

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

GRAWA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Honoring GRAWA members, Women Helping Girls

GRAWA's annual Installation Dinner not only is an opportunity to say farewell to our outgoing board of directors and welcome our incoming board.

The most touching and lovely part of the evening invariably comes when we recognize several deserving members and a community organization with special awards. This year's event honored the following women and local programs:

Hanna S. Cohn Mentoring Award

The Hanna S. Cohn Award was established in 2002 in honor of the late founder of Volunteer Legal Services of Monroe County Inc., a GRAWA president (1988-1989) and a dear colleague and friend to many within and outside of our organization.

Hanna was passionate and active about many facets of the legal system. The award recognizes a GRAWA member who has mentored, inspired and nurtured young women as they enter and begin their legal professions. This year's recipient was Sue Tebor.

Sue's legal path was less traditional — she attended law school later in life, then took a break from practice to raise her family. All the while, she mentored many young women attorneys by creating and providing direct opportunities for professional support, friendship and growth. Sue was equally dedicated to a young high school student mentee through GRAWA's Big Brother Big Sisters Mentorship program with the John Marshall Law Academy. With Sue's unending support and guidance, that young woman is now a college student and beginning her own professional path.

Crennel-Branch Award

In 2004, GRAWA established the Crennel-Branch Award to honor untiring and exemplary dedication to the organization. The award is reserved for a GRAWA member who has excelled in promoting the organization and the profession. The award is not given annually, but instead when a very deserving candidate is identified.

The award is named for two women, Rochester's first woman attorney and first woman judge.

Kate K. Crennel was admitted to practice in 1897. Sadly, little is known about her except that her name was included on the roster of admittees to the bar in Rochester that year. Given that

only about 300 women were admitted to practice law in the United States at that time, we can only guess as to Crennel's character. Doubtless, she must have been particularly under-terred, fierce, independent and intelligent.

Carolyn Branch, the first local female judge, was elected to the family court soon after its creation in 1962. Also dedicated, Judge Branch ran a successful primary against the Republican Party's designated candidate and defeated the Democratic candidate in the general election.

In the name of these trail-blazing foremothers, we presented the Crennel-Branch Award this year to Diane Cecero, who has long been dedicated to GRAWA in many ways. In addition to helping to found GRAWA in the mid-1980s, Diane served as our president (1990-1991). Through the years she has served in many board-related leadership roles including as board treasurer, and as the chairwoman of the Judicial Evaluation, Nominating and Media committees. Diane even agreed to serve as this year's chairwoman of the Mentoring Committee. In addition to providing untiring guidance and leadership, Diane has been a member of GRAWA's various committees innumerable times, was appointed as GRAWA's delegate to WBASNY and represented GRAWA on a statewide judicial screening committee. She has served both an official and unofficial mentor to countless GRAWA presidents and new women attorneys. It's no surprise that Diane also is a past recipient of our Hanna S. Cohn award.

As well as service to GRAWA, Diane recently served as secretary of the Monroe County Bar Association, is a founding member of VLSP and has been an active board member for Alternatives for Battered Women, Women's Career Center and Our Lady of Mercy High School. Despite her many laudable volunteer activities, Diane also has an impressive resume. In addition to serving as general counsel to Monroe Community College, she also is the legal advisor to MCC's president and its chief diversity officer.

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Directors' Award

Our board of directors presents its award to a person or orga-



By **AMY SCHWARTZ**

Daily Record
Columnist

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nization whose activities enhance the lives of women.

This year's recipient is the organization we adopted for our very successful Law Day Project fundraiser, Women Helping Girls. An award-winning program of the Greater Rochester Area Branch of the American Association of University Women, in partnership with the Rochester City School District, its mission is to support underserved girls in the Rochester City School District in leading productive and successful lives. Each girl's assets are recognized, and emotional support, guidance, mentoring and experiences are provided in an effort to broaden their horizons. Women Helping Girls empowers girls in grades 7 through 12, a majority of whom are African-American and Hispanic.

The program achieves success through one-to-one mentoring, enriching activities, college tours and personal development workshops, designed to broaden girls' interests, develop life skills, and reinforce the importance of an education. The 501(c)(3) non-profit organization depends solely on donations and grants for financial support, and has served hundreds of girls since 1992.

Women Helping Girls has many wonderful and inspiring success stories to its credit, and GRAWA is proud to support and recognize the work, which very well may be fostering our next generation of fine women attorneys and judges! The award is generously underwritten by *The Daily Record*.

President's Award

Each year, GRAWA's president has the opportunity to present an award to a member to acknowledge his or her hard work and commitment to the organization within the past year.

Outgoing President Heidi Schult Gregory selected the co-chairwomen of one of our newest, but most dynamic, committees — Julie Bielecki and Katie Courtney of the Newly-Admitted Women Attorneys Committee. Julie and Katie founded the Committee less than two years ago and, through their leadership, it already has become indispensable to our organization. These two young attorneys have provided incredible support and leadership to their committee members and offered many opportunities for networking and fellowship through formal meetings and happy hours. They organized this year's successful Law Day project, as well as a second small fundraiser for Women Helping Girls during the Installation Dinner. Julie, Katie and their committee coordinated and staffed a GRAWA information table at the Fourth Department's admission ceremony for new attorneys. In partnership with the Family and Careers Committee, they also co-hosted a brown bag roundtable to address the challenges of starting and raising a family while maintaining or re-entering the practice of law.

Congratulations to our many honorees are warranted indeed! You truly are the embodiment of all that is inspiring, good and right within our wonderful organization. We are so proud of all of your accomplishments and your important work as lawyers, leaders, role models, activists and as women, who have made our community a better place to live and practice.

Amy Schwartz is the 27th president of the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys and a senior staff attorney with Empire Justice Center, where she directs the organization's Domestic Violence Legal Project. Amy thanks former GRAWA President Heidi Schult-Gregory, who assisted in drafting this month's column.