

The Newest in the Member Benefits Line-up

by L. Tracee Lorens

Tracee Lorens is CASD's President for 2003. Ms. Lorens attended San Diego State University and Western State College of Law (now Thomas Jefferson) obtaining her J.D., B.S.L. in 1990 and was admitted to the California State Bar that same year. She has been a member of Consumer Attorneys of San Diego for nine years and was either a Director or Officer of CASD for the past seven years. She practices primarily in the area of employment law, focusing currently on wage and hour class actions, as well as complex personal injury and insurance bad faith claims. Ms. Lorens is the mother of a beautiful 12-year-old daughter, Alexandra Rose Lorens, and the "significant other" and partner of Wayne A. Hughes. She may be reached by e-mail at CASDPres@aol.com or by calling 619-239-1233.

When I began to prepare for my year as a President of our organization, the easiest task was picking the slogan "Year of the Member". It is relatively easy task to run an organization by taking care of "the leadership". It is much more difficult with over 700 members to make sure that the organization's benefits extend throughout the group.

This organization is about more than people who can afford to pay \$125.00 to attend a function. Such functions and revenue are important parts of our organization, but they are not the sole purposes for which we operate. It needs to be appreciated that our organization is costly to run when you calculate in staff, functions and educational programs. Money has to be raised. However, we also have to provide low cost benefits for those members who are at the beginning of their business lives.

I remember seeing, about two years ago on List Serve, criticism that our functions cost too much. I think the organization has done a lot in the past two years to address those concerns. We have done a lot to make our membership benefits more accessible without merely being acce\$\$ible.

For instance, at this year's Annual Installation Dinner with John Edwards as our keynote

speaker, we were able to make an offer to subsidize anyone who wished to attend but could not afford the full price. We were pleased to see that several members took advantage of that offer and in essence “named their own price”. We will not always be able to make such offers, but we are concerned about the problem and are trying to address it in a reasonable manner.

I want to take this time to tell you about some of our *New Member Benefits*.

List Serve Parties

One solution has been to schedule social functions which are affordable to all members. Last year we had two List Serve parties which were attended by over 150 members! We had live music, refreshments and good company. We are going to do more of these types of functions this year. **Rebecca Mowbray** is the chairman of the Events sub-committee.

Rebecca currently has a “List Serve Party” scheduled on **April 5, 2003** in Escondido at Thor and Tracy Emblem’s house. Once again it will be a potluck with a dance band and at no charge. Those members who have not met Thor yet are in for a treat. Not only is Thor a gracious host but his wife is one of the world’s truly neat people.

Another idea that is in the brainstorming stage is a “List Serve Beach Party” this summer. If you have any additional ideas or thoughts feel free to call Rebecca or post them on List Serve for everyone.

Mixers

At the time of writing this article, we had already had two mixers. One was in Leucadia and the other was at Downtown Johnny Brown’s. We are committed to having monthly mixers and moving the location around the county so that all of our members can participate.

What is evolving out of these mixers? The mixers have reflected a good cross section of our membership. Mixers are held after work for a couple of hours with a no-host bar and

donated appetizers. What we have seen at these functions is the intermingling of the entire spectrum of this organization from brand new attorneys to recipients of the Trial Lawyer of the Year award, Past Presidents, and former members who have become judges. An attorney mentioned that she was pleased to see how much effort the experienced successful attorneys took to introduce themselves to the younger members. She felt that the mixers were accomplishing what frequently could not be accomplished at the larger dinners, *i.e.*, the breaking down of what has occasionally been referred to as the barrier between the audience and the people at the front of the room.

Cynthia Sinclair, a new associate in our office, had an amusing experience. While she was driving to the Downtown Johnny Brown's mixer her precocious son remarked that it was not unusual that his dad was a medical doctor and his mother was a nurse who had become an attorney. Cynthia told her son, Andrew, that it was a very unusual occurrence and challenged him to identify any similar parental pairing. When she arrived at the mixer with her husband and son, she met **Alexys Kalafer**. Alexys is also a CASD member who is a former nurse and is married to a physician. As they were on their way home, Cynthia's son could only be thinking, "Yeah sure mom, it is common."

