Niagara University Launches New Experiential Education Program for Lawyers and Professionals

NIAGARA UNIVERSITY, N.Y. (Sept. 12, 2014) – A judge, an attorney and even a gorilla came together last week to help launch Niagara University’s new CLE program.

Aimed at providing mandatory Continuing Legal Education (CLE) courses to attorneys, NU CLE has added a new experiential twist into the conventional world of CLEs, hoping to attract non-lawyers, business professionals and small business owners as well.

Last Friday’s NU CLE course incorporated theatrical acts into the program, using actors to complement Niagara County Supreme Court Justice Frank Caruso and lawyer Stuart Shapiro’s lecture on contracts. At the root of the fictional fiasco was a harmless, yet careless, gorilla who misplaces a banana peel, leading to liability disputes.

“The New Era legal team enjoyed the ‘Indemnity Onstage’ CLE program,” said New Era associate general counsel Patricia H. Lyle. “The Niagara University Theatre students were wonderful, and the presenters did a fantastic job of making insurance, indemnification and hold-harmless clauses entertaining.”

Next month, on Oct. 3, NU CLE brings a blockbuster panel of local lawyers and journalists to campus for a course titled “Media Management for Lawyers: What Every Attorney Should Know About Dealing With the Press.”

Channel 2 news anchor Maryalice Demler, Niagara Gazette reporter Rick Pfeiffer, Buffalo Law Journal editor Michael Petro, and Associated Press correspondent Carolyn Thompson are among the presenters. Though focused on attracting attorneys, NU CLE program director Ryan Thompson says that for such a low cost of $95, he expects anyone who can benefit from learning how to communicate with the media should also attend.

“We thought it might be nice to give attorneys a little bit of entertainment and hands-on experience to go along with the educational aspect of CLEs,” said Thompson, who is also the university’s assistant general counsel. “For instance, in November, our CLE course on NCAA bylaws will include a ticket to the Niagara University men’s basketball home opener later that evening. And we have another CLE course coming up that will deliver attorney ethics credits during a yoga class.”
George Shaikh, a contractor for the Canadian company Hamilton Glass Co., said that despite not being an attorney, he attended last week’s CLE course and expects to attend more.

“This series of courses can help anyone from administrators to contractors such as myself,” Shaikh said. “The CLE program at Niagara University was of extremely high caliber. The course package will be instrumental in helping me with future [legal] issues.”

In keeping with Niagara University’s charitable and Vincentian mission, NU CLE will also host a toy drive CLE in December that will focus on “the litigious world of toys, from patent battles to personal injury claims.” There will be no fee for the two-hour course, but attendees will be expected to bring toys to be donated to local children in need. A holiday reception will follow.

For more information, please call program director Ryan Thompson at 716.286.8324 or visit www.niagara.edu/cle.

To learn more about Niagara University, please visit www.niagara.edu.

**Niagara University**

Founded by the Vincentian community in 1856, Niagara University is a comprehensive institution, blending the best of a liberal arts and professional education, grounded in our values-based Catholic tradition. Its colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, and Hospitality and Tourism Management offer programs at the baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral level. As the first Vincentian university established in the United States, Niagara prepares students for personal and professional success while emphasizing service to the community in honor of St. Vincent de Paul.

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