

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

JOHN E. KEEFE JR.

NJSBA Mentor Match Needs You



I have had tremendous mentors.

My first and enduring mentor, whose guidance I still rely upon, is my dad, John Keefe. To me he is Mickey Mantle.

I am fortunate that other big hitters have also played a role in my career.

Morris Brown was a guy who was a partner when I first started out trying cases at Wilentz Goldman and Spitzer. He was just a gentleman who was never afraid or hesitant to teach in the most genuine way possible. He exemplified what it meant to care for your clients and to serve the profession. He led by example.

Warren Wilentz, to me, was one of the great class acts of the bar. I learned a lot from Warren by watching and listening to him. And I learned from great trial lawyers sitting around the Middlesex County Courthouse.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever received from a mentor outside of the firm was from Bob Axelrod. He told me to always be myself.

"It's fine that you're watching, it's fine that you're listening, but don't try to be me; just be yourself," he said. That lesson has served me well.

That's what the mentors in my life have impressed on me—to take a little bit from the people you respect and admire and let that help shape who you are. I am extremely grateful for the mentors I have had throughout my career. Indeed, they helped shape the lawyer I am today.

The value of a meaningful mentoring relationship cannot be understated. Having someone you trust to ask questions of as you navigate the professional world can make the difference between struggling and success.

I know I have been lucky in that respect. And I know that not everyone has had such great mentors, or knows where to find one. With this fact in mind, the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA) is now launching Mentor Match, a program that blends traditional mentoring with the best features of online matching platforms, to help ensure all of our members can get the guidance and support they need.

Our aim is to provide mentorship for newer lawyers, those

looking to change specialties or who are in a state of transition, and those who work alone or in a small practice without a stable of colleagues who work just down the hall and are easily available for quick consultations.

What the program needs to successfully launch is experienced attorneys willing to share their time and expertise with attorneys who are new to the profession or those who seek guidance about a career or practice transition.

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It's not a heavy burden. Being a mentor means making yourself available through email, meeting for coffee or chatting over the phone about the issues another attorney is experiencing. It means bringing them to a NJSBA event and introducing them to a few folks so they feel comfortable at the meeting. It's not onerous, and it will be meaningful for both parties.

Signing up to be a mentor is easy. You can upload profile information straight from your LinkedIn profile. You can indicate how many mentees you want to work with, how long you want to work with them, what kinds of practice areas and questions you can provide help with and how you want to communicate with each of them.

Once we gather enough mentors, we will invite members to start signing up for a mentor. NJSBA staff is ready to assist you through the process, and we'll have resources available to ensure mentors and mentees know exactly what to expect.

It's important for our experienced attorneys to sign up today to ensure that we can fulfill our duty to help the future leaders of this profession. We owe it to ourselves and we owe it to them.

I hope you will consider participating in this new program created to provide mentorship and support to NJSBA members. I thank you for your continued support and volunteerism on behalf of the association.

Do good and do well; and be good to each other. ❧