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Stop Competing and Start Collaborating

Empowering Each Other in GAWL's 2012-2013 Year

The leadership of GAWL is committed to making this the Year of Empowerment. We strongly believe in the power of this organization to improve our members professionally and personally. This is a challenge that I am asking every member of GAWL to embrace.

You have a circle of influence. It is time that you embrace the power that you have to help others. It is also time that we embrace the power which we have as a community of professionals to help one another.

Our call is to encourage GAWL members to engage one-on-one; for GAWL committees to engage with one another; and for GAWL as an association to empower other women's bar associations across the state of Georgia.

GAWL is the premiere association for the women lawyers of Georgia. We support and promote women lawyers by providing networking opportunities, personal and professional development programs, leadership training, and community outreach. Women lawyers each have a vision of their personal success. GAWL brings us together and helps us each to achieve tangible results through the power of community.

I meet so many talented, smart, energetic women attorneys who are stressed and frustrated. Many seem to blame themselves for not 'having it all'. The struggle to achieve balance between all the aspects of our busy lives hits women attorneys very hard. The recent piece in the Atlantic Monthly that kicked up such a rousing national debate raised issues that have vexed our membership for years. The way to win that struggle

is, first, to have a greater role in setting the parameters of women's success.

For the first time in history, most of the post-college graduate degrees awarded in America this year were earned by women. Our status as a



Susan A. Campbell, Esq.

minority among professionals is changing rapidly. We also learned this year that the fastest growing segment of the law firm market is the solo and small law firm. Whether a result of the economy or simply a greater tolerance for risk, even new law school graduates are starting practices of their own. More women in positions of greater autonomy is a strong indication that opportunities exist for rapid changes to the legal market and how we participate in it.

How are we going to start empowering each other? How are our GAWL Committees going to empower other GAWL Committees? How is GAWL going to empower other women-focused bar associations?

I start from this basic principle: We

need to stop competing with each other and start collaborating. This should be an intentional, active process. We need to get to know one another more fully as professionals, and ask the hard questions of each other to determine how best to use one another as resources. You can't empower someone if you don't know what they need or who they are. When we engage with this intention, we will find ways to empower one another.

Getting to know your fellow GAWL members is an excellent place to start. I have challenged my board members to each make five successful referrals to other board members by the end of their GAWL term. I would be thrilled if you each would take up that same challenge. As you help one another, you will strengthen GAWL as a source for empowering all of our peers in the law.

Please consider my recommendations to you for this GAWL year:

1. Contact the GAWL Foundation and commit to one service project
2. Attend two of our educational/CLE events
3. Find a Neighborhood Networking Breakfast/Lunch/Happy Hour (NNB, NNL, NNHH) that works for you and attend three times
4. Have fun at the 20th Anniversary GAWL Art Auction and Fundraiser
5. Keep up with new items on the GAWL calendar as the year progresses
6. Join us to at the Annual Dinner May 2013 and bring your empowerment examples with you

I and the GAWL Board look forward to an empowering GAWL 2012-2013 year.

What I Learned in Jail – Insights from Kimberly Childs

By Michele Bruce

Anyone who has been involved in GAWL activities and leadership probably knows Kimberly Childs. She has served as the statewide Leadership Committee chair, the Cobb/Cumberland Neighborhood Networking Breakfast chair, a Judicial Applicant Review Committee member, and was a 2011 Leadership Academy member. She has supported GAWL in many ways and continues to be one of our best advocates.

What many of us don't know is that Kimberly Childs,

litigator and founder of www.BizDisputeAttorney.com, was once a DeKalb County Detention Officer. I only learned this when I was at a Cobb Bar luncheon and Mr. Chandler Bridger (former interim Dekalb County Sheriff and Kim's top boss) was in attendance. The topic of her prior employment came up and I was hooked. Can you imagine Kim Childs as a jailer? What was her path from corrections to litigator?

Kim began her career with a criminal justice degree. One problem – she hates guns. Three paths offered her

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an opportunity to use her criminal justice degree and avoid carrying a gun – serving as a social worker, probation officer or corrections officer. A career as a social worker wasn't appealing. The probation officer curriculum didn't stick. After taking the exam, she decided it wasn't her fit. Corrections it was.

Kim was finishing college in 1994, when DeKalb County had just finished its new jail facility on Memorial Drive. She toured the new facility with other students. The touring officer told the students that DeKalb was offering a 10% bonus to candidates with a college degree, and pointed to Kim when he said, "and we need a white female."

