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Kane bar leader says engagement not limited to in-person events

BY LAURAANN WOOD

Law Bulletin staff writer

Conventional wisdom says the way to build a stronger bar group is by getting people in the door.

But Gregory C. Maksimuk, an associate at Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck LLP and the Kane County Bar Association's new president, said another, less-intuitive part of the formula also involves making access from a computer easier.

Maksimuk hopes to increase the amount of available online Continuing Legal Education credits available to KCBA members as an added alternative to seminars. By the time the feature is fully functional and developed, he said, the association will offer about 30 free hours of online CLE credit — twice as many as the Illinois State Bar Association's 15-hour offering.

Although adding online conveniences may seem counteractive to building a face-to-face community, Maksimuk and the KCBA's other leaders hope to keep an active social calendar to ensure members still gather and socialize with one another.

"We want to make sure that we continue to keep the camaraderie of the bar association," said Daniel R. Whiston, a partner at SmithAmundsen LLC who Maksimuk appointed as the group's social committee chair.

It's a closeness Maksimuk, 35,

said he sensed when he first became a member and joined the association's New Lawyers Committee.

Becoming chair of the New Lawyers Committee was his first taste of leadership within the bar, and he said his early involvement helped him gravitate toward larger roles and more leadership positions within the association.

Recognizing how a committee title can inspire greater involvement, one goal on Maksimuk's presidential to-do list includes naming more committee co-chairs to sponsor the group's KCBA Cares volunteer programming, something which traditionally has been sponsored by one member.

KCBA Cares is a monthly event where group members get together and serve local charitable organizations.

Maksimuk said the group generally sees the same participants each time they gather. On average, he said, 10 people is considered a good turnout.

He said he wants to change that by increasing member participation through the help of committee members' encouragement during meetings.

"It really boils down to providing community service and giving back to the community," he said.

Whiston said Maksimuk is a good leader for the group because his style allows for open



Gregory C. Maksimuk

discussion and debate.

"He's letting everybody voice their opinions as to where things should go, and as an ultimate decision-maker, he nurtures the good ideas and is respectful of those the board isn't capable of carrying out, in a nonconfrontational way," he said.

It's earned him quick respect among the leadership, Whiston said.

"I can call him a friend and not just a colleague," he said. "The reason I can do that is because he doesn't jump to a conclusion. He listens to everybody in the room."

And at the office, it's just one reason Maksimuk's colleagues at Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck say he's a good fit for his area of

practice.

Maksimuk mainly represents clients in divorce cases who have to address assets such as multiple-trust interests, multiple businesses or inherited wealth.

Given the high stakes and higher tensions in divorce proceedings, colleagues noted Maksimuk's knack for keeping his clients calm, attentive and agreeable.

"He has a good sense of keeping things in its right perspective, which I think is great," said Timothy M. Daw, a senior partner at the firm. "Otherwise, you wouldn't last long in this type of practice."

Daw said he quickly recognized Maksimuk's demeanor and intelligence when Maksimuk joined the firm in 2011.

"He can organize his thoughts and break down something that is highly complex and make it much more manageable for the client," he said. "All of those things are real necessary elements, especially if you want to practice at a very high level where very sophisticated clients are at stake."

Karen Pinkert-Lieb, a partner at the firm, said she's impressed by Maksimuk's ability to balance time between the firm, the bar group and at home with his 21-month-old son and 5-year-old daughter.

"I think he's discovered a way not to sleep because I don't know how he fits it all in," she said.