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## President's Message

**IN A FEW WEEKS**, my tenure of President of GAWL will be coming to an end. Leading this organization is both an honor and a challenge. I have felt the weight of our 84 year history. The sincere devotion of our membership to the organization and to each other is why I have devoted my time and energy to GAWL. I love this organization and the fact that it lives up to its goal of providing support and fellowship for the women of the legal community.

If that sounds like so much hokum, let me break through the platitudes and tell you what I mean. Personally, because of GAWL, I have grown close to women I simply would never have met through any other aspect of my personal or professional life. These are women whose social, political and private circles may not intersect mine except here at GAWL. I have made real friendships through GAWL that have changed me for the better and enriched my life personally and professionally. And, I know from the feedback GAWL members provide every year that many of you have had similar, enriching experiences.

With that in mind, I would like to address a recent vote of the GAWL Board that has stirred emotion. Our Public Affairs Committee recommended that GAWL join an amicus brief filed in the case of *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, pending before the U.S. Supreme Court. After extensive discussion and sober deliberation, the Board decided that GAWL would not sign on to the brief. Taking that decision was certainly not easy and the fact that it

has been met with disappointment and even anger within our membership is understandable.

When the Board voted to abstain from signing on to the amicus brief, it was not a statement of GAWL's posi-



Susan A. Campbell, Esq.

tion on marriage equality, or even a statement of the individual Board member's positions on that issue. The Board issued a statement regarding the vote which is posted on the news page of the GAWL website and was emailed to all members. I encourage all members to read it. This vote has sparked discussion about whether GAWL's policy governing decisions like this strike the right balance. I think that is not only appropriate, it is a positive development. I want to see our members engaged in making GAWL an organization that meets the highest expectations for our community. Women attorneys have something unique to offer the State of Georgia and one another.

My personal view is that the business

of law will soon be bringing very significant changes to the way attorneys practice their profession. GAWL must be vibrant for the days ahead. This is our time and opportunity to CHANGE the model and platform as to how law is practiced to fit into our lives and not the other way around. It is the woman attorney's asset/ally that change is necessary for the entire profession and new ways are necessary and will be developed.

Financial pressures on law firms are unrelenting. Legal services are increasingly commoditized. We're living through a revolution in the democratization of information. All of these changes are going to challenge our members' ability to make a living in this profession. I find it sobering that the recent interview with American Bar Association President Lauren Bellows contains the exact same points that my 1990 first year in practice women's panel expressed. My intention and that of your Board is to ensure that GAWL will continue to be a valuable source of strength to women in the bar as we face these complex challenges together and together we all find the common ground to make the changes that need to happen. It is the change that we agree on that will lead us to success.

*Susan is a former litigator and has extensive experience working with attorneys in non-traditional attorney roles including legal recruiting and legal publishing. She is the Director of Client Services at the Daily Report.*

## Breaking the Glass Ceiling – Story of Annette Idalski

By Eloise Pinto

According to the American Bar Association, at least 40% of the law school population since 1986 has been women. However, a comparatively small percentage of partners in law firms are women. Although rising each year, the percentage of women partners in 2011 was merely 19.5% (per the National Association for Law Placement). Annette Idalski is one of these successful women partners. Ascending to this level was not easy, but Annette knew the simple key to achieving this goal: client development.

Upon graduation from St. Mary's University School

of Law in 1995, Annette worked as an associate at Elarbee and at Hunton & Williams, both law firms in Atlanta, for several years. During her years as an associate, Annette learned the importance of client development. She recognized that becoming a partner at a law firm is largely a business decision, driven by the amount of business she could generate for the firm. In addition to furthering her career, Annette realized that client development also provided the autonomy she craved.