Determined to break out of small-town life in North Georgia, she accepted the offer, despite the fact that she'd have to drive 90 minutes one way to reach the facility each shift. Bids in the officer gamble were that this twenty-something, white female from the hills of North Georgia couldn't take this learning curve. Shifts were long, some officers weren't supportive, and sexual harassment was intense and pervasive. Kim didn't cave. She was the first officer to run a

floor with inmates in the new facility, and later investigated inmate complaints of officer misconduct. She worked over four years, ending her last shift in 1997 to pursue a law degree as a paralegal by day and student by night.

Kim considers her years as a detention officer an important part of her 'education' that she wouldn't change. "I learned there is nothing I can't do." Nuggets of wisdom she gleaned from her time "in jail:"

- Maintain confidence and wits – Inmates were often desperate and/or mentally instable and fellow officers weren't always helpful. It was completely different than anything than she had experienced, but she refused to lose faith in herself. When an inmate began fighting her in an elevator, Kim did the only thing she could do alone. She wrestled the inmate to the floor and literally sat on her until the doors opened with back-up waiting.

Years later, when college graduates with less credentials were getting the offers from law firms and she wasn't, someone told her that she needed to be more "well-rounded" than just a hard-working student with good grades. She added a new hobby to her schedule, made

an appointment with a Nordstrom personal shopper and showed the interviewers that she was a well-rounded candidate. She had her pick of the offers after that.

- Your word is everything – In jail, the inmates spend their hours watching each other and the officers. Appeasing an inmate in the short term with empty promises breeds distrust, disrespect, and ugly problems. Something as simple as a promised bar of soap becomes a source of discontent. She learned to frankly tell inmates what she would do and what she would not do. She carefully avoided making promises she couldn't keep.
- Find and make alliances – Be watchful and creative. Find ways to help people when they aren't asking. She assisted a fellow officer in writing his reports in a more professional manner and, in doing so, gained a stalwart ally in an antagonistic work environment.
- Be real. What's the worst that can happen? – Salaries for jailers are meager. Money was tight. Her budget didn't get better as a paralegal and student. When she decided to launch her own firm in 2007, her husband expressed concern about income. She asked, "What's the worst that can happen? We have a

tough year, we lose money, we have to downsize, and we'll be poor. We've been there before. We can make this happen."

Kim founded The Childs Law Firm in 2007 with a focus on helping business owners. This year, Kim's narrowed her practice to business litigation and she is excited about launching her new website, www.bizdisputeattorney.com. In this market, she's aware of the worst that can happen, but she also has a book of clients that trust her word, strong strategic alliances and a great track record. She's not worried. She's excited to concentrate in the niche that she prefers.

Kimberly Childs represents business owners who are being taken advantage of by their business partners.

Her practice focuses on negotiating and litigating the break-up of multi-owner privately held businesses.

About the author: Michele Bruce is a Certified Public Accountant, a Certified Fraud Examiner and Certified in Financial Forensics. She is a forensic accountant at IAG Forensics, LLC, a CPA firm that specializes in forensic accounting, fraud investigation and litigation support.

GAWL Foundation Hosts Tenth Annual Girl Scouts "Law & Order" Badge Program

On June 4-5, 2012, the GAWL Foundation hosted its tenth annual two-day program for junior-high and high-school Girl Scouts to earn their Law & Order badges. Atlanta Legal Aid kicked off the program with a documentary film about the history of the organization and the importance of public interest law. After the film, five ACLU student interns spoke about being responsible with social media and coached the scouts in preparation for the next session, a group debate under the direction of GAWL members, Katie Salinas Acree and Toni Weir.

During lunch, the scouts began preparing for a mock trial. After a couple hours, Jennifer Keaton, founder of One Mediation, taught the participants about mediation (what it is and how it works). The first day ended with instruction about goal setting and organization from Dotty Pritchett, founder of Legal Goddess Network.

During day two, Cynthia Adkins from the Georgia Bureau of Investi-



Katie Salinas Acree, Dekalb County Superior Court Judge Asha Jackson and Lily Salinas

gation taught the scouts about the role of computers in law enforcement. The scouts then participated in a mentoring lunch with fifteen GAWL members and finished preparing for the mock trial with assistance from seven coaches – Tangelia King (State Bar of Georgia), Heather Ryfa (State Law Department), Tammi Fuller, Chris Wall (Carlock Copeland & Stair), Lindsay Verity (Atlanta Legal Aid

Society), Kathryn Clark, Jessica Harper (Bodker, Ramsey, Andrews, Winograd & Wildstein, P.C.). At long last, mid-afternoon of the second day, the trial began with Dekalb County Superior Court Judge Asha Jackson presiding.

