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## Hearsay

### Après Ski

It was not your typical gathering: 32 legal-services lawyers and 20 advocates from the American College of Trial Lawyers thrown together for a week on Wachusett Mountain in Westminister.

But it was the fulfillment of a vision for Boston lawyer Richard M. Zielinski, who heads up the Committee on Teaching Trial & Appellate Advocacy for the ACTL.

As chairman, Zielinski inherited an initiative to produce the first New England program that would deliver to legal-aid lawyers and prosecutors the kind of training normally provided only to advocates from major firms with enormous resources.

While the recent gathering was the second annual event, it marked the first commitment to "institutionalizing" the trial program, according to Zielinski.

He credits Ellen Hemley of Boston's Massachusetts Law Reform Institute for spearheading the recruitment of 32 interested "students" and five teachers with enormous experience in legal-services work.

The other 15 teachers, like Zielinski, were all volunteers from the ACTL, which invites less than 1 percent of all lawyers into its ranks based on years in practice, numbers of trials and actual performance.

The ultimate objective is to insure that the poorest clients have access to lawyers with training comparable to that received by high-priced lawyers schooled in expensive programs like those offered by the National Institute of Trial Advocacy.

Hemley is attempting to facilitate that objective further by building online interactive training through [www.legalaiduniversity.org](http://www.legalaiduniversity.org) for members of the New England Legal Services Consortium and other interested parties.

Zielinski also has a vision of building a nationwide library of materials from such programs and developing permanent strategic partnerships between groups like the ACTL and the NELSC.

He says that he and Hemley are currently looking for donors and people willing to contribute time and effort to their equal access objectives.

Zielinski asserts that participation in the annual teaching program is not just a teaching exercise either.

Participants got to see a specially produced film of "Academy Awards of the Courtroom," with clips from virtually every law-related movie, ranging from "To Kill a Mockingbird" to "My Cousin Vinny."

They also joined in folk songs while some, like Zielinski, got to strum a few notes on various six-string instruments.

"There was a palpable and memorable feeling of collegiality between the legal-services lawyers and the fellows of the college," he remarks.



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