Early in her career, Annette sought to cultivate strong client relationships. She became an active

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# Katie Salinas Acree – Recipient of the 2012 Hon. Debra Bernes Community Volunteer Award

The Honorable Debra Bernes Community Volunteer Award recognizes a GAWL member who has a history of exceptional service to the community through pro bono work and community involvement. Award recipients personify the GAWL Foundation's mission to encourage philanthropy by women lawyers in Georgia for the benefit of the greater community. After her death in 2010, the award was renamed in honor of Judge Bernes because of her commitment to philanthropy. Judge Bernes set an example for what it means to be a community volunteer, and the GAWL Foundation seeks to honor GAWL members who follow in her footsteps.

The GAWL Foundation was pleased to present Katie Salinas Acree with this year's Hon. Debra Bernes Community Volunteer Award



Katie Salinas Acree (left) receives award presented by GAWL Foundation President, Christina Baugh (right)

at GAWL's Annual Judicial Luncheon. Katie has consistently partnered with and champi-

oned Legal Aid through her work with Legal Aid in Texas, the Atlanta Legal Aid's Grandparent Adoption Program, the Atlanta Legal Aid's Health Law Partnership, and serving on the Atlanta Legal Aid Board. Katie served as a Foundation Board member for five years, co-chairing the Community Service Committee, organizing the Girl Scout Program, and is currently helping expand the Girl Scout Program to our Savannah Chapter. Katie has also volunteered and organized dinner at the Nicholas House for the last several Octobers, providing dinner, manual labor, and donations to the homeless shelter. Katie's continual focus on bettering her community personifies the GAWL Foundation's mission, and it is our great honor to recognize her efforts.

## Idalski, from page 1

member of the legal community and began to strategically develop her contacts list. Annette eventually signed her first client as a fourth year associate at Elarbee. The referral was made through a friend who introduced her to the human resources director of a property management company. Annette said "I was thrilled to have my own client to take care of and nurture." Through her focus on client development, Annette developed a significant book of business. She was eventually offered a partner position at Duane Morris where she worked for three years before joining Chamberlain Hrdlicka as a shareholder in March 2010.

The advancement of women in the legal field has always been one of Annette's personal goals. As past president of the Georgia Association for Women Lawyers ("GAWL"), Annette strived to assist and guide members into

becoming strong independent lawyers. Annette believes that women in the legal profession should lend each other a helping hand stating "The more experienced members [of GAWL] have a duty to introduce younger members to opportunities." Through her work at Chamberlain Hrdlicka and other professional organizations, Annette hopes to mentor young women into becoming the next generation's successful law firm partners.

Annette focused on five points of advice for women seeking to excel in their legal careers:

- Client Development – Client development is the key to being successful and taking control of your career. Start networking as early as possible as an associate. Be active in organizations and work on building solid relationships. Discover who you get along with best and nurture that relationship

into a successful business connection. Business relationships take years to develop before becoming fruitful, so invest as early as possible. Also, do not get discouraged when you get the "no"; remember it is nothing personal. When you do retain clients, treat them like gold. Realize that you cannot be successful without them.

- Consider the Big Picture – When planning your career, do not simply look at your short-term goals. Consider where you would like to see yourself 5, 10, and 15 years from now. Knowing your ultimate career goal is highly motivating.

- Take Personal Responsibility For Yourself - Ask yourself if you are learning and advancing in your current job. If you are not, then it may be time to move on to something more challenging. With self-analysis, you will constantly be pushing yourself and advancing your career.

- Learn From Criticism – Do not balk at constructive criticism; embrace it instead. Understand that criticism will only make you a stronger attorney. At the same time, manage your supervising attorneys' expectations as to what you can and cannot do and do not be afraid to ask for help. Annette observed that women are less likely to ask for assistance, thinking they can do it all. Understand that asking for help

and managing expectations is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it shows that you know how to manage your workload and it will allow you to ultimately produce a better product for your client.

- Make the Time – Be willing to work hard, especially in the early years of your career. There are no short cuts in this profession if you want to be successful. Staying that extra hour and going that extra mile will be the difference between winning and losing a case or a client. Investing in your work early on will have a huge impact during the later stages of your career.

