



## WAAT'S HAPPENING

### Outgoing President's Message

It goes without saying that when I began my one-year term as President of the Women Attorneys Association of Topeka last summer, I did not expect it to wrap up the way it has. I am sure many of us can say that about a variety of things in our lives—personal and professional—right now. But, do not let that ring as a sentiment of disappointment. This organization has done amazing things in spite of the difficulties and disruption surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am excited to witness the organization continue to grow and evolve under the leadership of our next president, Jen Cocking. While physical distancing may have kept us from networking in person, WAAT pivoted to supporting its CLE on a virtual platform. And, the organization surpassed its fundraising goal for the Food from the Bar Food Drive. Each and every member of WAAT's board of directors volunteered their time and talent to improving the organization and furthering its purpose. These 15 ladies deserve the thanks and recognition for WAAT's accomplishments this year.

This has been an extraordinary year for WAAT. This past membership year marked the 35th anniversary of WAAT's founding—a milestone achievement for certain. We also celebrated the centennial anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment and will soon see 100 years since its ratification. Honoring those who have blazed the trail before us has been a theme woven in to many of WAAT's events, but it was especially poignant this year.

Jen Cocking  
President

Erin Beckerman  
President-Elect

Jen Ouellette  
Treasurer

Jodi Litfin  
Secretary

Amber Smith  
Past President

Judge Rebecca Sanders  
Membership Chair

AnnLouise Fitzgerald  
Program Chair

Ashley Rohleder-Webb  
Mentorship/Young Lawyer Chair

Melissa Wangemann  
Social Chair

Danielle Hall  
Community Service Chair

Lindsay Strong  
Newsletter Chair

Hon. Penny Moylan  
Just Desserts Chair

Hon. Nancy Parrish  
Nominations Chair

Carly Masenthin  
Career Development/CLE Chair

Kelly Trussell  
Archives/Bylaws Chair

Ashley Jarmer  
Public Relations/Website Chair

As we move ahead, I look forward to continuing a courageous fight for equality of all forms and types. Brené Brown taught me that courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen. Sheryl Sandberg taught me to lean in. And, a multitude of women within this organization have taught me that to be successful you must help others succeed as well. I encourage you to be mindful of those lessons and attempt to apply them—even if in small ways—every day.

It has been my pleasure and my privilege to serve as WAAT's president for the 2019-2020 membership year. Thank you all for the support, encouragement, and unique experiences that only the members of this great organization can bring.

Be courageous,

Amber Smith

## 2020 MCFARLAND AWARD

### **Congratulations to the 2020 McFarland Award Recipient, Barbara Rankin**

WAAT awarded Barbara Rankin with the 2020 Justice Kay McFarland Award this spring. The McFarland Award recognizes an individual who has achieved professional excellence in her field and has influenced other women to pursue legal careers, opened doors for women lawyers in a variety of job settings that historically were closed to them, or advanced opportunities for women within a practice area or segment of the profession.

Barb began practicing law 38 years ago. After graduating from law school in 1982, she clerked for Chief Justice Schroeder of the Kansas Supreme Court. She later served as Assistant Counsel for the Security Benefit Group of Companies, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary of CrossFirst Holdings, LLC, Chief Counsel of the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), Interim Secretary of KDOT, and currently serves as Kansas's Assistant Insurance Commissioner. Barb has achieved professional excellence as an attorney, but has also done much to help women advance in the profession—namely by founding WAAT.

When Barb was working for the Kansas Supreme Court, she and her colleague Lori Callahan, who clerked for Justice Herd, and law school classmate Cathy Reeder, who worked in private practice but spent many hours at the Supreme Court Law Library, often found themselves commiserating about feeling isolated as women in the profession. They knew some of their female friends from law school hadn't been able to find jobs at all while others struggled to find mentors who would show them the ropes. They were well aware that the boys club was alive and well in the practice of law and that there was no network for women attorneys to support each other. Together, the three of them decided to start a professional organization for women attorneys in Topeka, and WAAT was born. Barb served as the organization's second president in 1985-86 and consistently supports WAAT's efforts by maintaining her membership and sponsoring Just Desserts. The vision and dedication of these founding women has resulted in an organization that has served many women over the last 35 years. WAAT has provided opportunities for networking, friendship, and the development of leadership skills for many women attorneys in Topeka. Barb undeniably played an important role in creating these opportunities for women to serve and grow both personally and professionally.

