

# THE DAILY RECORD

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

## GRAWA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### GRAWA relevant in changing times

In order to thrive, the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys and other organizations must find ways to adapt in changing times.

When speaking with the GRAWA board and members about our uncertain economy, I often say that "GRAWA needs to stay relevant."

In other words, we should identify ways to connect with and satisfy members' current needs, while remaining true to our purpose and mission.

Overall, GRAWA's members understand that "staying relevant" will allow us to better serve our members' needs and remain grounded in the currently challenging conditions.

In recent months, GRAWA has taken many steps to embrace the nation's ever-changing realities, while still providing quality programs and services.

#### GRAWA aligned with member needs

Most people like to be recognized for a job well done or applauded for a significant achievement. In today's times, professional recognition can be a big boost to one's reputation and ability to develop clients and grow a legal practice.

Long ago, GRAWA formed a Nominating Committee for the primary purpose of nominating members and community organizations for local and state awards. GRAWA not only nominates its members for awards and recognition, but also celebrates and highlights individual successes whenever and wherever possible.

Since GRAWA's mission is to promote, support and encourage the advancement of women attorneys in their respective careers, GRAWA attempts to find creative ways throughout the bar year to honor members who achieve personal or professional milestones, take new positions or receive special recognition. Such special recognition is especially critical these days for those who don't have access to a large professional platform.

There is a great deal of job uncertainty in our changing times. Professional networking is becoming increasingly necessary for lawyers not only as a means to develop clients, but also to assist in changing or finding a new job. GRAWA recently co-sponsored a food and wine pairing event with the Rochester Women's Network to encourage members of both groups to network and forge connections. The event was well attended and a success by networking standards.

GRAWA hosts less formal, but equally important networking

programs through its monthly dinner club and specialized committee meetings.

#### Value through programming

Mentoring is central to just about everything GRAWA does. GRAWA's Mentoring Committee pairs mentor attorneys with younger mentee attorneys, who meet and talk on an individual basis as needed.

Almost every program or project GRAWA sponsors has some mentoring motive to it. Our Chamber Chat series, for instance, enables GRAWA members to sit with a select member of the judiciary for an hour or so in chambers. Most judges provide information about the court and the matters over which he or she presides, but also will provide information about what lead to his or her appointment or election to the judicial office.

GRAWA's committees hold brown bag lunch series to discuss relevant topics. In fact, GRAWA's Newly-Admitted Women Attorneys Committee and the Family and Careers Committee plan to join forces at noon on May 8 to discuss a variety of topics pertinent to their members, including balancing work and family, changing jobs and mentoring.

Over the summer, GRAWA hopes to connect with members through the creation of a Linked-In group.

GRAWA understands and appreciates that technological advances allow for more seamless communication in different venues. Obviously, personal encounters and gatherings are preferred for mentoring and socializing, but GRAWA promotes the use of electronic communication for its cost effectiveness and time efficiencies.

In such changing times, professional networking sites and electronic communication may be the best way to provide immediate assistance to our members.

#### GRAWA volunteers with a purpose

Each year, GRAWA identifies several worthy charities for which our members raise money and/or awareness. On Law Day, May 1, GRAWA's Newly-Admitted Women Attorneys Committee will spearhead a volunteer effort to raise money for Women Helping Girls, a program of the Greater Rochester Area Branch of the American Association of University Women.

This bar year, GRAWA also has donated time, money and



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focus to the Society for the Protection and Care of Children and Foodlink, the local food pantry.

GRAWA places a huge emphasis on health and wellness as well through the Women's Health Committee. Members receive pertinent information on a regular basis on a variety of issues, including medical and mental health conditions women are facing and how to live a healthier lifestyle, especially in such stressful times. In May, the committee will host a health fair, which will be open to everyone, not just GRAWA members, and will feature alternative health, relaxation techniques and massage therapy.

## **GRAWA's 'Go Green' works**

GRAWA made a commitment about two years ago to "go green." Instead of generating hard copy newsletters, we communicate through weekly — sometimes more than once a week — e-blasts. Through links, members are provided information or connected to the GRAWA Web site to gain additional input.

While some may argue that online communication is imper-

sonal, the majority of our members say they prefer electronic communication and recognize its inherent efficiencies, environmental benefits and cost savings for GRAWA's budget.

## **Emphasizing the mission**

GRAWA is not afraid to ask the tough question, "Are we doing enough?"

I suspect that — despite our best efforts in light of stressful, changing times — the answer is, "No, not enough."

GRAWA is committed to working hard for its members by identifying relevant programs and projects, finding new ways to connect and offering the support and encouragement needed now more than ever. I invite you to get involved and to join GRAWA today if you are not already a member. Please forward your ideas, concerns and issues to me. GRAWA needs feedback so that we can continue to stay relevant to our members.

*Heidi Schult Gregory is a member of the Pittsford-based law firm Harris Beach PLLC, for which she serves on the Health Care Providers Industry Team and the Business and Commercial Litigation Practice Group. She is GRAWA's 26th president.*