



# Newsletter

**Summer 2012**

## I.O.W.A. 27th Annual Meeting



Judge Donna Paulsen

Natasha Kaiser-Brown

Prof. Barbara Schwartz

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On June 19, I.O.W.A. held its 27th Annual Meeting and Dinner at the Sheraton Hotel in West Des Moines. The event was held in conjunction with the Iowa State Bar Association's Annual Meeting.

The event was a great success with over seventy people attending. We were delighted to have numerous distinguished guests, including: Supreme Court Justice Thomas Waterman, Court of Appeals Judges Anuradha Vaitheswaran and Mary Tabor, District Court Judges, Kristin Hibbs, Annette Scieszinski, Karen Romano, Eliza Ovrom, Marsha Bergan, and Artis Reis, District Associate Judges Odell McGhee and Romonda Belcher, Federal Magistrate Judge Celeste Bremer, Superior Court of the District of Columbia Judge, Herb Dixon, Chief Legal Counsel to the Governor, Brenna Findley, ISBA past president, Robert Waterman, ISBA President, Cynthia Moser, ABA Representative David Brown, and Dean of the Iowa College of Law, Gail Agrawal.

## Natasha takes a team approach to track, even though it is generally an individual sport.

The evening's program began with our keynote speaker, Natasha Kaiser-Brown. Natasha is the head coach for Drake University's Track & Field Program. She is also a two-time Olympian. Natasha shared her journey from running track at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines to becoming an Olympic runner and World Track Champion to becoming a wife, mother, and coach.

Natasha described how her coaches trained her to become a 400 meter runner, even though she hated running that distance. Four hundred meters is one lap around a track and is an all-out sprint. It is known to be one of the most difficult races

there is. Natasha followed her coaches' advice and while she admitted she never developed a love for the 400, she kept with it because she loved the feeling of winning.

Natasha ran for the University of Missouri. She went on to win a silver medal in the 4x400 meter relay at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. At the 1993 World Track Championships, she won the gold in the 4x400 and silver in the individual 400. She rebounded from stress fractures in her feet to make the track team for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

Natasha described how the two most influential coaches during her running

career had very different styles. One coach was very nurturing, positive and encouraging. The other coach used a harsher style with a colder tone of discipline. Although it took some getting used to, she explained how both styles of coaching made her a better runner and that she employs both styles in her own coaching.

Natasha was very humble in speaking about her experiences and accomplishments. Even though she has lived out what many people can only dream of, she is very down-to-earth and practical. I noticed three lessons in her speech that we can apply as lawyers. First, Natasha seems to have ap-

proached her goals in a deliberate but calm fashion—putting in the work beforehand and accepting the results, whether it was her best performance or not. Second, Natasha takes a team approach to track, despite it generally being an individual sport. She described how her and her roommate had the same track goals. Instead of becoming competing adversaries, they became allies, diligently practicing together and pushing one another. Last, it was clear from her speech that Natasha values having a family more than her medals and coaching career, reminding us to keep our goals in perspective and our priorities in proper order.

## I.O.W.A. 27th Annual Meeting (cont'd from page 1)

The next segment of the program entailed the presentation of the Arabella Mansfield and Gertrude Rush awards.

Arabella Mansfield was the first woman admitted to practice law in the country. I.O.W.A. gives this award to a woman attorney who exemplifies Arabella Mansfield's spirit and has helped nurture other women in our profession. This year the award was given to Judge Donna Paulsen. Judge Paulsen was the first woman appointed to the district court bench in the Fifth District of Iowa. Early in her career, she helped form the Linn County Women Attorneys Association. Through her accomplishments, Judge Paulsen helped pave the way for women in the legal field. She has also mentored countless women new to the practice of law. Judge Donna Paulsen retired in February 2012. You can read more about Judge Paulsen in our previous newsletter (Spring 2012).

Gertrude Rush was the first African American admitted to practice law in Iowa. I.O.W.A. co-sponsors this award with the Iowa National Bar Association and it is given to an attorney who manifests Gertrude Rush's spirit, is a leader in the legal profession, and has demonstrated concern for human and civil

rights. This year the award was given to Professor Barbara Schwartz. Barbara Schwartz has been a clinical professor at the University of Iowa College of Law since 1977. In this capacity, she has trained thousands of future lawyers while providing legal assistance to the needy. Professor Schwartz has dedicated herself to helping secure rights for those who have difficulty obtaining representation, including prisoners and immigrants. Some of her work includes obtaining services for blind and deaf prisoners, and obtaining secular drug-treatment programs as an alternative to faith-based treatments offered in prison. She has also helped hundreds of immigrants encountering citizenship and deportation issues.

