

THE AWA BRIEF

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we begin a new board year I want to thank all of the officers, board members and committee chairs who have agreed to serve for the 2010-2011 term. What a talented and diverse group of women! Please check out the board members' bios in this newsletter to learn more about the women who are serving you this year.

In addition, I want to thank Pamela Powell for her able leadership as AWA President during 2009-2010. Thanks to her we had some amazing speakers this year and a very successful student reception. I am honored to be following in the footsteps of so many talented and dedicated women.

The AWA has many opportunities for our members to become more involved, and I encourage you to do so. Currently, our Judicial Endorsement Committee, led by the amazing and dedicated Tammy Kidd, is working hard interviewing over 180 judicial candidates. The AWA's endorsement is coveted state-wide by the judicial candidates, thanks to the Judicial Endorsement Committee's thorough interview process and dedicated service. Our Book Club, led by Lisa Isgitt, meets monthly, and new faces are always welcome. The next meeting is May 20th and the book being discussed is "Olive Kitteridge." Please contact Lisa Isgitt for more information. In addition, we have the Special Events Committee, chaired this year by Tanya Langford, which plans fun events for our members. In the past, those events included cooking classes, a tequila tasting, dinner and a play at The Alley Theatre, Dinner and a Chick Flick at

Gravitas, a weekend trip to Gruene, and a wine tasting. Tanya has some great ideas for the upcoming year, including some art-related events, but new ideas are always welcome. Get involved and contact Tanya today to share your ideas and help plan some fun events!



I recently read an article in the Houston Chronicle that stated that the Houston Area Survey reported that only 20% of Houstonians said their financial circumstances had improved over the past few years. This is the lowest number since the Houston Area Survey began in 1982. Times are indeed tough. Many of my friends and colleagues have been laid off in the past few years. Those who do have jobs live in fear that they won't for long...or are so stressed with their increased workload due to cutbacks that they can't handle their cases effectively. Our law student members worry that they won't have jobs when they graduate. Recent law school graduates learn quickly that jobs are sparse, and the income they expected is much lower than they anticipated.

So what can we do to remain positive in this stark economic climate?

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2010-2011 AWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joanne M. Ericksen, President
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Lynette Fons, Secretary
Deborah Lawson, Treasurer
Rebecca Thai, Newsletter Editor
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INTRODUCING THE 2010–2011 AWA BOARD MEMBERS



Joanne M. Ericksen is the newly elected **President** of the AWA. Joanne has been practicing commercial litigation in her hometown of Houston since graduating from St. Mary's University School of Law in 2002. Active in the AWA since 2005, Joanne has been on the AWA Board since 2006. In her spare time, Joanne enjoys cooking for her friends, theatre, live music, and traveling to Napa as much as possible to enjoy all that the beautiful California Wine Country has to offer.



Laura Gibson is **President Elect** of the AWA where she is responsible for planning the programming for the monthly meetings. Please email Laura at lgibson@ogwbl.com if you have a suggestion for a topic or speaker for our meetings. Laura is an employment lawyer representing management. In her free time, Laura enjoys photography, cooking, and gardening. She is currently tending to her tomato garden in Fayette County and hopes to have a bumper crop.



Pamela E. Powell, the AWA's current **Past President**, practices estate planning and probate law at Cenatiempo & Ditta, L.L.P. During her six years on the AWA Board of Directors, she has served as Special Events Chair, Treasurer, President-Elect, and President. This year, Pamela looks forward to getting to know more AWA members and to coordinating new community service opportunities for our organization.



Lynette Fons, a member of the AWA for more than 20 years, holds the position of AWA **Secretary**. A graduate of South Texas College of Law, her practice focus is civil litigation. Lynette's professional and civic accomplishments include service in a number of elected positions including South Texas College of Law Alumni Association President, officer and director positions with Houston Bar Association and Texas Association of Defense Counsel, Chair of the State Bar of Texas Advertising Review Committee and the Houston Volunteer Lawyer Program, and the executive committee of Lone Star Legal Aid. She enjoys mentoring students and young lawyers.