WAAT honors its McFarland Award winners every year at our annual Just Desserts event. Sadly, our Just Desserts event could not be hosted as planned this spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic. WAAT looks forward to celebrating Barb's professional accomplishments and dedication to promoting women in the law in person once we can safely do so.

# RECENT HAPPENINGS

## **Food From the Bar 2020**

This spring, WAAT raised over \$1,250 from our Food from the Bar Virtual Food Drive campaign to benefit Harvesters. Harvesters serves 26 counties in north-east Kansas and northwest Missouri. For each dollar WAAT members donated, Harvesters will be able to provide three meals. We thank our members who allowed WAAT to exceed our goal and look forward to having just as much participation in our next community involvement endeavor.

## **WAAT's First Virtual CLE**

WAAT hosted its first set of virtual CLEs this spring focusing on attorney well-being. Danielle Hall provided two hours of ethics providing an overview of KALAP and the National Task Force on Attorney Well-Being. Whitney Casement provided an hour of ethics discussing how to establish purpose during a global health pandemic. WAAT intends to host more virtual CLEs this coming fall, so be on the lookout for fall CLE dates.

## **KWAA's 31st Annual Lindsborg Conference**

KWAA's annual Lindsborg Conference went virtual this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. KWAA was able to provide participants up to obtain 6.5 hours of CLE credit by attending virtual presentations.

## **Lindsborg Conference Social Events**

Although attendees were unable to gather in person this year for KWAA's annual Lindsborg Conference, District G and KWAA's Conference Committee organized virtual social events. Events included wine-tasting hosted by Sherri Wattenbarger, crafting, and a cocktail hour. Comedian Nicole Burch lead District G's virtual cocktail hour preparing lemon gimlets. Nicole is a writer and comedian based in Los Angeles (but quarantining in Kansas City). She has written everything from stage plays to feature films to sketches for Jimmy Kimmel Live. Nicole is also a stand up comic and her first stand up special called "Never Been Kissed" will be premiering September 15th on Amazon and Apple TV.

## **WAAT Drawing for Lindsborg Conference Reimbursement**

As a KWAA affiliate, WAAT encourages our members to attend KWAA's annual Lindsborg Conference. This year, all WAAT members who renewed their membership by July 1st were entered into a drawing for a complimentary registration for the virtual conference. Congratulations, winner Crystal Moe!



## **Monthly Membership Meetings**

WAAT will continue to provide high-quality programming on a monthly basis to its members and our broader legal community. If you are interested in presenting or have suggestions for programming you would like to see, please contact WAAT's Program Chair, AnnLouise Fitzgerald.

## **Annual Meeting, June 2020**

WAAT's annual meeting went virtual this year in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic. This year's meeting gave members an opportunity to share their experience with going virtual and easing back into the workplace. While members all agreed that they missed face-to-face contact with others, there are still some perks to going virtual. Whether it's less commute time, chore filled breaks, or pajama pants, WAAT members are finding positive aspects of this "new normal" and are excited to continue WAAT traditions virtually.

## GOOD NEWS

Share your good news with the group anytime by posting on the WAAT listserv or send your triumphs to the WAAT Board for publication in our newsletter. Let us share in your success and celebrate with you!

- **Angel Zimmerman** received the International J. Reuben Clark Law Society Women in Law Service Award. The J. Reuben Clark Law Society is an international society consisting of thousands of attorneys and law school graduates around the world. The Women in Law Committee of the International J. Reuben Clark Law Society focuses on affirming "the strength and contributions that women lawyers bring to their legal practices, communities, and families, and to promote fairness and equal opportunities for these women." Angel is also serving as the first Regional Area Director of the newly organized US Central Region for the JRCLS.
- **Nicole Revenaugh** was selected to the Leadership Greater Topeka Class of 2020. LGT is an organization that identifies aspiring and established leaders from the community and introduces them to the opportunities and needs of Topeka and Shawnee County while also teaching adaptive leadership concepts.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING NEXT

**Watch your email for details on upcoming events.**

**August 19**

**Kelly Erby**

“Black Women in the Struggle for Freedom and Suffrage”

**September 15**

**Jared Maag**

Annual Supreme Court Update

**October 21**

**Dr. Diana Carlin**