

being compromised by the demands of our workplace or the expectations of our clients. Workshops, retreats, and regularly scheduled reflective sessions help participants articulate what is most important to them in the company of peers, sensitive and sympathetic. Hundreds of professionals and management folks who have benefited from Heart to Heart programming continue to meet monthly for mutual support.

The retreat was scheduled for the last weekend in February. The barren fields surrounding Loyola of the Lakes retreat house in south Akron were still covered with crusted snow, but there was a warmth inside as soon as the lawyers began greeting one another. It was a mixed group of veterans and newcomers, men and women, and I could not tell which one was the judge.

I don't mind admitting I was a little anxious as the days approached. Just minutes after we were underway, however, the anxiety dissolved and the stories flowed.

I opened with just two of my favorite lawyer jokes. This group had a great sense of humor. I did not pack the sessions with activities that way I do for junior high students, but I did invite the lawyers to do some problem solving with hose. (I get bundles of seconds from Sara Lee. They make women's hose. Items that are flawed are available for the price of shipping. See "Resources" on our web site.) Each participant was given a stocking with a loop knotted in each end. Once everyone was partnered, I invited them to place the loops over their wrists while making sure one hose was interlocked with the other. The instructions were simple: "Get unhooked, without slipping the knots off the wrist or untying them." Let the games begin.

Fr. Norm was the star of this episode. An intuitive extrovert, he saw the outcome of stepping through the partner's loop was not a solution, no matter how many times one or the other stepped through. He paused for a moment and slowly manipulated the slack hose until, to his surprise, he was free from his partner. I've never seen anyone do what he did with such speed and dexterity. But

he was not done. I had said just moments earlier that the game was over only when everyone was free. That didn't take long. Everyone concluded that the solution was simple though not readily apparent. Perhaps not unlike some of the cases they have tried to win!

The best part of the overnight was the personal sharing. Many of the lawyers spoke of clients whose stories had moved them deeply. The judge connected with a story I told about a former high school student and a note I had written to her at graduation. Mental illness would have been too much for her were it not for her church, her family, and that note I had sent. Our juvenile judge said this reminded her of one of "her kids," a young person who suffered from mental illness and had been through her courtroom a couple of times. It was not an easy story to tell

and the tears flowed freely when she revealed that this young person had committed suicide. Loads of safeguards were in place and this youth had been making progress. The loss was personal for this elected official.

In support of her moving witness, at least one of the lawyers commented that it was reassuring to know that a sitting judge could be so moved by the events in the lives of those who stood before their bench. It was a time for solidarity, support, and affirmation.

It turned out that I had gone to high school with one of the dozen lawyers. I had not recognized him at first but quickly remembered him well enough to recollect a few stories from the sixties. He asked about a former classmate and I was able to forward contact information after I returned home. Grateful for the retreat and the address, my old acquaintance sent a thank you note and a handsome check in support of our ministry. Thank goodness for billable hours.

So, how many lawyers does it take to build a memorable retreat? Experience tells me now that the number is irrelevant. It just depends on whether or not they meet heart to heart. You can be the judge.

*"First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. Then you win." ~ Gandhi*

