

2015 National Conference of Women's Bar Associations
Women's Bar Leadership Summit: Forging New Paths – Women, Careers & the Law
Notes Abstracted from "Best Practices" Sessions

Chicago Bar Association

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National

Terry Harrell spoke on behalf of the **ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs**. Ms. Harrell wanted to inform everyone that the Commission gives every member someone to ask for help if they need it. Ms. Harrell stated that it was very important for everyone to be aware that the Commission's services are **confidential** (with minor exceptions). Ms. Harrell also explained that while the Commission helps with substance abuse issues, the Commission can also provide assistance with other personal problems such as coping with cancer and managing stress. Ms. Harrell stressed that it does not hurt to refer someone to the Commission, even if you are not sure what the exact issue is, because the referrals are confidential. Finally, the Commission is also available to conduct **presentations** that educate attorneys about wellness issues.

Arizona

Diana Theos spoke on behalf of the **Maricopa County Women's Lawyers Association**. Ms. Theos explained that the Association compiled a **list of committees and boards** that are available in the community to provide assistance to women attorneys looking to serve in those areas. The Association has also a **CLE program** to introduce women attorneys to the idea of volunteering on boards and committees that has been well received and is a model for the state-level association. The Association also has a very active **membership recruiting group**, and this summer had a contest, with prizes, to see which members of the Association would be able to bring in the most new members. The Association also has a mentoring program for new members, a judicial appointment committee, a monthly's mom's program, shopping and spa outings, and monthly CLE luncheons. Finally, the Association recognizes a woman each year at an annual wine and cheese reception.

California

Kathleen McDowell spoke about the **Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles' "Polish Your Professional Image"** event which provided members with a professional headshot to use on their firm's website or social networking site. The event was held at a Salon and provided members with a night of pampering, followed by a photo session with a professional photographer. Ms. McDowell also provided information about **"Food from the Bar"** which is a grassroots campaign started by lawyers to fight hunger among children in our communities. It consists of a month-long friendly competition in the spring among law firms and legal offices in which participants contribute money, donate food, and/or volunteer time sorting and packing food at the local food banks in their communities. Ms. McDowell urged individuals to get

involved in their community's Food from the Bar event or organize one, if there is not an active group in their area yet.

Colorado

Jessica Brown spoke about the **Colorado Women's Bar Association's** very successful Annual "**Moms Luncheon**" Program. Since 2010, the Association has hosted an annual luncheon for hard-working professionals juggling the joys and demands of motherhood. The aim is to provide support for working moms through shared interests, camaraderie, and an environment conducive to making it all work. A recent innovation was to group attendees according to the ages of their children and have guided discussions on topics related to parenting those specific age groups.

Florida

Robin Bresky, the immediate past President of the **Florida Association for Women Lawyers** shared information about the Association's **Membership, Advancement and Placement Program** ("MAPP"). This program helps women apply for and secure positions in the judiciary, the community at large and in the state bar association.

Kansas

Marilyn Harp spoke as the President, of the **Kansas Women Attorneys Association**. She explained that they just completed their **26th annual three-day CLE event** that was started in an effort to create a leadership path for women attorneys, and to allow women attorneys to give CLE presentations in a supportive (rather than competitive) environment. Ms. Harp noted that approximately 150 attorneys attended, and the event has transformed their relationship with the Kansas town where the event takes place. The town has changed the date of its annual sidewalk sale date to coincide with CLE event.

Amanda Marino, President of **Wichita Women Attorneys Association**, provided information about how the Association has hosted **Judicial Forums** which provide an opportunity to meet candidates for judicial positions and hopefully to level the playing field for women candidates seeking to be elected to the bench. Information was also provided about the **Kansas Women Attorneys Association's 2015 Annual Lindsborg Conference**. Each year at this conference, KWAA members gather to reconnect with colleagues, meet new friends and learn. This year's theme was "Growing Our Own: Mentorship, Making Our Own Path, Building the Future."

Massachusetts

Leigh-Ann Durant shared information regarding the work of the **Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts**. She discussed the Association's establishment of the "**WBA Emeritus Board**" to address a two-pronged challenge – how to keep the Association's more seasoned/senior members involved in the organization and how to harness their tremendous talent and expertise for the betterment of the organization. Ms. Durant also discussed the Association's "**Women's Leadership Initiative**" which brings together senior women attorneys and up and coming rising stars for mentoring and leadership development. In addition, she highlighted the

Association's major legislative activity in 2015, including the ***Equal Pay for Comparable Work legislation***.