Following the awards ceremony, outgoing president, Ann Smisek, summarized some of I.O.W.A.'s activity and accomplishments in recent years. She explained that the board had made an effort to use I.O.W.A. funds to engage members and host events. Some of the events have included receptions with Law Students at both Drake and Iowa City, a luncheon in Sioux City, a happy hour for discussion of "rainmaking" strategies in Des Moines, and free CLEs for members in District 5. She noted that membership has increased and that the

Board has tried to improve communications with members by sending more frequent emailed bulletins and revamping the newsletter. She also explained I.O.W.A.'s partnership with two projects: 50/50 in 2020 and the Infinity Project. 50/50 in 2020 is dedicated to improving the gender diversity of Iowa's elected officials and the Infinity Project is dedicated to improving the gender diversity of the judiciary. Ann thanked the group for electing and supporting her.

Current president, Dawn Boucher, introduced the new board members (see page 5) and gave closing remarks. She thanked the membership for electing her. Dawn emphasized that the main goals for her tenure include increasing membership in the corners of the state and holding more events outside of Des Moines.

We extend our many thanks to those who helped make this year's annual meeting and dinner a success. Our Annual Meeting Chair, Gail Sheridan-Lucht worked on the event details for nearly a year in advance. Alissa Smith, our Professional Action Chair, planned, organized, and presented the nominations and conducted the election of the award recipients.

## Pottawattamie County Women Attorneys: Building a Network

Early this year, I.O.W.A. was contacted by Jennifer Carlson, an Associate with Stuart Tinley, L.L.P. in Council Bluffs. She told us that several women attorneys, including herself, had started organizing luncheons for women attorneys to meet in Pottawattamie County. She kindly invited leadership from I.O.W.A. to one of their lunches to talk about our mission and learn about their group.

On May 3, 2012, Ann Smisek and Dawn Boucher of I.O.W.A. met the group at a Pizza Ranch in Council Bluffs. Approximately 20 area women attorneys attended. While the group leisurely munched on the offerings from the salad bar and pizza buffet, participants discussed our groups' mutual goals. Ann and Dawn described I.O.W.A.'s desire to better serve members in western Iowa. Leaders from



*Jennifer Carlson*

the Pottawattamie County Women Attorneys described how they initiated their meetings and built their network.

There was a noticeable excitement about the room as the discussion progressed. Some attorneys expressed their need for networking. Others described their hope to encourage younger attorneys to stay in the area and develop their practice. The group hoped to have more gatherings and was motivated to get more women on the bench in District 4. They have since held a happy hour networking reception and have a luncheon planned for October 18.

We applaud the efforts of Karen Dales, Marti Nerenstone, & Deborah Peterson for organizing this group. Many thanks also to Jennifer Carlson for inviting I.O.W.A. to the luncheon and to Shelley Whitcher our new 4th District Representative. Three cheers for women attorneys in Pottawattamie County!

## In Memory of Wendy Carlson Waugaman

On June 18, 2012, Wendy Carlson Waugaman, a long-time I.O.W.A. member and leader for women in the legal profession, passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. We extend our condolences to her colleagues and family and hope in sharing her memory, we can all learn from her even if we did not know her. She was known for living to the fullest, having an intense drive, and for her smile.

Wendy grew up in Humboldt, Iowa and attended Drake University, studying business administration and accounting. She then attended Notre Dame law school. As a law student, she was a summer clerk for Whitfield and Eddy law firm in Des Moines. She continued there from 1985 until 1999, first as an associate, and then as a partner.

Maureen Tobin, a former colleague and friend remembers first being welcomed by Wendy at Whitfield and Eddy 25 years ago, in 1987. Wendy, along with Jaki Samuelson and Megan Antenucci, passed Maureen a welcome

note and signed it, "The Whitfield Women."

Jaki Samuelson stated, "Wendy always approached the task before her with enthusiasm, intelligence, and a drive to succeed. That made her a great lawyer, insurance executive, community



*Wendy Carlson Waugaman*

leader, athlete, musician, and friend."

Wendy became admired by men and women alike at Whitfield and Eddy. She was known for being smart and quick. One of the founding partners noted it was fascinating to watch her grow as an attorney and businesswoman.

In 1999, Wendy became Chief Financial Officer and General Counsel of American Equity Insurance Company. She became President and CEO of the company in 2009. She was the first woman CEO of an Iowa based insurance company.

In addition to building an extraordinary career, Wendy dedicated her life to philanthropic endeavors, including serving on the boards of the Mercy Hospital Foundation, the Bright Foundation, Des Moines Metro Opera Foundation, and Buena Vista University, just to name a few.

Wendy also developed many interests and hobbies. She enjoyed long morning bicycle rides and competed in her first triathlon in 2008. She also enjoyed traveling, cooking, and playing the piano.

She will be greatly missed.

