

ISSUE NO. 08
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Newsletter

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FROM THE DC CHAPTER PRESIDENT



Marjorie Just
Offit Kurman

It has been a whirlwind first year for the DC Chapter of the Coalition! The newly formed DC Chapter launched in April of this year, and since then we have formed our committees, increased membership and hosted programs. I am thrilled to serve as the Chapter's first President. I am lucky to work with an amazing group of Officers and Board members, whose hard work made our first year so successful.

We had three terrific programs this year where we learned about what is needed to take our next professional steps. Speaker Debbie Epstein Henry emphasized that being great at your job is not enough for professional success. You need to let others know,

by maintaining your networks, through a "give" rather than an "ask," so you are top-of-mind when a problem needs solving. At our summer wellness program, Speaker Jennie Fagan encouraged us to consider the importance of self-care and leaning on our networks for support.

We wrapped up our programming at our September panel of amazing law firm leaders: Amy Bess of Vedder Price; Shawn Wright of Blank Rome; and Gwen Renigar of Steptoe & Johnson. These three women, who hold senior leadership positions at their respective firms, inspired us with what hard work, perseverance and growing our networks can do. Their parting advice for us: Don't quit! Always grow your network; and listen to your own judgment. I came away from the program energized and inspired.

In November, I visited the New York Chapter and attended their Second Annual Leadership Forum, where I heard speakers Rhonda McLean, former Deputy General Counsel at Time, Inc., and Inspiration Award winner Susan Herman, President of the ACLU, along

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with New York Chapter members and Leadership Award winners Jean Cooper Rose and Nneoma Maduiké. Another evening of inspiring women! I left there with our speakers' messages that facing formidable challenges every day is something many women lawyers are constantly tackling; that there are good people all around us, if we pay attention; and that even one individual can make a big change.

Our final program of the year was our Annual Meeting where we welcomed our new and additional Board Members and Officers for 2020. It was a pleasure to celebrate our first-year accomplishments while sharing holiday cheer with our members.

In the New Year, our Associates Committee will host a networking event on January 30, 2020. That will be a great jump-start to our next year of programming.

In nine short months I have had the pleasure and privilege of meeting and working with many dynamic, intelligent, inspiring women who I am proud to call members of my professional and personal networks. Our networks are so important, as they are our sources of business, reality checks, information and support. It has become even more clear to me this year the value of meaningful professional relationships. I am not a big fan of the word "networking" because I think it connotes a superficial interaction. I prefer to think of networking as "friends recommending friends." Growing my network of friends -- who are also impressive women lawyers -- has been a real gift this year. I look forward to more! Happy Holidays.

Chicago Chapter

CHICAGO MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Esther Contreras

Masuda Funai, Partner

Describe what you do.

I provide immigration solutions to corporate clients including foreign investors, domestic businesses hiring foreign workers, and multinational companies transferring foreign employees to the United States. I also represent individual executives,

professionals, researchers, scientists and artists regarding their specific immigration-related needs.

When did you first join the Coalition?

I began attending events as a guest in 2015 and asked my firm to join in 2016.

What positions have you held in the Coalition?

Membership Committee and Diversity & Inclusion Committee.

What was your first job?

I began my career as an Associate at my current firm after law school graduation.



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What is your fondest career memory or highlight?

Receiving my first paycheck at my firm (when I let out a sigh of relief that I would be able to pay off my loans) and making partner.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Take care of yourself first. If you are not physically and mentally healthy, you cannot perform at work, have meaningful personal relationships or take care of others. Make time for the things you enjoy and take a vacation.

What advice would you give to a woman lawyer just starting out?

Embrace the non-legal, business aspects of private practice early on. Learning the law and providing legal counsel is only half of what you will do. The other half involves learning how your firm works

(identifying decision-makers, navigating your firm's finances, determining how work is doled out, what matters most for salary increases and promotions), collections (how much to bill clients, how to ask for money and get paid for your hard work), customer service (managing client relationships so they will refer more work to you and keep calling you), human resources (managing your staff and dealing with others at your firm) and business development (bringing in new business, establishing referral sources, marketing yourself and your firm).

