



## Lawyers and Time Management by Jodi L. Wyman

---

Lawyer jokes always portray lawyers in a negative light. Hopefully, the public understands that unethical and dishonest lawyers are actually very rare. The vast majority of lawyers not only do an excellent job, but also make important contributions to their communities.

A Manitoba Bar Association survey from 2003 showed that the average Manitoba lawyer volunteers with three different community organizations. Lawyers spent an average of 99 hours a year doing volunteer work for charitable and not for profit organizations.

In Brandon alone, lawyers have been President or Chair of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Cancer Society, Multiple Sclerosis Society, CNIB, Chamber of Commerce, Big Brothers & Sisters, Brandon Kiwanis Club, YMCA, YWCA, Brandon Kinsmen Club, Brandon University Board of Governors and Alumni Association, and Assiniboine Community College. Local lawyers have been involved with Brandon General Hospital Foundation,

Crimestoppers, Elizabeth Fry Society, Westman Dreams for Kids, John Howard Society, Brandon Area Community Foundation, The Women's Centre, Brandon Rotary Club, to name a few.

Many lawyers also are involved coaching hockey, soccer, or basketball. They volunteer countless hours at their children's school or their church, join community theatre and numerous fundraisers. The skip of the 2008 world curling champion team, Jennifer Jones, is a practicing lawyer.

Both Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College have lawyers as educators.

Within their profession, lawyers are also active in the Law Society of Manitoba, the Canadian and Manitoba Bar Associations, and locally the Western Manitoba Bar Association. Lawyers donated an average of 52 hours per year to these types of organizations.

In Brandon and Winnipeg lawyers volunteer their time to present "Law Day" for the

public each April at the courthouses.

Those jokes about selfish and greedy lawyers do not reflect the actual professionals who take calls in the middle of the night from frantic strangers or who go to the jail or hospital on a Sunday morning to help someone, often with no guarantee of being paid. Many people laugh at lawyer jokes but on an individual basis are very loyal to their personal lawyer and would not group their own lawyer in with the negative popular conception.

The Manitoba Bar Association survey also had interesting results as to the amount of "non paid" legal work done each year. Manitoba lawyers spend an average of 48 hours each year doing free work, 58 hours doing reduced fee work and 211 hours on Legal Aid work. Given that lawyers in private practice have expenses to operate their businesses, the amount of time spent on free or reduced fee work does not fit with the stereotype of the greedy lawyer.

As well, lawyers have been

active in campaigning for more government funding of Legal Aid and making the legal system more accessible for the public.

The survey also showed that lawyers are involved in political activities, including canvassing, telephoning and assisting with election activities. Lawyers run for election to City council, school boards or their local rural municipalities.

Lawyers contribute countless unpaid hours to their clients and their communities. They are valuable members of many charitable and not for profit organizations. Hopefully this will someday be reflected in the content of lawyer jokes.