Deborah Lawson currently serves the AWA as **Treasurer** and is a freelance attorney, specializing in admiralty/maritime and non-profit law, who dreams of becoming a literary agent and is on a quest for the ultimate book.



Rebecca Thai, Newsletter Editor, is always interested in AWA members' contributions to the newsletter. You may contact Rebecca at rthai@IntlCorpCompliance.com if you have news to contribute. Rebecca, a former DOJ prosecutor, is the founder and owner of Rebecca Thai, Esq. & Co.LLC, an Antitrust and FCPA Compliance firm headquartered in Houston. In her free time, Rebecca enjoys running, cooking, classic movies, visual arts, and traveling.



Hon. R. Jack Cagle has served as Judge of Harris County Civil Court at Law No. 1 for ten years. He is a graduate of Rice University and Baylor Law School. A longtime supporter of the AWA, Judge Cagle looks forward to sharing the joys of the legal profession and the great people within it through his service on the AWA Board.

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CHAMBER CHAT WITH JUDGE KEITH ELLISON

By Joanne M. Ericksen, AWA President

On April 21, 2010 Judge Keith Ellison, a U.S. District Court judge in the Southern District of Texas, graciously hosted a Chamber Chat for AWA members. AWA members in attendance were: President Joanne Ericksen, President-Elect Laura Gibson, Meha Gargi, Yolanda Jarmon, Sarah Frazier, Julia Cook, Chantal Rappi, Elizabeth Patterson, Teri Walter, Paula Whitten, Jessi Rivera, Sonya Heath, Wil-Jeanne Eugene, Charlotte Simon, and Christina Huston. In addition, Judge Ellison's Case Manager, Stephanie Loewe, and his law clerks, Shilpi Agarwal and Menaka Kalaskar, participated in the lively discussion.

Judge Ellison's Chamber Chat encompassed many topics. Our discussion began with Judge Ellison expressing his concern that young lawyers weren't getting enough trial experience and how that experience could be obtained. In addition, Judge Ellison's staff shared their views on the importance of professionalism in the courtroom. Ms. Loewe advised us that she, the judge, and the law clerks often talk with the jury at the

conclusion of the case to get their feedback on how the trial was conducted. She offered us great insight into what the jury notices (Everything!) and what makes a good impression (being prepared, conducting one's self professionally towards the bench, the court personnel, the jury, and the witnesses). We definitely learned a lot from this discussion!

In addition, members shared experiences of how the practice of law has changed for women in the past twenty years and lamented about how far we still have to go. Specifically, while the number of women in law school has increased dramatically, the number of female partners in law firms is still miniscule. We discussed ways we could change that and concluded that the way to get ahead is not gender-specific: the key to success is having a solid book of business. The power is in the purse as they say, so let's help each other fill that purse by mentoring each other and referring clients to each other.

The AWA Chamber Chat with Judge Ellison was time well spent. We will plan more Chamber Chats in the future and I encourage you to attend. Thank you to Judge Ellison and his staff for your time, insight and access!



TIFFANY STAR — LISA ISGITT

By Deborah Lawson, AWA Treasurer

As women attorneys, we spend hours struggling to find the exact right words to express our thoughts. We ponder endlessly over whether to use this word or that. Wordsmithing is our business. Yet, when it comes to asking for help or saying “thank you,” our minds are often blank. So instead of struggling to find just the perfect words to express our gratitude, the AWA says it with Tiffany’s! And...let’s admit it... what woman doesn’t understand diamonds?

The Tiffany Star is given, each quarter, to a member who exemplifies all that it means to be a member of the AWA. This month, it is given to a woman who has taken on tasks that others rejected, helping the AWA to be the premier women’s legal organization in Houston. It is given to a woman who truly shines. We are pleased to name Lisa Isgitt the new Tiffany Star recipient.