To what do you attribute your success?

I'm not sure I've gotten there yet. I still feel like I have so much to learn, so many skills to develop and I feel like I am constantly working

to be a better counselor, manager and colleague.

What's your favorite Coalition program you've attended?

I enjoy the speed networking events. I've met and connected with many women over the years that have become good friends and have helped me in my career in a multitude of ways.

Where do you hope to be in 5 years?

I would like to become more engaged with the Coalition and other organizations, do more volunteer work and pro bono work, and have more time to mentor younger attorneys and law students.

Coffee or tea?

Coffee.

CHICAGO UPCOMING EVENTS

Mindful Leader Program

January 23, 2020

Ogletree Deakins

It's Not You, It's the Workplace: Women's Conflict at Work and the Bias that Built It

Book Discussion by Andrea S. Kramer and Alton B. Harris

February 6, 2020

Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP

New York Chapter

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Elizabeth Eilender

Law Office of Elizabeth Eilender, PC



Describe what you do.

I represent seriously injured individuals who have already experienced their worst day before they come to my office. I work with them to navigate the overwhelming litigation process to obtain closure and financial compensation for their losses.

When did you first join the Coalition?

In 2017 when the New York Chapter was launched.

What positions have you held in the Coalition?

None, yet.

What was your first job?

In 1992, right out of law school I was the first woman Associate at Jaroslawicz & Jaros, PLLC., a small boutique personal injury firm in New York City. My mentors were all men. They taught me to be tough, resilient and passionate about what we do.

What is your fondest career memory or highlight?

Several years ago, I handled a very serious car accident case where

a friend's daughter sustained a devastating brain injury and another young person in the car was killed. I immediately took control of the situation by having the vehicle impounded and preserved. I promptly travelled out of state with my expert to where the accident occurred. We visited the damaged car and the accident scene on I-95 where cars were zipping past us at 90+ mph as we tried to take photographs, observe skidmarks, etc. and take measurements. I learned all about accident reconstruction and vehicle damage crush patterns. Because the accident occurred out of New York, I performed a choice of law analysis and based upon the significant differences in the two states' applicable law, determined it would be best for the case to be filed in New York. That critical call on venue resulted in having the case heard by a federal magistrate in New York, who was instrumental in getting the case settled. More importantly, it maximized the amount of available insurance so that we were able to provide financial security for my client for the rest of her life.

What is the best advice you ever received?

"Don't be intimidated by these guys." As a young woman plaintiff's lawyer in the early '90's, the defense attorneys in court were very aggressive and would try to take advantage of my youth and inexperience. The senior lawyers in my office encouraged me to stand up to the bullies and gave me complex cases and even jury trials early on in my career. Over time, with that support, I learned how to balance being a fierce advocate with humanity and common sense to achieve positive outcomes for my clients.

What advice would you give to a woman lawyer just starting out?

While it may sound cliché, "prepare, prepare, prepare". I am routinely surprised to see lawyers in court for a conference or a motion who know very little about the case. If you have a command of the facts and pertinent case law, you are more likely to prevail in a ruling or dispute. Another suggestion would be to "slow down". Young lawyers tend to talk way too fast whether it

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Washington, DC Chapter

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Lisa Bleier

Managing Director, SIFMA



Describe what you do.

I am a regulatory attorney who works for a financial services trade association focusing on retirement and senior financial exploitation matters. I work with legislators and regulators on improving the applicable laws.

When did you first become acquainted with the Coalition?

I first learned about the Coalition through other attorneys who were looking for a solution to the networking challenges unique to women.

What positions have you held in the Coalition?

I am the DC Chapter's current Treasurer.

What was your first job?

