

2016 Citizen Lawyers: J. Troy Smith, Jr.

By Michael Parrish

NEW BERN – Everyone at Ward and Smith, P.A. knows that Troy Smith loves to practice law. He can't hide that fact. His car is in early, he never stops smiling, and his office walls cannot contain his laughter and commotion. We also know that he, very quietly, has made a real difference in his community. You won't hear that from Smith.

We know that because Smith is often the first to pitch in to support the causes that are dear to his partners. Also, although Smith never says anything, we sometimes see that he has made donations in honor of his friends or a press release may mention his role in groups like the UNC Health Care System Board of Directors and the UNC Lineberger Board of Visitors.

Smith preferred to stay in the background, quietly making a difference with his dollars, his time, or his expertise. Smith says he stayed in the background because he was more comfortable "giving" than "asking." But that preference changed immediately when Smith was moved by the mission of the Boys and Girls Club and he decided that New Bern was going to have its own Club.

It started when a law partner asked Smith to donate to the Boys and Girls Club in Greenville. The request came with a brochure. That wasn't necessary. Smith was going to support it because his partner asked him to. But this time Smith did something he doesn't usually do. He went to the Boys and Girls Club website, and he learned a bit about the Clubs' programs and mission; their focus on mentorship, citizenship, and good character, and the help they give to young people who need it.

That clicked with Smith. He thought about the adults who had positively impacted his life through mentorship, good advice, and time. He knew there were many, many young people who did not have that advantage. He was impressed with the Boys and Girls Club, and then he was frustrated that New Bern did not have a Club. New Bern was the largest town in North Carolina without a Club.

Next, Smith visited Clubs in Greenville and Morehead City. He saw the students. He saw the impact. He was moved to action. After those visits, he set his mind to bringing a Club to New Bern, so that the young people in his community could have this opportunity.

He met with people within the Boys and Girls Club. They laid out the requirements for chartering a new Club – at least enough initial capital to fund operations for three years. They told Smith the fundraising would take years.

Then Smith went to work. He stepped out of the background. For the first time in his career, he "asked." He was moved to do so by his belief in the good that would come from a Club in New Bern. It didn't take years. He raised the money in two months. The

need for a Club in New Bern was obvious, but it didn't hurt that Smith was selling it and really believed in it.

Today, New Bern has its own Club with more than 100 students participating and benefitting. Smith won't let anyone say that the Club is here because of him, but we know that he wasn't going to rest until it was.

The Citizen Lawyer Committee of the NCBA Young Lawyers Division, in conjunction with the NCBA Citizen Lawyer Committee, provides expanded coverage of the 2016 Citizen Lawyer Awards in recognition of their volunteer service and leadership in their communities and beyond.

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