Michigan

Nicolette Zachary spoke about the **Women's Lawyers Association of Michigan's** fundraising event for its Foundation via ***Photography Contest*** which showcased the photographs of women lawyers. The photographs were then sold to raise money for the Foundation's scholarship program for law students attending Michigan law schools.

Minnesota

Breia Schleuss shared information about the Minnesota Women Lawyers "***Leadership Project***" which is a core development program for women in the law. The Leadership Project is a 6-month intensive leadership development program designed for all women attorneys, regardless of practice type or area of law. The Project consists of monthly seminar sessions wherein participants develop leadership competencies that will support them in making significant contributions to their organizations and advancing their individual career goals. Ms. Schleuss also shared information on the Minnesota Women Lawyers "***Gender Data Project***," which was the first of its kind project to count the number of women in the Minnesota legal profession. This project was prompted by the lack of demographic data on women lawyers in Minnesota and the difficulty in addressing gender inequities and working to change them without such data.

Mississippi

Amanda Green Alexander spoke about the Mississippi Women Lawyers' Association's ***membership expansion*** efforts by offering free one-year memberships to first year lawyers at their swearing in ceremony, thereby expanding membership and showing new lawyers the value of the Association. In addition, Ms. Alexander provided information on how the Association created two new positions on their board to improve two of their most needed areas of improvement: relationships to law schools' female population and increasing membership.

New Hampshire

Gretchen Pyles, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Women's Bar Association spoke about how the Association, along with the Women's Law Student Association at UNH School of Law, held a ***Panel Discussion*** with some of the organization's past Ricker Achievement Award recipients. The panelists covered a wide range of topics including mentoring, path to career, work/life balance and the practice of law in New Hampshire.

New Mexico

Lauren Oliveros provided information about the **New Mexico Women's Bar Association**. The Association has compiled a referral list that can be used by women attorneys to refer cases to one another. The Association sends the referral list to its listserv and posts it as a member benefit on the Association's website and Facebook page. The Association recently put on a program called "***Pathways to the Judiciary***." The program includes a panel of judges/hearing

officers (both federal and state), who speak on topics such as how they got elected, long-term planning to become a judge, how the process works in New Mexico, and the judges' experiences on the bench. The Association recently started a mentor program in conjunction with the women's law caucus at the law school that provides a shadowing/networking opportunity for the students.

New York

Beth Bryson provided information regarding the **New York County Women's Bar Association**. She noted that the New York County Bar Association now has well over **800 members** as a result of recent **membership expansion efforts**. Ms. Bryson also spoke about a program the Association holds every summer with a sponsoring firm, summer associates, and another local bar association. During the program, four diverse panelists spoke about what it is [really] like to be a women attorney. Over 300 people attended that program. The Association also has a mentoring circle program.

Oregon

Elizabeth Tedesco Milesnick spoke about **Oregon Women Lawyers'** response to the challenge of women litigators finding **private lactation rooms in Oregon federal and state courthouses**. As a result of the Association's efforts, a resource page has been put together and posted on the Oregon Women Lawyers' website summarizing the resources available for private lactation facilities in courthouses. Additional information gathering and advocacy will be undertaken by the Association's Working Parents Committee.

Tennessee

Beth Bates, President of **Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women**, spoke about the Association's program, "**A Successful Negotiation: A Women's Guide to Negotiation**," which was a statewide, free CLE which drew over 200 attendees. The program was also video streamed to 6 locations statewide, making the program available to a wide number of attorneys statewide. The program provided insight on how each woman can use her individual talents and characteristics to better negotiate on behalf of her clients, her organization and herself.

Wisconsin

Maria Kreiter shared information about the **Association for Women Lawyers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin**. Information was also shared about the Association's signature event, an **Annual Women Judges' Night**. The event is structured as a cocktail hour, followed by a dinner and then a speaker.

iAngel

Mary Wolverton spoke about **International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (iAngel.org)** which is an international network of lawyers who believe in gender equality and justice for all people. A new concept in pro bono work, iAngel harnesses the power of volunteer lawyers and use it to promote and help secure equity and rights for women and girls locally, nationally, and around the world. Attorneys can donate their skills, time and/or resources to justice and equal rights by contacting iAngel.org.