

President's Message



Laura Caldera Taylor

The recent weather events left me snowed in with my seven- and nine-year-old girls for the greater part of two weeks. Every morning they woke up with wide-eyed wonder-

ment; would school/winter camps be canceled yet again? And each day that the answer was yes, a snow-day dance broke out in the Taylor home.

That same snow also prevented the delivery of many of their presents. I have to admit, I fretted quite a bit about how they would react on Christmas when there were only a few presents to open. On Christmas Eve, with great angst, I set out to explain that most of their presents would arrive *after* Christmas. To my surprise, there were no sad faces. Instead, the girls were excited that they would get to celebrate Christmas every day for as long as it took the presents to arrive.

I spent a lot of time over the holidays thinking about how fortunate I was to be fretting about delivery schedules when so many parents spent the holidays worrying about foreclosures, evictions, health care,

and providing food and other basic needs for their families. And I started to think about all the things OWLS members do throughout the year to give back to the communities we serve.

In 2008, OWLS members were the second-largest contributors to the Campaign for Equal Justice. OWLS members donated more than 1,500 books to the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. OWLS members helped the Multnomah Bar Association raise over \$120,000 to keep CourtCare open, and helped the OWLS Foundation's endowment reach \$100,000. OWLS members provided many hours of pro bono legal services to people in need. Over the holidays, OWLS members contributed to food banks and homeless shelters, sent gifts to children with cancer, wrote cards to members of the military, volunteered at Red Cross shelters, walked the streets of Portland handing out packages to our city's homeless, and contributed in many other ways. The truth is, I cannot list all the great things OWLS members did in 2008—there are simply too many to count.

As we head into 2009, I just want to say, keep up the good work! Our collective efforts make a measurable difference.

Laura Caldera Taylor
OWLS President

Goodbye Catherine, Hello Linda

OWLS said goodbye in December to Catherine Ciarlo, who served as our executive director (ED) for the past two years. Catherine's tenure was marked by a significant increase in membership, an ever-more-professional look for the organization, and the unveiling of our new website.

Catherine notes that her time at OWLS was tremendously rewarding, both personally and professionally: "It has been inspiring to work with women who are successful in their own right, and who are also committed to helping other women advance in the profession." In January, Catherine joined the staff of incoming Portland Mayor Sam Adams to manage transportation policy for his office. She promises, however, to remain an OWLS member and volunteer. "I leave my position here with a clear sense of OWLS'

value," she said, "both to the individuals who comprise it and to the legal community as a whole."

Although Catherine will be missed, OWLS is fortunate to have Linda Tomassi, our former administrative director, stepping into the ED role.

Linda began working with OWLS on a contract basis about five years ago, during a staffing transition, and she quickly fell in love with the organization. She is delighted to move into the role of ED and is the second nonlawyer to do so.



Linda Tomassi

OWLS Board Seeks Candidates

This spring, the 21-member Oregon Women Lawyers Board of Directors will have openings. If you would like to play a leadership role in OWLS' work transforming the practice of law, consider serving on the board of directors. Board members provide financial oversight and strategic direction, helping to shape the future of OWLS policies and programs. Each board member is asked to participate actively on at least one working committee.

As a statewide organization, OWLS is actively seeking board members from outside the Portland metro area. Regional representatives serve as liaisons to our chapters and help OWLS understand and serve the needs of women and minority attorneys around the state. Board elections take place in April, with new members taking office in May 2009 for a three-year term. Meetings are held eight times a year on Saturday mornings.

If you would like to help guide OWLS through the coming years—and form valuable connections with other attorneys around the state in the process—please contact one of OWLS' co-president-elects, Gwyn McAlpine (gmc Alpine@perkinscoie.com/503.727.2091) or Heather Van Meter (hvanmeter@williamskastner.com/503.228.7967).

"It's a privilege to work with people doing such important work in the world," Linda says, "and I see my role as helping to improve the culture in which they do that work."

Linda sees many opportunities to work with the membership and board of directors to help fulfill OWLS' mission. "I'm really looking forward to traveling around the state to meet members and find out what we can do better." She understands the need to focus energy and time on diversity issues and has started meeting with other organizations to collaborate in this area.

Linda looks forward to meeting as many people as possible at the Roberts-Deiz Awards Dinner on March 13.

Our mission is to transform the practice of law and ensure justice and equality by advancing women and minorities in the legal profession.