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President's Message What a Wonderful Year with GAWL!

That exceedingly busy time between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day – a time when we rush between parties, shopping, decorating – is truly one of my favorite seasons. Each year, I look forward to holiday traditions; especially seeing which critically celebrated films Hollywood has released to dazzle us. Every holiday season gives me a renewed hope that one of the new films will become a new holiday classic, like my all-time favorite, *It's A Wonderful Life*. This holiday, as I watched George Bailey running through the streets, wishing his beloved Bedford Falls "Merry Christmas", I thought about the angel Clarence telling George what a rare gift he had been given to see what his world would have been like if he had never been born. This scene held special importance, as it inspired me to reflect on my year as GAWL President and how the organization has shaped me. I found myself thinking about how profoundly different my world and that of countless others would be if GAWL had not been founded 86 years ago by Minnie Hale Daniel and Betty Cobb Reynolds.

What a wonderful mark GAWL has made on my life! Some of my closest friends and mentors are women that I met only because of GAWL. So



Cristina C. León, Esq.

many of my clients and, thus, many aspects of my professional livelihood, have come from GAWL referrals and relationships. And my story isn't uncommon! This past fall the GAWL Board hosted its first "Conversation with GAWL" event where we provided a forum for members to voice, both in person and via an online survey, why they joined GAWL, what they valued most from their membership and how GAWL can continue to support them in the future. Many members recounted stories about how their activities with

GAWL impacted both their personal and professional relationships. Over and over again we heard how much our members valued our mentoring and leadership.

In support of our mission of enhancing the welfare and development of women lawyers in Georgia, we are planning a number of great events and programs for 2014. We are looking forward to our annual Legislative Reception, The Leader Within and our Leadership Academy kickoff, all taking place in January. Additionally, we will host our annual Art Auction this March, and are also exploring activities related to the Equal Pay Act. Your GAWL leadership is looking forward to continuing to support your interests in the coming year. I am honored to have been involved in creating and supporting these events for our upcoming year, and I very much look forward to continuing to support this wonderful organization in 2014 and beyond. Thank you GAWL – your first 86 years have proven to be A Wonderful Life!

Cristina C. León is a Senior Director of Attorney Recruiting with The Partners Group, a premier national legal search and staffing agency that specializes in placing attorneys in permanent and temporary positions.

GAWL Holiday Parties



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTY E. DRAPER

GAWL's Douglas-Paulding Chapter celebrated the holiday season on December 6th at Baraonda Ristorante & Bar in Atlanta.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BARBARA ALEXANDER

GAWL members Cheryl Legare, the Honorable Sara Doyle and Jaime Duguay attend GAWL's annual Holiday Party on December 18th, which the Hon. Doyle hosted at her home.

GAWL Leadership Committee, Participants Prepare for Refreshed Leadership Academy

By: Laurie Rashidi-Yazd

Taking seriously its mission of advancing women in the profession, GAWL is quickly gearing up for its revamped Leadership Academy, which this year will run January through April with ongoing program requirements throughout 2014. GAWL's Leadership Academy is an intensive leadership development program that provides women lawyers across Georgia with the leadership skills, individualized mentorship and networking opportunities that will prepare them to achieve their potential as leaders in the profession and in their communities.

This year, Tammy Hibler, CPCC, RCC of Get to More!, and Lynne Siders, CPCC, MBA of Envision It! Coaching will guide 16 Academy

members as they identify and hone their leadership abilities. These 16 attorneys hail from a wide-range of practice settings, including law firms (of all sizes), government offices and public interest groups. They also represent diverse practice areas, such as bankruptcy, business, criminal, elder, employment, estate planning, family, healthcare, immigration, intellectual property, juvenile and litigation.

Ms. Hibler and Ms. Siders are certified professional coaches with an in-depth understanding of the unique challenges facing women attorneys. Their focus for this year's Leadership Academy will be personal and professional development. GAWL VP of Leadership, Barbara Alexander, says "the Leadership Committee has dedicated the past year to designing this

new and improved program that will give each Academy participant the tools to determine what her leadership style is, what leadership means to her, and how she can best commit her leadership skills to benefit colleagues and community."

Participants will also take advantage of opportunities to network with prominent judges, politicians, general counsel and practitioners from throughout the state and will complete a community service project of their own choosing over the course of the year. Additionally, GAWL will recognize the 2014 Leadership Academy Class at its annual dinner in May.

Rebecca McFadyen, Vice President of GAWL's Mentoring Committee, is one of this year's Leadership Academy participants. She says, "I am thrilled to

be a part of the 2014 class. I am excited about challenging myself to be a better leader, a better attorney, and a better person. I especially look forward to being with other motivated GAWL members, and hopefully, to developing lifelong friendships and collaborations."