GAWL greatly appreciates the participation of Honorable Judge Jackson. Thank you to Katie Salinas

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GAWL Welcomes a New Sponsor

The Partners Group

The Partners Group is a premier national legal search and staffing agency based in Atlanta, comprised chiefly of former practicing law-firm and in-house attorneys from some of the best schools in the nation. They distinguish themselves through unprecedented results, top ethical standards, and by offering a full array of legal placement services that go beyond permanent placements. The talented team includes skilled temporary contract attorney/legal staffing specialists, document review/e-discovery specialists and more.

Cristina León, Senior Director of Attorney Recruiting, is President-Elect of GAWL for the 2012-2013 Board year and has held various other leadership roles within GAWL, including VP of Strategic Partnerships and Treasurer. Shannan Rahman, Director of Attorney Recruiting for the Atlanta office, is also an active GAWL member having served on the GAWL Membership and Communications Committees. For more information, please contact Cristina León at 404-697-1909.

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Acree and Bethaney Embry for recruiting speakers and coordinating the volunteers for this valuable program, and thank you to the speakers and volunteers who helped mentor and coach the scouts.

Lily Salinas, a rising eighth grader and daughter of organizer Katie Salinas Acree, participated in the program, and acted as one of the attorneys for the criminal defendant in the mock trial. "I liked having to figure out what questions to ask my client. It was harder than I thought, but when our turn came, I thought the testimony came out great. I had coached my witness to apologize to the victim from

the stand, even though I knew that it was objectionable, and it worked! I can't wait to go back again next year." Despite her successes at the podium, Lily does not plan to follow in her mother's footsteps. She intends to attend Kennesaw State University, play soccer, and get a teaching degree.

The volunteers found the program equally rewarding. Katie shared, "Spending two days with this group of young women was invigorating and energizing. For me, the best part was watching the girls transform into their mock trial roles over the course of the project. We had two girls from the 2011 project return for this year's pro-

gram, and several others told me they can't wait to participate again next year. What a rewarding experience. This is what the GAWL Foundation is all about."

If you are interested in volunteering to help with next year's Girl Scout project or planning other GAWL Foundation community service events, e-mail the GAWL Foundation's community service committee at GAWL.communityservice@gmail.com. For more information about the GAWL Foundation, please contact the president of the GAWL Foundation, Christina Baugh, at GAWLfoundation@gmail.com.

Women in Law Day: GAWL Chapter Honors Women in the Judiciary

By Megan Hodgkiss

"A law degree affords women with so much flexibility; you have the ability to do what you want to do, and make the changes you want in your life." -- Fulton County State Court Judge Diane E. Bessen

On March 29, 2012, the John Marshall Law School chapter of GAWL hosted its annual event, Women in Law Day – Honoring Women in the Judiciary. The event featured panel speakers Fulton County State Court Judge Diane E. Bessen, Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Carol W. Hunstein and Fulton County State Court Judge Susan E. Edlein. The women discussed the difficulties of breaking through the judicial glass ceiling, as well as creating a

feasible balance between work and family.

They also shared thoughts about being a new lawyer in the current job market. "This is a particularly difficult market, but there is always room for a good lawyer," commented Chief Justice Hunstein, "You have to be committed, professional, and build a good reputation."

Judge Edlein added, "Even if your first job is not exactly what you want to do, you need to get in there, build your reputation, and the doors of opportunity will follow."

After the panel of judges, John Marshall Law School Chapter President Kara Foskey presented plaques to the school's four recently tenured female professors and recognized the new GAWL officers

for the upcoming 2012-2013 school year.

John Marshall Law School founded its student chapter in 2004, and is actively involved in the GAWL community. During the spring semester, John Marshall Law School recognized GAWL as "Outstanding Student Organization of the Fourth Quarter." School administrators praised the group for its leadership, as well as its positive contributions to students and the surrounding community through programs such as Women in Law Day.

Megan T. Hodgkiss recently graduated from Atlanta's John Marshall Law School. She is spending the summer preparing for the Georgia Bar Exam, and pursuing a career in Media and Communications Law.



Panel members from left to right: Fulton County State Court Judge Diane E. Bessen; Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Carol W. Hunstein, and Fulton County State Court Judge Susan E. Edlein

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