*Annette Idalski is a shareholder of Chamberlain Hrdlicka in their Atlanta office and is Chair of the Labor and Employment Litigation Group. Annette practices exclusively in the areas of labor and employment litigation. Currently, she serves on the GAWL Advisory Board.*

*About the author: Eloise Pinto is a Certified Public Accountant and attorney, licensed to practice in Florida. She currently works as a staff accountant in the Forensic and Litigation Department of Habif, Arogeti & Wynne, LLP, a CPA firm located in Atlanta, Georgia which provides accounting, audit and business advisory services as well as forensic accounting, fraud investigations, dispute resolution and litigation support, and business valuation services.*

## GAWL Upcoming Events & News

Want to know more about GAWL events? Find us on Facebook under "Georgia Association for Women Lawyers" for updates and additional photos! Register for upcoming events at [www.gawl.org](http://www.gawl.org). In addition to the events below, there are always networking socials to check out. We look forward to seeing you!

**May 9, 2013 – Annual Dinner, Olmsted**  
**May 13, 2013 – Trip to U.S. Supreme Court for Swearing-In**

GAWL has a new website! The website now includes a personalized membership directory that is easy to search by practice area for referrals, as well as a job listing, photo gallery and news feed. A mobile view is coming soon for convenient updates and access. Create your profile today at [www.gawl.org](http://www.gawl.org) to add your biography, photograph, a map to your office and even your Twitter feed and social media links.

# The Leader Within – A New Graduate’s Perspective

By Megan Hodgkiss

AS A RELATIVELY NEW graduate, attending a seminar about leadership can be daunting. How do I become an effective leader while trying to jump-start my legal career? At this year’s Leader Within event, organizers challenged me to discover and nurture my inner leadership abilities. The Georgia Association for Women Lawyers (“GAWL”), Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys, and the Atlanta Bar Association’s Women in the Profession section co-hosted the series of networking opportunities and intensive training sessions at the State Bar of Georgia.

During the break-out session “Being a Leader Within Your Own Workplace: How to Stand Out Among Your Peers and Succeed,” the panel discussed the importance of young attorneys developing mentorship in the workplace. “The word ‘mentor’ has a lot of meanings, but that meaning needs to be mutual” said Honorable Mary Grace Diehl, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Northern District of Georgia. “You

have to be purposeful about mentorship – you have to let them know” added Catherine Paulson, Assistant General Counsel at Kimberly-Clark Professional. The panel also shared tips on how new lawyers can stand out by being vocal, involved, and a team player.

Both presentations “Leading in the Marketplace: How to Get More Clients In-Person and Online” and “Networking Leaders: Making the Most of LinkedIn to Connect” provided excellent advice on how to become stronger networkers. “The more time you spend putting your name and information out there, the better, because it’s all about increasing awareness,” said Bonnie Buol Ruszcyk, President of BBR Marketing. “Be adaptable with your networking,” advised Heather Hale of the Law Firm of Heather Hale, “Try new things and go with what you like.” The panelists spoke about creating targeted online profiles and stressed the importance of getting involved with professional associations such as GAWL.

The session “Leading in the Community: Being on a Board – Give &

Grow” taught attendees how to develop their leadership skills while also giving back to the community. The panelists shared advice about finding



Karen Rands of Launch Funding Network presents at the Leader Within seminar



Heather Hale (Law Firm of Heather Hale) shares insights on becoming a thought leader.

for professional development. Following these sessions, Leader Within participants were invited to stay for a networking lunch as well as two additional training seminars: Representing Immigrant Victims of Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence and the Breast Cancer Screening Project.

Being a new graduate, I am probably not going to head a department or sit in that first chair position anytime soon. After attending The Leader Within; however, I know how to reach those goals. I learned that I need to be proactive, collaborative, a strong networker (on-line and in-person) and team up with an enthusiastic mentor. This event has motivated my transition from unsure new graduate to confident legal professional. For more information on The Leader Within, visit Georgia Association for Women Lawyer’s website, gawl.org.

*Megan Hodgkiss is a graduate of John Marshall Law School. She serves as Communication Chair for GAWL and the GAWL Foundation. Megan is pursuing a career in media and communications law.*

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