Lisa graduated from William Mitchell College of Law in 2005, took the Minnesota bar, and started practicing law. Little did she know that she would soon find

herself in Houston, taking the Texas bar, and starting all over again. Luckily for us, Lisa found the AWA, and became an active member and friend. When the AWA Foundation was looking for new trustees, Lisa willingly accepted the call and worked hard to raise money so that the AWA can award scholarships to Houston law students. When the Foundation needed a new treasurer, Lisa volunteered. And, when the Book Club needed resuscitating, Lisa found the time and the energy to revitalize this popular social gathering. All this, while maintaining a busy law practice with possibly the toughest boss imaginable...her father!

If you haven’t had the opportunity to get to know Lisa, I encourage you to join the AWA Book Club.

Congratulations Lisa!

LISA IS “A
WOMAN WHO
TRULY SHINES.”

PAST RECIPIENTS INCLUDE: Deborah Lawson, Shannon Powers, Barbara Gardner, Carol Keough, Trisha Keough, Joanne Ericksen, Janet Beck, Johnetta Lang, Andrea Tran, Chantal Rappi, Rachel Greene, Caroline Marciano, Pamela Powell, Teri Walter, Heather Asselin, Alia Vinson, Martha Failing, Lynne Clarke, Denise Kurt, Lisa Rossmiller, Deana Freeman, Jenn Rustay, Patricia Casey, Monica Vaughan, Paige Sarff, Karen Hurwitz, Teresa Waldrop, Hon. Eva Guzman, Susan Myres, Jeannine Flynn, Janiece Horn, Janet Schafer, Terry Elizondo, Barbara Runge, Janice Pardue, Cameron Vann, Sally Andrews, Ellen Shelton, Kathleen Gasner, Elizabeth Asher, Brenda Whitehead, Karen Lister Conticello, and Katherine Yzaguirre.

AWA'S JUDICIAL ENDORSEMENTS MAKE THE NEWS!

By Tammy Kidd, AWA Judicial Screening Committee Chair

The Dallas Morning News states that an endorsement by the Association of Women Attorneys "is no small feat given the group's reputation for intensive candidate review." The AWA continually receives compliments on its screening and voting process. The candidates describe the screening experience as tough, but good. Many people in the legal community have told committee members that the AWA endorsement is highly regarded and well respected so they seek the opportunity to interview with us. In fact, Roger Jones, a reporter with the Dallas Morning News, called to tap into the expertise of AWA and to find out what makes us such a sought after endorsement.

As an AWA member in good standing as of April 26, 2010, you can play an important part of the decision-making

process for these endorsements at the AWA general meeting on **Wednesday, May 26, 2010, at 6:00 p.m.** During the meeting, the Judicial Screening Committee will present its recommendations for each race. After each recommendation is made, the members in attendance will have the opportunity to make their voices heard by sharing their knowledge of the candidates and by voting on the endorsement. The meeting will be held at the Briar Club, located at 2603 Timmons Lane, between Edloe and Wesleyan.

See http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/opinion/editorials/stories/DN-lehrmann_0315edi.State.Edition1.2257c1e.html for the full story.

TAKE A MEMBER TO LUNCH—YUSHAN CHANG

By Laura Gibson, AWA President-Elect

I had the great pleasure of taking Yushan Chang to lunch recently. We had lunch at Pronto Cucinino, Mandola's Casual Italian on Montrose. Both the company and the food were wonderful.

Yushan grew up in Bellaire, graduating from Bellaire High School. She attended the University of Texas for her undergraduate degree and obtained her law degree from Tulane University in 2003. After a brief stint working for the State of Texas, Yushan joined the City of Houston where she works in government relations.

Yushan joined the AWA at Janet Schafer's suggestion. She has found her membership in AWA to be extremely valuable and she encourages other women attorneys she knows to join the AWA.

Yushan likes to travel a lot. Her dream destination is Iceland. However, she prefers traveling

with a group and hasn't persuaded anyone else to join her on a trip to Iceland. If you also like to travel and are interested in going to Iceland, you should reach out to Yushan. Her most recent trip was ski trip to Calgary, Canada this winter with friends. Yushan is single, which gives her the flexibility to plan a last-minute trip when the weather is perfect for skiing.

This year, Yushan wants to plant an herb garden. Because she lives in an apartment and her balcony is fully shaded, Yushan plans to plant rosemary, thyme and basil in pots by her front door.

