

1. The NHWBA was formed in 1998 to promote and support the advancement and interests of women in the New Hampshire legal community through leadership, professional interaction, education and the exchange of ideas between our members and the community. In furtherance of our mission, we offer our members opportunities for personal and professional growth through networking and professional development forums, continuing legal education seminars, and public service initiatives that focus on improving the lives of women and children in New Hampshire. Our organization includes attorneys in all areas of law, judges, educators, government officials and law students from across the state.

We offer many programs and events throughout the year. Last October, we held our 20th Annual Fall Reception. At the Reception, we presented the Marilla M. Ricker Achievement Award, named in honor of the first New Hampshire woman to apply for admission to the New Hampshire Bar. The Award is designed to recognize outstanding female lawyers in New Hampshire who have achieved professional excellence and paved the way to success for other female lawyers, advanced opportunities for women in the profession, and/or performed exemplary public service on behalf of women. This year, we honored Chief Justice Linda Stewart Dalianis, the first woman to hold a seat on the New Hampshire Supreme Court and to be appointed Chief Justice.

This April, we will host our 16th Annual Retreat. The Retreat is an opportunity for our members to spend a weekend away for networking and continuing legal education designed specifically to address challenges that female attorneys often encounter in the legal profession. In May 2018, we will host a symposium to commemorate our 20th anniversary and to feature and celebrate female leadership. The symposium will offer attendees the chance to attend breakout sessions on “seizing a seat at the table,” featuring panels of some of New Hampshire’s most prominent female attorneys and business leaders. The event will culminate in a formal seated lunch, featuring Heather Hubbard as the Keynote Speaker, a nationally-known attorney, speaker, author, and strategic advisor who will provide authentic, inspiring advice about success in the legal industry as a female leader. We also have numerous networking events throughout the year that range from museum trips and paint and sip events to barre and cycle classes.

In addition to these programs, we recently hosted our Annual Post-Holiday Party, which allows our members to reconnect after the rush of the holidays. We also see the value of mentoring and participate annually in a Speed Mentoring event at the University of New Hampshire School of Law and offer several “Tables for Eight” throughout the year. The Tables for Eight allow seven of our members to meet with a featured mentor in a relaxed setting over dinner. We host several CLEs and brown bag lunch programs each year. Some of our recent programs include Demystifying the Path to the Bench, The Art of Taking Depositions, Effectively Working with Paralegals, and Specific Developments in Family Law.

We strive to make a difference in the lives of our members, but also of those in the larger community. We pack holiday food baskets at the local food pantry. We hold professional clothing drives to benefit Dress for Success. We have also participated in the NCWBA's Food

from the Bar program for several years. We are extremely proud of our most recent public service initiative, the Women to Women Project, which provides legal information on various topics of interest to the female inmates at the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women.

2. The Women to Women Project provides legal information on various topics of interest to the female inmates at the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women. The Project's co-creators, NHWBA Board Members Laura Maistrosky and Lindsey Courtney, initially fashioned the concept for this Project on the heels of the State's announcement that the budget had been approved to break ground on a new women's prison. Understanding that female inmates have endured disproportionate treatment to that of male inmates for decades here in New Hampshire, by way of overcrowded facilities and lack of access to programming for rehabilitation, changes on these fronts have been long overdue. Beginning in 1983, NH Legal Assistance first filed suit on behalf of female inmates claiming the substandard conditions of confinement violated their rights to equal protection. Despite their victory, decades passed without any action. With a renewed suit in 2012, NHLA again went to court on behalf of our State's female inmate population and as a direct result of that advocacy, the State approved funding measures to construct a new facility with space to access programming that would deliver parity with those offered at the men's facility.