If you are interested in attending the 2014 – 2015 Leadership Academy, please watch the GAWL website for the next application cycle in the fall of 2014. For specific questions, contact committee leaders Barbara Alexander, Michelle West, or Salmeh Fodor at GAWL.leadership@gmail.com.

Laurie Rashidi-Yazd, GAWL Communications Chair, is the principal attorney at the Rashidi Law Firm based in Marietta. She specializes in civil litigation, business law and estate planning.

GAWL Highlights Community Service, Domestic Violence Awareness at 18th Annual Judicial Luncheon

By Barbara Alexander

GAWL hosted its 18th Annual Atlanta Judicial Luncheon on Wednesday, October 23rd at the Capital City Club in downtown Atlanta. More than 140 members of the bench and bar, including 27 judges, were in attendance to honor the women of the Metropolitan Atlanta Judiciary. With two judges and six attorneys per table, attendees participated in lively small group conversations before presentations began.

Following the presentation of the 2013 Honorable Debra Bernes Community Service Award by Foundation President Veronica Higgs Cope to Christian Torgrimson, the Honorable Asha Jackson, Superior Court Judge for DeKalb

County, delivered the keynote address. Governor Nathan Deal appointed Judge Jackson to the Georgia Commission on Family Violence in 2012. Her address focused on Domestic Violence Awareness and the Commission's activities aimed at strengthening Georgia's families by ending family violence.

Judge Jackson told attendees that approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are physically assaulted by an intimate partner in the US every year. Further, since 2005 there have been more than 100 domestic violence related deaths in Georgia every year. "Despite funding cuts, Governor Deal and the General Assembly maintained state funding for family violence and sexual assault

programs at \$11.8M for both fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014 budgets," Judge Jackson reported. Additionally, the General Assembly passed House Bill 78 providing additional protections for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Judge Jackson advocated the importance of identifying domestic violence in all of its many forms and knowing the statistics. She reminded us that lawyers are advocates by nature. She also noted that domestic violence affects everyone in some way, shape, or form. "We can all get involved and rally around the prevention of family violence in our state," she said.

Those in attendance appreciated this year's Judicial Luncheon.

Heather Brown, Kitchens Kelley Gaynes, PC., said "I especially enjoy the personal connection with members of the judiciary that the Judicial Luncheon provides." Laura Vickery Benesh, Vickery Benesh Law, P.C., echoed Heather's sentiment. "I enjoyed speaking with Fulton County Superior Court Judge Gail Tusan during lunch, as well as visiting with friends and colleagues before and after the luncheon," she said.

Barbara Alexander is the founder and managing attorney for Alexander Legal LLC, where she focuses on intellectual property. She is also GAWL's current VP of Leadership and co-chairs the Leadership Council with Year Up Atlanta.

GAWL Recognizes Christian Torgrimson as Debra Bernes Community Service Award Recipient for 2013

By Megan T. Hodgkiss

Each year, the GAWL Foundation presents its Honorable Debra Bernes Community Service Award to a GAWL member who provides exceptional service to the public through pro bono work and philanthropy. The GAWL Foundation is excited to recognize its 2013 recipient of the Hon. Debra Bernes Award, Christian Torgrimson.

Christian founded and is the managing partner of Pursley Friese Torgrimson. She has previously served as President of both GAWL and the GAWL Foundation.

"This award is meaningful in so many ways," says Torgrimson. "It is an honor to receive this award from my peers and people whom I admire and aspire to be more like."

GAWL Foundation President Veronica Higgs Cope presented

Ms. Torgrimson with the 2013 Debra Bernes Community Service Award during the Annual Atlanta Judicial Luncheon. While introducing the award, Ms. Cope praised Ms. Torgrimson's volunteer work with the Fairfax County (Virginia) Domestic Violence Network, DeKalb County Rape Crisis Center, Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation, Atlanta-area shelters

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JOHN DISNEY/DAILY REPORT

GAWL Foundation President Veronica Higgs Cope presents Christian Torgrimson with the 2013 Hon. Debra Bernes Community Service Award at GAWL's Atlanta Judicial Luncheon on October 23rd.

GAWL Gwinnett Adjusts Focus in 2013 to Celebrate and Accommodate Family

By Jennifer Gore-Cuthbert

When attorney Nola Jackson first became President of the Gwinnett Chapter of GAWL in 2013, she immediately set to work assessing the chapter. Ms. Jackson says she wanted to find out how to improve attendance, so she sent members a survey about their likes/dislikes and which direction they thought the chapter should be heading in. The response she received was overwhelming. She learned that many of her chapter members are family law attorneys and working moms who are looking

for substantive, family-friendly legal events.

