

# THE DAILY RECORD

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## Renew your commitment to change

BY GRETA K. KOLCON

Daily Record Columnist

January is a natural time to focus on new beginnings and renewed commitments.

January also is the time for the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys (GRAWA)'s final membership push. If you have never joined, consider this to be a formal invitation. For those who have had a renewal notice sitting in your e-mail inbox or on your desk for several weeks, now is the time to take two minutes to submit your renewal.

### Membership provides a larger voice

There are many personal membership benefits for GRAWA members, both tangible and intangible, from networking and referrals to opportunities for professional development and recognition. However, membership is important beyond the direct personal benefits.

One of the best things about GRAWA is that, together, its members can have a greater impact and a larger, more credible voice for change. WBASNY's chapters, of which GRAWA is one, play an important role in formulating positions on both state and federal legislation that improves the quality of life and protects the rights of women.

WBASNY frequently acts as *amicus curiae* in important cases. Simply by joining GRAWA and increasing WBASNY's membership list, GRAWA members help ensure that legislators, OCA and legal employers continue to take WBASNY's voice seriously.

### Recent initiatives For change

Recently, WBASNY evaluated the number of state appellate court vacancies in New York, and urged the governor to fill those vacancies, and particularly to consider highly qualified candidates who are women.

On Dec. 31, 2007, the state announced the appointment of WBASNY member, the Hon. Karla Moskowitz, to the Appellate Division, First Department bench.

On a local level, GRAWA has joined with other community leaders to respond to concerns that the appointment process for the Monroe County Public Defender is not perceived as a fair and open process.

## GRAWA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



GRETA K. KOLCON

According to Anthony R. Palermo, past president of both the Monroe County and New York State Bar Associations, the last time the selection process took place, 35 candidates applied. This time, there is only one. GRAWA has addressed the issue directly with the Monroe County Legislature, and GRAWA encourages anyone interested in the issue to participate in tonight's community meeting at 7 p.m. at Aeon Baptist Church on Genesee Street in Rochester (next to St. Mary's Hospital).

GRAWA's board recently met with representatives of Rochester's Teen Court program to explore ways for the program to become self-sustaining following funding cuts. A unique and highly effective program that targets a prime at-risk population, Teen Court is a diversion program operated through the Rochester City Court for young adults ages 16 to 18 who have

committed first time, non-violent crimes. Defendants whose cases are transferred to Teen Court have a disposition of their criminal charges by teen peers who act as prosecutors, defense counsel, court personnel and jurors. A sitting Rochester City Court judge presides over the proceedings, and teen jurors recommend sentencing.

### Join GRAWA before Jan. 20

GRAWA is a voice for change, a voice for the advancement of women in the law and women's legal rights in society. Join us. See [www.grawa.org](http://www.grawa.org) or contact Membership Chairwoman Sharon Higginbotham at [shigginb@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:shigginb@courts.state.ny.us). You can also send an e-mail to me, [gkolcon@woodsoviatt.com](mailto:gkolcon@woodsoviatt.com), or call (585) 987-2812.

Following the end of our current membership drive, GRAWA will host a mixer and special membership meeting on Feb. 7, from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. at Nixon Peabody LLP, 11th floor, to vote on a change to WBASNY's bylaws. The business program will be short but important, as WBASNY looks forward to its long-range planning and renewed commitment to its mission.

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