NHWBA anticipated that it may be able to offer programming in the new space, which would assist the inmates with the legal issues that are unique to women, and often act as the biggest barriers to a female's rehabilitation once transitioned out: parenting rights, custody, housing stability, and employment. Laura and Lindsey relied on their own legal experience in the areas of family law and landlord/tenant law, and tapped into NHWBA's loyal network of practitioners in the areas of tax law, healthcare law and wills and estates. With an excited gathering of volunteer attorneys, NHWBA decided not to wait for the new women's prison to be built and began its volunteer legal services project on October 24, 2016, in partnership with the Department of Corrections and with early help from the Department of Health and Human Services and Attorney Chris Keating of the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Through the project, the NHWBA facilitates bi-monthly, in-person, on-site information sessions. The sessions are hosted by the Department of Corrections at the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women. The Project is intended to provide information only, so no attorney-client relationship is formed. The information sessions operate with a team of three to five volunteer attorneys attending each scheduled session and cover topics such as family law, landlord/tenant law, collections law, juvenile law, health/disability law, and other general civil matters. In order to participate, volunteering attorneys have to be approved by the Department of Corrections and attend a training session.

Our first information session was held on October 24, 2016. Four volunteer attorneys attended the session and answered a variety of questions from the inmates. The women in attendance were extremely grateful to have their questions answered and to learn more about the laws that apply to their situations. They were eager to have additional sessions scheduled. Since then, we

have held ongoing regularly scheduled sessions throughout 2017, which have been met with true appreciation. Our next session is scheduled for January 29, 2018. With over 150 women in the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women, the need for this Project is great. We have many NHWBA members who are willing to participate in the Project. Training sessions for the volunteering attorneys have been scheduled through November 2018.

The Project provides pro bono legal services that would otherwise not be available to the women through another organization or court program. The Project helps these women get a jump start on taking back control of their lives before they are released from incarceration. The transitional period before they are released can be challenging. The women are often not able to access forms, instructions and basic legal information prior to their release from prison. The Project bridges this gap and provides needed forms and instructions, which can be crucial when the issues involve matters such as parenting rights and responsibilities. When Retired New Hampshire Supreme Court Justice Carol Ann Conboy heard about the Project, she said, "[t]his is such a worthy effort. In my experience, inmates at the women's prison are desperate for legal information and advice. Congratulations to all participating members for giving their time and expertise to these women, who face such daunting legal issues."

The Project has been met with great acclaim. It was featured in an article in the New Hampshire Bar News in January 2017. Here is a link to that article: <https://www.nhbar.org/publications/display-news-issue.asp?id=8692>. Additionally, Warden Joanne Fortier of the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women has written a letter of support for our nomination. Chris Keating, Director of the Administrative Office of the Court of New Hampshire, has also written in support of our nomination. The Women to Women Project is clearly meeting a crucial need.

Other women's bar associations could participate in similar programs in their communities. They should contact their state prisons to see if the prisons would be interested in partnering with them to host regular information sessions to provide legal information on a variety of topics of interest to the female inmates.

3. The Women to Women Project is unique because it provides legal information to an underserved and often ignored segment of our community. The Project allows female inmates at the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women to feel heard and understood and provides them with advice and information on a varied spectrum of legal issues. With construction of the new prison being close to completion, the NHWBA looks forward to continuing to assist a vulnerable population that has waited, patiently, for decades.

# The State of New Hampshire

## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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January 16, 2018

Awards Committee  
National Conference of Women's Bar Associations  
PO Box 82366  
Portland, OR 97282-0366

Dear Members of the Awards Committee,

The New Hampshire Women's Bar Association will nominate the Women-to-Women Project for the National Conference of Women's Bar Association's Public Service Award, and I'd like to respectfully write in enthusiastic support of this nomination. I serve as the Director of New Hampshire's Administrative Office of the Courts; before serving in this position I ran the State's Public Defender Program before having overall responsibility for administering the State's indigent-defense delivery system. I also serve as the Chairperson of the Citizens Advisory Board for the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women.

In these various positions I've seen the plight of incarcerated women who experience pressing legal needs but have nowhere to turn. I'm even partly to blame for this problem, because I actively discouraged public defenders from providing legal advice after their former clients were sentenced to prison. Over the course of the last several years I've watched with great admiration as the Women's Bar Association worked to create, promote and sustain a program to provide access to justice to women under correctional control.

