

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

LegalCURRENTS

Expand your horizons beyond your expertise

For years now, I've watched TED talks online whenever I was in the mood for thought provoking ideas. If you aren't familiar with TED, it is a nonprofit organization dedicated to spreading new ideas.

Its motto is "ideas worth spreading" and its goal is to provide free access to the best talks and presentations via annual conferences and online videos of the talks. The videos can be accessed at www.ted.com.

TED is an international endeavor and the annual conferences are held in Long Beach/Palm Springs, Calif., and Edinburgh, Scotland. The conferences feature talks that are 18 minutes or less given by some of the greatest thinkers across the globe, including Malcolm Gladwell, Al Gore, JK Rowling, Sheryl Sandberg, Julian Assange, Seth Godin, Bill Gates and Amy Tan.

Invitations to TED conferences are highly sought after and nearly impossible to obtain, and for those of us mere mortals who don't make the cut, the online videos are a very good substitute.

But, there's another option available as well: TEDx conferences (www.ted.com/tedx). These conferences have the same format as TED conferences, but are independently organized events that are "designed to give communities, organizations and individuals the opportunity to stimulate dialogue through TED-like experiences at the local level."

Although I was aware that Rochester had previously hosted its own TEDx conference, I'd never sought to attend. But after some encouragement from the co-panelists with whom I'd presented at the RIT Social Media and Communications Symposium, I decided to apply for a ticket to this year's TEDxRochester conference (www.tedxrochester.org). And, yes, like all TED conferences, you have to apply to attend and only 400 people are selected from the applicant pool.

Fortunately, my application was accepted, and last week I had the privilege to attend the third annual TEDxRochester, which was held at Geva Theatre. It was a wonderful experience and I found the topics discussed to be both fascinating and thought provoking.

The talks included: 1) a local graduate student describing his social entrepreneurial venture to distribute wind turbines to developing countries, 2) an Eastman School of Music professor discussing musical improvisation and its parallels outside the field of

music, 3) plans to create a skate park in the City of Rochester and the reasons that doing so would benefit our community and its youth, 4) a vision of bicycling as a primary form transportation and re-designing Monroe County to make it one of the most bicycle-friendly communities in the United States, and 5) a local physician outlining the cutting edge stem cell research that he and his colleagues are conducting at the University of Rochester and the many benefits of that research.

During the breaks, I spoke with fellow attendees and a recurring theme that emerged was how refreshing it was to listen to people speak passionately about topics outside of our respective areas of expertise.

We all agreed that because of time constraints and busy schedules, we tend to spend our time with others in our chosen fields and it is the rare occasion that we expand our horizons beyond our chosen professional focus. TEDxRochester was the perfect opportunity to do so.

Many also mentioned that listening to TEDxRochester speakers gave us a greater appreciation for our community and the passion and creativity of those who reside here. The conference provided us with the opportunity to reflect on the depth of Rochester, especially given its smaller size and locale, and its unique offerings, available in large part because of the universities, our community's large and small businesses, and the arts.

TEDxRochester was everything I'd hoped it would be and more. It was a refreshing change from my day-to-day routine and was nothing short of eye opening. I truly enjoyed having the opportunity to listen to the many talented and engaging speakers discuss their passions and their hopes for a better future.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience and I highly recommend that you consider attending a TEDx conference, if one is held in your community.

*Nicole Black is of counsel to Fiandach & Fiandach in Rochester. She co-authors the ABA book *Social Media for Lawyers: the Next Frontier*, co-authors *Criminal Law in New York*, a West-Thomson treatise, and is currently writing a book about cloud computing for lawyers that will be published by the ABA. She is the founder of lawtechTalk.com and speaks regularly at conferences regarding the intersection of law and technology. She publishes four legal blogs and can be reached at nblack@nicoleblackesq.com.*



By **NICOLE BLACK**

Daily Record
Columnist