I very much enjoyed Yushan's company. Additionally, we both enjoyed our meal. Yushan selected the penne primavera and said that it was delicious. I had the spinach salad with grilled chicken, which was also good. If you haven't been to Pronto, you should try it. The food is delicious and reasonably priced. It is the perfect place for a quick business lunch. Patrons order their meal at the counter and the meal is delivered to the table. Judging by the crowd of people who were dining with us, the restaurant is a tremendous success.

AWA STUDENT RECEPTION

By Kimberly Carter, AWA Membership

On February 24, AWA hosted its Law Student Reception. It was a wonderful success. Law students from TSU, South Texas and University of Houston got the opportunity to mingle with practicing attorneys. After a period of networking and light refreshments prepared by Pamela Powell, the attorneys divided up into their practice areas, and the students had the opportunity to visit attorneys in three different practice areas. The attorneys gave an overview of what their practice areas entail and then answered student questions. We were especially fortunate to have been joined by two judges: Judge Jack Cagle, an AWA board member, and Judge Kathy Stone.

After the reception was over, Judge Stone graciously took the students over to the ceremonial courtroom and discussed courtroom practice. The students all left the reception with an AWA coffee mug to remind them of the event and our organization. The students were very appreciative that so many attorneys had taken the time to come out and share their valuable experience. Several students even joined AWA.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT—CONTINUED

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As Winston Churchill once said, “If you’re going through hell, keep going.” Sometimes the best we can do is keep going. It helps to rely on our support groups. Some of my closest friends are those that I have met through the AWA, and they have indeed helped me during these tough times.

In addition, I recommend surrounding yourself with positive people. Spend enough time around their positive energy and it is bound to rub off on you! I was initially skeptical when friends told me about books they were reading, such as *The Secret* or *The Laws of Attraction*. But my friends really did seem happier than I, so I started to read. One of my favorite books is “*The Energy Bus*” by Jon Gordon. Many things in his book spoke to me, but I want to share two. The first is: When you feel blessed you don’t have time to be stressed. Yes, we all have stress in our lives: economic uncertainty, health problems, divorce, childcare issues, etc. But we are

all blessed too! Think about the amazing Spring we’ve had this year in Houston. I can’t think of a Spring here that has been so long, so free of humidity, so full of beautiful flowers. I challenge each of you to start and end each day by thinking of the blessings in your life: a great lunch with a friend, a delicious glass of wine, the beautiful Texas blue-bonnets, laughing on the phone with your mother, and I guarantee, your stress will diminish.

The second thing from Jon Gordon’s book that I’d like to share with you is this parable. A man goes to the village to visit a wise man and says, “I feel like there are two dogs inside me. One dog is positive, loving and kind. The other dog is angry, mean-spirited and negative. The two dogs fight all the time. I don’t know which dog is going to win.” The wise man thinks for a moment and says, “The one you feed most is the dog who will win. Feed the positive dog.” So, my friends, despite the tough economic times and the challenges we face in all aspects of our lives, I urge you to *feed the positive dog*.

INTRODUCING THE 2010–2011 AWA BOARD MEMBERS—CONTINUED

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Linhuyen Pham works for Heard & Medack, P.C., handling insurance defense litigation. This is her third year serving on the AWA Board, and Linhuyen looks forward to helping the AWA update its website.



Shannon Powers practices intellectual property law, having recently joined the law department of Petroleum Geo-Services. This new position gives her the opportunity to utilize her physics background while handling patents and other IP issues particular to subsea exploration. Out of the office, Shannon enjoys running, skiing, golf, and cheering for the Astros.



Janet Schafer currently works as Assistant Director – Properties for the Houston Airport System. She handles property contractual matters at the City's three airports. Janet has served as President of AWA (2005-2006) and was Chairman of the AWA Foundation Board (2006-2007). She is also a graduate of Class XXIII of Leadership Houston. She is currently finishing a professional certification program jointly conducted by Airports Council International (a non-profit organization promoting aviation) and International Civil Aviation Organization (a specialized agency of the United Nations).

