

## **SPOTLIGHT ON TENNESSEE LAW SCHOOLS**

Saying Goodbye to the Nashville School of Law

By Chelsea Nicholson

This year marks my last year to walk through the halls of the Nashville School of Law. As a fourth-year night law student and member of the inaugural class on the new campus at Armory Oaks Drive in 2005, I can say without a doubt it's been a long journey to learn the law. Many a student at the Nashville School of Law works full-time during the day at their respective jobs, and learns the law at night. Rare is the student at NSL who does not work full-time in some sort of law-related profession, whether as a clerk, paralegal, court officer or even law enforcement officer.

I've had the benefit of working for some of NSL's distinguished faculty and have learned their jobs rarely end at 5 p.m. or on the weekends either. Yet, despite the fact that our instructors maintain what we call "day jobs" as lawyers and judges throughout the state, they always are available to students while performing these dual roles. This is our tradition.

### **Non-Classroom Opportunities**

Many students utilized internships and supervised practice this year with such organizations as local public defender offices, district attorneys offices and legal aid offices. The students may work and earn credit at these government offices and "practice" under the supervision of an attorney. I performed an internship at the Metro Public Defender's Office in Davidson County. As a student, getting to participate in the courtroom and interact with clients going through the system showed me how the law works in a much different way than the usual student setting does. Often as you read the law and learn it, you forget it is nothing more than a reflection of the people it serves. Understanding that concept has been a priceless gift.

### **Involvement in the Bar**

Yet again this year, the Nashville School of Law led the state in the number of student members joining the Tennessee Bar Association. At the TBA's fall membership drive, 33 NSL students joined the association – more than any other law school in the state. Many alumni and faculty attended the event, which provided a great opportunity for students to network with local lawyers.

### **Expanding Opportunities**

NSL is in its third year of offering two sets of classes, one that begins in the fall and one that begins in February. This staggered start has allowed more students to utilize the school and better accommodates students' employment schedules. In addition, more alumni and lawyers can be seen in the halls of the school taking advantage of a growing continuing legal education program. Through these and other improvements, the little law school that began in the downtown Nashville YMCA in 1911 continues to grow.

### **Year End Activities**

To end the school year, NSL will hold its annual recognition dinner on June 12. The event will honor faculty member John Lewis, a contracts instructor, and Tom Thurman, a graduate of the school who is now an assistant district attorney in Davidson County.

As for me, on May 23 I will graduate, say farewell to the Nashville School of Law and head out into the world of practicing law. But in the fall, the school doors will open again to new night law students, just as they have for almost 100 years.

*At the time she wrote this article, Chelsea was a 4L student at the Nashville School of Law. She is now a graduate, a law clerk to Jack A. Butler at Butler, Elkin and Associates and an intern at the Metro Davidson County Public Defenders Office to Laura Dykes. She also provides freelance writing and research for the Freemon Law Firm in Lawrenceburg and Hardin, Parkes, Kelley & Carter PLLC in Columbia. She can be reached at [nicholson.chelsea@gmail.com](mailto:nicholson.chelsea@gmail.com).*