

BY DEAN R. DIETRICH

The lack of lawyers in rural and small communities negatively affects the economies of these communities and the well-being of their residents.



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# Moving the Profession Forward – Rural Practice Needs

The State Bar of Wisconsin is committed to showing the positives of a small-town practice and the opportunities that exist throughout Wisconsin.

Several midwestern states have the same conundrum – how to encourage lawyers to practice law in rural and small-town communities. Wisconsin is no different than any other state. The challenge of finding enough lawyers to meet the civil legal needs of individuals is the same challenge experienced by rural counties that are struggling to find lawyers to work in the criminal justice system.

The lack of lawyers in rural and small communities negatively affects the economies of these communities and the well-being of their residents. This is not a problem that can be fixed quickly; it will require the joint efforts of lawyers, local government leaders, Chamber of Commerce leaders, local bar associations, the Wisconsin Legislature, and the governor.

The State Bar of Wisconsin's Bar Relations Committee is concentrating on this issue and will be presenting strategies that can be used to open the doors for more opportunities for lawyers in rural and small-town communities. The focus should be on lawyers of all experience levels and areas of practice, as more lawyers are learning that they do not need to be in an office in a tall downtown building to enjoy a successful law practice.

Giving back to the community and enjoying nature are a few benefits of a rural practice. With the help of lawyers and law schools, the State Bar is committed to showing these and other positives of a small-town practice and the opportunities that exist throughout Wisconsin. Small-town lawyers can support this effort with stories and insights about the benefits of small-town practice and living in rural communities around the state. [See the related Rural Practice Series of articles in this issue.]

*Reminder:* Lawyer wellness is important. **WL**



## Lawyer Wellness: Occupational Considerations

*Things to do:* Cultivate personal satisfaction, growth, enrichment in work, and financial stability.