

## Resources for Lawyers New to Bankruptcy Practice

By Laura Donaldson, Kuni Donaldson, LLP

Our economy has created a recent increase in the number of bankruptcy filings. As a result, there are many faces new to the practice of bankruptcy law. Lawyers new to the practice need resources – ways to find answers to their questions or concerns, and/or to learn quickly how to handle a situation never faced before. Will the Trustee take this asset? Is this asset exempt? How do I serve this party? Where do I find bankruptcy forms? Who can I call when I have a question? You have the Oregon State Bar Bankruptcy Law book in your library arsenal, but it isn't giving you the answers you need.

At last year's Saturday Session, we recognized the need for such resources and formed a committee to address that need. The committee focused on what tools could be provided to members of the bar to provide quick answers and reduce the potential for malpractice claims. We then created a resource list of mentors and individuals willing to take a five-minute phone call or answer questions by email. The list includes attorneys from the Portland, Eugene, and Bend areas. The list of names and email addresses is available on the Debtor/Creditor website. If you would like it in advance, please email me at [laura@kunidonaldson.com](mailto:laura@kunidonaldson.com). In addition, Tips and Tricks for new practitioners from the bankruptcy court (ecf tips and tricks), Chapter 13 Trustee's office, and Chapter 7 Trustees themselves, as well as relevant articles from the Professional Liability Fund, will be gathered all in one place.

Here are other valuable links for information. Charlene Hiss and Mike Blaskowsky of the Portland bankruptcy court have developed a link on the bankruptcy court website ([www.orb.uscourts.gov](http://www.orb.uscourts.gov)) titled "Useful Contact Information" under "Information for Attorneys." This link provides contact information for the Court, Chapter 13 Trustees and US Trustees in the State of Oregon. The Debtor-Creditor website at [www.osb-dc.org](http://www.osb-dc.org) contains the contact information for each Chapter 7 Trustee and important document production requirements in Chapter 7 cases. Click on "Trustees" to find a list of Trustees and their contact information. The website of Chapter 13 Trustee Fred Long is [www.13network.com/trustees/eug/eughome.asp](http://www.13network.com/trustees/eug/eughome.asp) and the site of Chapter 13 Trustee Brian Lynch is [www.portland13.com](http://www.portland13.com). Each site contains resources and contact numbers for questions you or your clients may have about Chapter 13 issues.

Not sure how to handle a service issue on a Friday afternoon at 4:00 pm? Post the question to the Debtor-Creditor listserv – [debc-red-discuss@lists.osbar.org](mailto:debc-red-discuss@lists.osbar.org) – and you'll get the help you need. Members of the list include judges, debtor and creditor lawyers, state agency members, and others throughout the State of Oregon. Attorneys discuss an array of issues, including exemptions, stay violations, recent case law, service issues, procedural questions, foreclosure issues and more. It is a great resource for obtaining the opinions of members who have practiced in this area for years, as well as those up and comers who have a new outlook on our sometimes confusing Bankruptcy Code. Participation is open to all Debtor-Creditor Section members whose email addresses are

registered with the bar. Members are automatically signed up on the list serve; however, your participation is not mandatory.

ORCBA is a listserv for debtor's attorneys only. Discussions focus on representing clients in bankruptcy from the debtor's perspective. Attorneys must ask to be added to the listserv. The request is posted and current members vote on whether to allow the addition of a new member. This procedure is intended to ensure that lawyers who represent creditors or trustees are not privy to the discussion. It is similar to the NACBA (National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys) listserv but on a local level. If you are interested, contact Bret Knutson at [bknewton@yahoo.com](mailto:bknewton@yahoo.com) or 503-846-1160 to join.

Email is great, but networking is important too. Consider joining a local bar committee. You don't have to do much but attend and take in the fun and informative discussion. The Consumer Section (aka "The Circle of Love") meets every other month to discuss practical bankruptcy issues. Judges, lawyers (creditor and debtor), trustees (7 and 13), US Trustee attorneys, representatives of the IRS and Oregon Department of Revenue, and others address recent events in bankruptcy law, changes in procedure, new case law and comments. Recent speakers have included Tim Zimmerman of Vial Fotheringham and Stuart Cohen of Landye Bennett, who discussed ongoing HOA dues in bankruptcy and PLF issues relating to the same. Practitioners rotate bringing eats for all to munch on while the discussion takes place. Participation by telephone is available for those who cannot attend in person. Eugene has a similar committee. For information about the Portland committee, contact Laura Donaldson at [laura@kunidonaldson.com](mailto:laura@kunidonaldson.com) ; for the Eugene committee contact Natalie Scott at [nscott@mb-lawoffice.com](mailto:nscott@mb-lawoffice.com).

The New Lawyers Group is another resource for lawyers new to debtor-creditor practice. It used to be called the "Young Lawyers Group" but a number of individuals new to bankruptcy law didn't meet the criteria (including me – I exceeded the age requirement), so the name was changed. Three times a year the group holds panel discussions with Chapter 7 Trustees, Chapter 13 Trustees, the Professional Liability Fund, and the IRS, among others. The group also holds a social at the end of each year. This group is a great way to network with other attorneys. If you are interested, contact Christopher Coyle at [chris@vbcattorneys.com](mailto:chris@vbcattorneys.com) or 503- 241-4869 to see when the next meeting will be held.

The WOMBATS group was developed specifically for women in bankruptcy practice. The group meetings provide an opportunity for informal networking and exchange of information. This is a diverse group, with creditor attorneys, debtor attorneys, judges, members of the US Trustee's office and the like. Interested? Call Laura Walker at 503-224-3092 or email [lwalker@cablehouston.com](mailto:lwalker@cablehouston.com).

Finally, the Oregon State Bar Debtor-Creditor website at [www.osb-dc.org](http://www.osb-dc.org) should be a link on the desktop of every lawyer who practices bankruptcy law. It contains valuable information for the bankruptcy bar. Thomas Renn, Chapter 7 Trustee and past Chair of the Executive Committee has done a great job keeping the website up to date with relevant information and contacts. One of its features is a calendar of events including

meetings of all the committees described above. The site also lists committee chairs and contact information.

*This article was originally published in the OSB Debtor/Creditor Winter 2010 newsletter.  
This article is posted with permission.*