“Lots of working moms are looking for ways to get outside, to learn things they haven’t had time for,” said Jackson.

With this new information, Nola made it her mission to overhaul the Gwinnett chapter. She incorporated a strong “referral engine” element into the chapter and began planning new types of gatherings to fit membership needs. Some event highlights include: Gwinnett Book Club for Busy People, Self Defense Training Class for Women, Tubing

on the Chattahoochee River with GAWL Gwinnett and Baking for the Holidays When You Have No Time. By the end of 2013, Ms. Jackson was happy to see that the Gwinnett Chapter was picking up momentum.

“We’ve had more people starting to attend, and I’ve found that Thursdays work the best for events for our members,” she says.

GAWL Gwinnett has a number of exciting events on the docket for the New Year. On February 13, the chapter will host Chocolicious – Chocolate Tasting Event, (location TBD). Also, the Gwinnett Chap-

ter will host its Rest & Relaxation Retreat on March 28-29. For more information about the Gwinnett Chapter and all its upcoming events, please visit the GAWL website at gawl.org.

Nola Jackson is a partner at Crusier & Mitchell, LLP, located in Norcross, Georgia. She specializes in civil tort litigation.

Jennifer Gore-Cuthbert is a personal injury attorney. She is the founder of The Gore Law Firm, LLC, located in Alpharetta. Jennifer serves on the Communications Committee and is the List-Serv Editor for GAWL.

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and her children’s elementary school. She also detailed Ms. Torgrimson’s accomplishments while serving on the GAWL Executive Board, as GAWL President and as the founder and President of the GAWL Foundation.

The Foundation’s Community Service Award is named for the Hon. Debra Bernes, formerly of the Georgia Court of Appeals. Judge Bernes was a valued member of both GAWL and the Georgia legal community. She personified GAWL’s

mission of supporting women lawyers and worked continually to improve the legal profession generally. Ms. Torgrimson says she was honored to have clerked for Judge Bernes with the appellate division of the Cobb County District Attorney’s office.

“I am overwhelmed to be thought of in the same category as Judge Bernes... She was very committed to her job and duties as an ADA,” reflected Torgrimson. “[Judge Bernes] was an incredible example of how a strong, smart, committed

woman can succeed in law – and be in charge.”

Christian credits GAWL with helping her develop her own leadership skills, along with helping grow her professional network and for providing business opportunities. In 2012, she established the Pursley Friese Torgrimson firm with Stephanie Friese Aron, another former GAWL President. In addition to her legal and community service work, Ms. Torgrimson continues to serve as a mentor and advisor to women attorneys in and around Atlanta. She is scheduled to speak about the importance of mentorship

at GAWL’s Leader Within event on January 28th.

“There is always an opportunity to give in small and large ways,” says Torgrimson. “[The Hon. Debra Bernes Community Service Award] celebrates the importance of giving your time, energy, ideas, labor and money – no matter how busy things become.”

Megan T. Hodgkiss is an attorney, mediator and freelance writer. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Communication at Georgia State University. Megan serves as VP of Communications for GAWL and the GAWL Foundation.

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Upcoming Events Online on GAWL’s website

GAWL has a number of networking opportunities every month, including breakfasts, lunches and happy hours. Not a member? Join us sometime, experience the GAWL advantage, and learn how membership with GAWL can help you in your business and personal development plan. We invite you to visit the GAWL Upcoming Events page to RSVP and to begin building relationships.

Upcoming Events:

January 24:	Solo/Small Firm Affinity Group Lunch
January 28:	The Leader Within Seminar
January 28:	Working Moms Affinity Group Lunch
February 1:	GAWL Foundation Scholarship Application Deadline
February 4:	GAWL Douglas-Paulding February Lunch
February 11:	Newer Lawyers Affinity Group Dinner
February 13:	GAWL Gwinnett/Lawrenceville NNB “Chocolicious” Event
February 18:	GAWL Columbus February Lunch
February 28:	Solo/Small Firm Affinity Group Lunch
March 1:	GAWL Foundation Annual Art Auction
March 18:	GAWL Columbus March Lunch
March 21:	GAWL Foundation Grant Application Spring Deadline
March 28-29:	GAWL Gwinnett Retreat & Judicial Luncheon
April 2:	GAWL John Marshall Law School Women in Law Day 2014

Check out the GAWL Upcoming Events page for more information on these and all of GAWL’s exciting events for 2014!

Now you can Share, Tweet and Like GAWL! Search for “Georgia Association for Women Lawyers” on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook and for “The GAWL Foundation” on Facebook.