## 50/50 in 2020 Project Progress

One project I.O.W.A. is involved in is the 50/50 in 2020 project. This project's mission "is to achieve political equity for Iowa women by recruiting, training, and mentoring women in sufficient numbers that by the 100th anniversary of Women Suffrage (the year 2020) Iowans will have elected females to fill 50% of the Iowa Legislature, the Iowa delegation to the U.S. Congress, and the office of Governor." The project's founders are Maggie Tinsman, a Republican from the Quad Cities, and Jean Lloyd-Jones, a Democrat from Iowa City. The bipartisan project is working toward its goals by encouraging women to run for office and helping train those interested in elected positions.

On June 27, 50/50 in 2020 held a strategy meeting with core organizers from various groups, such as I.O.W.A. Ann Smisek and Jenn Smith attended on behalf of I.O.W.A.

We discussed our groups' missions and developed strategies for how we can help 50/50 in 2020 and how 50/50 in 2020 might help serve our constituents. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn about how various groups are helping advance women in our political process—from teaching girls confidence at an early age, to providing networking opportunities for women business owners, to educating women about voting. Some of

the groups represented were the American Association of University Women, Business & Professional Women of Iowa, Central Iowa Council of Girl Scouts, the Carrie Chapman Catt Center, the Iowa Women's Foundation, League of Women Voters of Iowa, and the Women, Food and Agriculture Network.

At the meeting, we learned

that 50/50 in 2020 has made progress toward its goal. It recruited 29 new women candidates to run for seats in the Iowa legislature. In the Iowa Primary Election, there were a total of 67 women who ran and 82% of these candidates won.

There is much more work to be done though and we are far from reaching our goal of political equity. We developed the following action steps to work on:

- (1) Develop a one page summary of why political parity is important.
- (2) Develop a questionnaire to help women determine whether they would be interested in pursuing an elected office.
- (3) Collect and share stories of women in office and their experiences.

(continued on page 4)

*"One century is long enough  
to wait for equity."*



## 50/50 in 2020 Project Progress (cont'd)

- (4) Design and conduct training sessions for persons willing to serve as mentors to women candidates.
- (5) Maintain a shared calendar for women's organizations to learn more about each other's events, foster networking, and further each other's missions.

The group also discussed its efforts to collect data from across the state to track gender diversity in appointed and elected positions at the local level. Other groups aiding this effort are the Political Science Department at UNI, the Carrie Chapman Catt Center, the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, the Iowa Women's Foundation, and the American Association of University Women.

One interesting topic of conversation was the legal mandate for gender equity in local boards and commissions. Gender equity on state boards and commissions has been required since the mid-eighties. In 2009, the Iowa legislature expanded this mandate to require gender balance on local boards and commissions.



The law required compliance by January 1, 2012. Iowa Code section 69.16A requires local boards and commissions to fill vacancies in a way to make the body gender balanced. The local government must make a "good faith effort" to comply with the law.

Some local boards and commissions naturally tend to be gender balanced. However, there are some boards that have tended to attract more women (historic preservation boards), and some that have traditionally been governed mostly by men (planning and zoning boards). This new mandate will not only help introduce women to the political process at the local level, but can also serve as a pipeline for women to serve in higher levels of political office. If you are interested in dabbling

in political office, consider volunteering for a local board or commission. To learn more about this new law see: <http://thegazette.com/2011/12/26/gender-equity-mandate-for-city-boards-and-commissions-effective-jan-1/>.

See more about the project at: <http://50-50in2020.org/>.

## Join I.O.W.A. Today!

### 2012-2013 I.O.W.A. Leadership

**President:** Dawn Boucher

**Vice President:** Shellie Mackel

**Treasurer:** Josey Bathke

**Secretary:** Jessica Doro

**Past President:** Ann Smisek

**Committee Chairs:** Gail Sheridan-Lucht, Miki McGovern, Alissa Smith, Rebecca Goodgame Ebinger, Catherine Chargo

**Judicial District Representatives:** Marcy Lundberg & Jackie Armstrong (2nd), Lindsay Bucheit (3rd), Shelley Whitcher (4th), Elisabeth Reynoldson & Tara Lawrence (5th), Jenn Smith (6th), Kate Johnson (7th), Diana Miller (8th)

**Advisory Members:** Emily Chafa, Mary Walsh, Roxann Ryan, Allison Werner Smith

Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys (I.O.W.A.) provides an excellent opportunity to network with other lawyers throughout the state and have an impact on issues affecting women and the legal profession. Members stay informed and stay connected through a list serve, an email distribution list for announcements, a membership directory, board meetings and other I.O.W.A. meetings, CLEs, and website. More information at: [www.iowawomenattorneys.org](http://www.iowawomenattorneys.org)



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