriculum. A letter was received from one of the faculty members to inform us that her class used the information learned at the event in a current events activity at school and also discussed the legal topic with other students in detail in later weeks.

2. Chapter members worked as a group to plan and prepare for the event. Many hands were needed to secure the program materials used and distributed to the students. As this is the third year RLSA has sponsored the event, teachers from other schools have received word of the program and have become interested. Sponsorship of the program reflected positively on RLSA and the legal community.

3. Based on the positive feedback received from attendees, similar programs will be offered in the future. Students from other area schools may be invited to further increase attendance.