I started out working on Capitol Hill for Marge Roukema of NJ. She was one of the most senior women in the Republican party in the House at that time. It was not as common to see as many women on either side of the aisle when I was working on Capitol Hill. It has been a very welcome sea change.

What is your fondest career memory or highlight?

Working on Capitol Hill was a dream job for which I have many fond memories. But the greater highlights of my career so far involve the work I have been doing to try to prevent financial exploitation of seniors. This has been an issue that touches everyone in some way, including myself. SIFMA has provided me with the opportunity to work with academics, medical professionals, social workers and financial institutions to work together to come up with solutions.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Some very practical advice which works for both the professional world and the personal world – that is, when seeking a solution, put yourself in the other person's shoes and figure out what they need for a "win", then find your compromise with that in mind.

What advice would you give to a woman lawyer just starting out?

I would remind them that they bring a lot to the table, and not to downplay the value they bring. Women do not always have the same level of confidence walking into the room, but they should.

To what do you attribute your success?

I would attribute my parents, and my husband and children. My parents because they always supported me as I was growing up. I never thought there was anything that was out of reach. And my husband and children because they have always supported me as a working wife and mother. My children particularly have taken on additional responsibilities for themselves to help support me as I work.

What's your favorite Coalition program you've attended?

We are just getting started, but we had a wonderful speaker talk to us about the importance of always continuing to network and reminding us that our networks can be from our professional life, as well as our personal life.

Where do you hope to be in 5 years?

Making bigger strides in preventing financial exploitation.

Coffee or tea?

Herbal teas only.

Snapshots from 2019 Programs



New York Chapter's Beyond Surveys and Guidelines Even.. (L-R) Blossom Kan, Mona Bhalla, Monique Chase and Blythe Lovinger



The Chicago Chapter celebrated its 10th Anniversary with the current and past presidents. (L-R) Kelly Turner, Julianne Hartzell, Margo Wolf O'Donnell, Carolyn Blessing, Tara Kamradt, Katherine Minarik, Kim Metrick, Nicole Auerbach, Katie Rak, and Marcia Owens



Tiffany Higgins, Susan Zumph and Malaika Tyson at the Chicago Chapter's 10th Annual Leadership Forum



Chicago Chapter 7th Annual Judges Panel. (L-R) Jihan Walker, Hon. Sophia Hall, Hon. Moira Johnson, Hon. Maria Valdez and Hon. Ann Williams



Mehtap Cevher Conti, Rhonda Joy McLean and Jean Cooper Rose at the New York Chapter's Second Annual Leadership Forum



(L-R) Penny Williams, Amy Gallup Klann, Kaitlyn Fallon, Meaghan Millan, Nneoma Maduiké, Jean Cooper Rose, Christina Bost Seaton, Elizabeth Schrero, and LaDonna Lusher



Chicago Chapter attendees at Peter Bensinger Jr's workshop, Leading and Enhancing Influence Through Listening and Asking Questions



is in a meeting or before the court, which can cause confusion and dilute your argument.

To what do you attribute your success?

Several things. I attribute my success thus far to my "team" which are my incredible colleagues and my supportive husband and family as well as the opportunities I was given as a young lawyer (see above). Also, as a former Division I lacrosse player, my competitive and

goal-oriented nature are baked into who I am and why I am effective.

What's your favorite Coalition program you've attended?

We had a panel of renown women federal and state court appellate judges speak at one of our chapter events about practical litigation strategies from the court's perspective. The tips they shared were particularly useful in my practice. Of course, our roof-top cocktail networking events at the Setai downtown are always fun.

Where do you hope to be in 5 years?

I hope to be handling even bigger cases and continuing to keep my clients' worst day in the past and give them hope and security for a better future.

Coffee or tea?

Coffee. Is that a real question?

NEW YORK UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Meeting & Holiday Party

December 9, 2019

Corkbuzz

Financial Gym

January 9, 2020

Questions or Comments?

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