Kimberly Carter attended Wellesley College and the University of Texas School of Law. Kimberly clerked for Judge Edward E. Carnes on the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Montgomery, Alabama, before joining Fulbright & Jaworski, LLP. Kimberly is now working with Cenatiempo & Ditta, LLP. in the area of probate law. Kimberly is the treasurer for Brigid’s Place, an organization that explores the feminine aspects of spirituality.



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Have something you'd like to share with the
AWA members? E-mail Rebecca Thai.

MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

AWA President-Elect **Laura Gibson** has been elected First Vice President of the Houston Bar Association.

Rose Garcia Moriarty, former AWA board member, has joined Collier Legal Search as an Executive Attorney Recruiter. Collier Legal Search is a full-service recruiting firm specializing in all types of legal positions, both temporary and permanent. Rose's focus is on partner placements and senior level associates. Her contact number is 713-854-7663, and her email is rose@collierlegal.com.

Charlotte Simon, an AWA student member and University of Houston Law Student, won the Weil, Gotschal & Manges Award for the Best Paper in the Area of Civil Rights. Her paper is entitled "Change is Coming: Rethinking the Material Support Bar Following the Supreme Court's Holding in *Negusie v. Holder*." Simon also recently won the Beirne, Maynard & Parsons Award, which goes to the Second Year Law Student Who Best Exemplifies the Character, Temperament, Dedication and Courtroom Skills to be a Great Trial Lawyer.

The AWA is now on Facebook!

DON'T MISS THESE UPCOMING EVENTS...

May 20, 2010: AWA Bookclub. Please join the AWA bookclub for an evening of great conversation. At our next meeting we will discuss *Olive Kitteridge* (a collection of related short stories) by Elizabeth Strout. In June and July, we return to the Museum of Fine Arts for their summer selections: *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *My Antonia* by Willa Cather. Bookclub members have enjoyed our previous visits to the MFAH where a docent leads the discussion during a guided tour of the relevant art. To RSVP for future meetings or for more information, please contact Lisa Isgitt at lisgitt@isgitt-law.com.

May 26, 2010: AWA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP AND JUDICIAL ENDORSEMENT MEETING at The Briar Club, located at 2603 Timmons Lane, between Edloe and Wesleyan. Mix and mingle with the judicial candidates from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. The judicial endorsement elections will immediately follow the reception. Only those members in good standing as of April 26, 2010 and whose dues are current for 2010 may attend the endorsement meeting and vote. If you are eligible to vote but are unable to attend, you may submit a proxy. Proxies will be emailed to the members prior to the meeting. To RSVP, email Tammy Kidd at tammykidd@sbcglobal.net.

June 23, 2010: AWA General Meeting, Special Event with the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. More information to come.

You are also invited to attend the following events which are not sponsored by the AWA:

June 2, 2010: Houston Bar Association Minority Opportunities in the Legal Profession Committee is hosting their annual Summer Associate Luncheon at The Houston Club, 811 Rusk from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Cost for a table of 8 is \$400. Individual tickets are available for \$50. Make check payable to the HBA and return to Karen Ramsey at the HBA, 1001 Fannin, Suite 1300, Houston, Texas 77002 by May 26, 2010. No tickets are sold at the door.

June 2010 and July 2010: Volunteers Needed to Give U.S. Vets Legal Advice. The Houston Bar Association is seeking volunteer attorneys to staff the Michael E. DeBakey VA Legal Clinics on Friday, June 25, 2010, Friday, July 2, 2010, and Friday, July 23, 2010. Clinics are held from 2PM to 5PM at the Michael E. DeBakey Medical Center at 2002 Holcombe Blvd. No special training is required and HVLP Veterans Specialists will be present to assist volunteers. Contact Ashley Steinger of the HBA at 713-759-1133 or ashleyg@hba.org to get additional information.

Protect Your Children! The Texas Young Lawyers Association offers a free CD or video downloads about protecting children on the Internet entitled, "R U Safe?" These videos are for children of all ages. Please go to www.tyla.org/rusafe for more information or to download the videos.