I also had a chance to talk to **Tom Grady**. Tom Grady used to work on the dark side of the street as a defense attorney for many years. He sold his practice, retired, got bored and has returned as a plaintiff's lawyer. Tom related that he has never enjoyed himself as much as he has as a plaintiff's lawyer. Tom reflected on the fact that for many years defense attorneys had so many ways of exchanging information and plaintiff's attorneys were always operating in a vacuum. He believes that member services such as List Serve and the proposed Brief Bank are equalizing the playing field.

At the Leucadia mixer (which Wayne attended for me and was hosted by **Joel Selik** and his bird **Dave**), **Cindy Chihak**, a former president of CASD, talked about how when she started out in this organization there had been a great deal of socialization between the experienced members of the organization and the younger members. She felt that CASD had gotten away from that for many years and that the List Serve parties and Mixers had marked a return to a friendlier, more accessible organization.

It is our intent to have monthly mixers which move around the county. Already the mixers are proving a valuable place to network and to put faces with the names you see on List Serve. List Serve has also become a valuable percolator for our members to discuss and organize on their own such things as Alexys Kalafer's Grieving Party, the use of focus groups and even a raft trip.

Seminars

"Tuesday Night At The Lab"

We have started a new program which is tentatively called "Tuesday Night At The Lab". The first Lab focused on "The First Hundred Questions: The Basic Deposition".

The purpose of these monthly sessions is to help less experienced attorneys hone their skills.. The idea is to have each "Tuesday Night At The Lab" consist of materials, lecture and a simulated session involving hands-on experience using volunteers from the audience. Following each program there will be an opportunity for CASD members who are in attendance to set up a mentoring relationship with a more experienced attorney to get additional experience, insight or advice over the next month. Attorneys with more than four years of experience will be charged \$25.00 and those with less than four years experience \$15.00. Each seminar should qualify for at least two units of MCLE credits.

Future monthly seminars which will be posted either on List Serve or in this magazine have such interesting topics as:

- April 22** **“Dealing with Difficult Judges [As If There is Such a Thing]**
- May 20** **“Which Table Do I Sit At?” A Primer on Courtroom Etiquette and Procedure**
- June 17** **“Law and Motion Sickness”**

There are approximately 2,000 attorneys in the County of San Diego who have less than 4 years of experience. As of the writing of this article, I am in the process of sending a mass mailer to each of these attorneys to apprise them not only of the “Tuesday Night At The Lab” seminars but to also invite them to check out our organization. As we related on List Serve, there is strength in numbers.

We also have two regular seminars scheduled for April 4th and June 7th. In April we will be hosting a seminar on deposition skills which includes speakers like **Deborah Wolfe**, **Wayne Hughes**, and **Rhonda Holmes**. In June, **Dwight Ritter** will bring in the “best of the best” lawyers from around the country. **Ned Good** will be speaking along with a line-up not to be missed.

Brief Bank

We have put together a committee, chaired by Ross Jurewitz, to start gathering in electronic form briefs of common significance to the membership. The technical problems to making these briefs accessible to the members on-line have been numerous but we are close to a solution. It is our hope that we will be able to gather and provide to our membership at a low cost means to access these briefs on-line. It is likely you will be able to shop for all your needs by making just one stop at **www.CASD.org**. The members, of course, will be responsible for

checking the appropriateness of cites and language, but this library of materials should be a considerable time saver.

If you have ideas, thoughts, questions, input, or criticism please feel free to forward them to me. The best way to get your thoughts to me is to e-mail it to CASDPres@aol.com. My fax number is (619) 239-1178 or just call me at (619) 239-1233. Please take care and help me make this *your organization*.