Before the NHWBA began this program, nothing like it existed. On occasion in the past, a gracious and well-intended volunteer from NH's Department of Health and Human Services would go in to the prison to answer questions about termination-of-parental rights proceedings and guardianships. However, the Q&A was severely limited by the Department's often adversarial role in these proceedings. And while the Department of Corrections once had a long-ago de-funded position of "inmate's attorney," that lawyer worked in the men's prison and was not accessible to the women.

The NHWBA overcame a lot of obstacles in making this program work. Correctional officials were generally supportive, particularly because of the professionalism and thoroughness of the

NHWBA proponents, but wary about the parameters of the advice being given and about the training and administrative requirements for this new class of volunteers coming into their facility. Getting time and space for after-hours attorney meetings in the severely restrictive confines of our cramped building also presented challenges, as did the formulation of guidelines for the information sessions that meet the ethical and professional obligations of the attorneys while still providing a framework for meaningful and valuable content delivery.

The NHWBA took on an extraordinary challenge in creating and sustaining this program. Every female prison-bound offender in New Hampshire ends up in this Correctional Facility, so the program reaches all women sentenced to prison for a year or longer in our State. Recognizing that all of these women have a wide variety of access-to-justice challenges, the program offers a broad range of legal information. The NHWBA recognized that the women under correctional supervision are mothers, daughters, sisters and caregivers; they're very often victims of crime and abuse; they're often people who suffer from a disability or from substance-use disorder. Their legal needs are distinct, and the NHWBA has sought to meet these legal needs in a setting that allows the voices of women under correctional control to be heard.

Nationally, women's involvement in the criminal justice system continues to increase. Advocates have made a call to arms to all professionals to combat this trend, and have urged that our response to this problem be intentional and gender-responsive. The Women-to-Women Project is exactly this kind of intervention: women being of service to women in a direct and meaningful way. For these reasons, please accept my statement of support for the nomination of the New Hampshire Women's Bar Association's Women-to-Women Project for the National Conference of Women's Bar Association's Public Service Award.

I'd be happy to provide any additional information at your convenience and request.

Sincerely yours,



Christopher Keating  
Director



**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
NEW HAMPSHIRE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY FOR  
WOMEN**

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**Commissioner**

**Helen Hanks**

**Joanne Fortier  
Warden**

January 10, 2018

Awards Committee  
National Conference of Women's  
Bar Association  
PO Box 82366  
Portland OR 97282-0366

Dear Awards Committee,

The New Hampshire Women's Bar Association is providing a unique and valuable service to the women of the New Hampshire Correctional Facility for Women (NHCFW). Incarcerated individuals are often experiencing non-criminal legal issues as a result of their incarceration ranging from child custody to eviction proceedings and many other dilemmas. While they have access to the law library, navigating the system alone can be difficult.

The Women to Women Project allows incarcerated women to meet face to face with experienced lawyers who provide them with the knowledge and advice they need to access and navigate the court system. These issues, left unresolved, add stress to the women and their families. This program enables women to take action, alleviate the helpless and ultimately enhances their behavior by reducing stress and helplessness.

The vast majority of residents of the NHCFW are mothers. These women are often surprised to learn their visitation, legal parental status and sometimes financial child support obligations are not automatically void due to their incarceration. Lawyers who volunteer for the Women to Women Project provide residents with accurate information, enabling women to regain some sense of control over their own lives, and instill hope in the, often times, hopeless.

Any prison can be a difficult place to be where control, self-esteem and individual choices are often out of reach. The Women to Women Project acknowledges each woman's needs as valid, worthwhile and respected. The personal commitment of each lawyer to assist other women is profound. It is easy to look the other way, or to justify or ignore their loss. It takes heart, resolve and the power of knowledge, women to women, to rebuild. Women to Women, each one teaches one.



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**Commissioner**

**Helen Hanks**

**Joanne Fortier  
Warden**

Sincerely,

Joanne Fortier,  
Warden

Cc: file