

## President's Message

By Brenda Aguilar-Guerrero



It is with great excitement that I start my second term as President. Looking back to last year, we had some informative and well attended MCLE programs, some fun mixers, the Spring Reception at Judge Northridge's and Judge

McGuiness' home, and of course a very successful Judge's dinner.

This year at our retreat, I felt honored to be surrounded by such committed woman and men who are extremely dedicated to the advancement of women in the profession. Although the mechanism by which that advancement is promoted may be different as to each board member, the ultimate goal is the same. We have a very energetic group with diverse perspectives and ideas for creating positive change. Some members hope to help law students, while others are dedicated to working with at risk youths. Some want to increase our presence in professional groups and others want to provide resources for our members, so that we are each helping elevate one another, while others want to focus on recruiting attorneys from all different practice areas: non-profit, government, private practice, solo practice, etc. It's so refreshing to work with so many passionate women, each with her own ideas for making a positive impact within our community. Together we make a great team, and it is a joy and honor to be a part of such a dynamic group.

This year my goal will be to increase our membership. I strongly believe that all woman attorneys who either

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live or work in Alameda County should be members of WLAC. It is a great organization and the more members we recruit, the stronger we become. I, therefore, welcome each of you to not only attend our spring reception on March 19th at the home of Judge Judith Ford but to also bring a friend. Let's get the word out and unite to advance Women. We have various events planned. We are already working on our Judges' Dinner, on several networking mixers, on our Spring Reception, on providing law students with scholarships, on putting on MCLE programs, and on sponsoring a panel entitled "So you want to become a partner"; a trail ride/hike/ or barbecue for our members, and of course we will continue to put on presentations at our local law schools. Join now, so you can enjoy the fun and help us in meeting our goal of helping woman lawyers, woman law students, and women students interested in exploring law. Together we can make a difference! I would love to hear from you.

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WLAC members please help  
circulate our newsletter and  
encourage other to join us!

## WLAC 2014 Judges' Dinner

As we look back on 2014 with Women Lawyers of Alameda County, and the many wonderful events we shared, the brightest highlight has to be our 2014 Judges' dinner.

We honored women who have led us to the point where we are now, and enjoyed recognizing our own distinguished Alameda County Superior Court Judges Hon. Gail Brewster Bereola, and Hon. Yolanda Northridge, and recognized the mentorship and inspiration of our Velvet Hammer Award recipient, Alice Beasley, as well as local judges Hon. Joan Cartwright, Ret., Hon. Ursula Jones Dickson and Hon. Alison Tucher; and recognized the leadership of our Women Of Distinction, Aundrea Brown, Esq., Margaret A. Gannon, Esq. and Lisa Pearlman, Esq.

And, we raised funds to support the women lawyers of the future—thank you to all who attended supported our silent auction! We heard inspirational words and shared wonderful food and drink in one of our most comfortable and satisfying local venues. Thank you for supporting Women Lawyers of Alameda County!



*WLAC Judges' Dinner keynote speaker, California 1st District Court of Appeal Justice Therese M. Stewart. (Photo provided by Deborah Craig.)*



*Judge Bereola*

WLAC 2014 Judges' Dinner - Continued



Judge Northridge



Swearing in new Board.



Judges' Table

# New Member Profile—Heather Chang

by Mary S. Cain Simon

Have you ever wondered how to find time for volunteer service, on top of your law practice? Or, on top of your law practice and raising your family? If so, then you are going to enjoy meeting our newest Board member, Heather Chan. Heather manages to make it all fit together in a way that makes perfect sense.

Heather came over to my house for a cup of tea and a talk about WLAC, after a busy morning of volunteer service and interviewing Alameda County high school students who have applied to Harvard (Heather is a Harvard alum). I asked Heather, what drew you to serve on the WLAC Board?

“I knew about the WLAC and attended the Annual Judges’ Dinner, and other events. I saw these as opportunities to get to know local attorneys and to network. When I attended the dinner a few years ago and heard our California Chief Justice (Tani Cantil Sakauye) give the keynote speech, I was inspired to get more involved.”

“This past year, I truly enjoyed a program WLAC put on, about finding work/life balance,” Heather continued with a big smile—with her small child (right on cue!) running up to help with the interview. “I thought, what a nurturing organization, to provide childcare and an opportunity for women lawyers to connect and network. I think there is a need to reach out and provide that kind of support to more women in the local legal community.”

Heather could be a poster person for the concept of a balanced and well-rounded lawyer. Heather grew up in East Bay, and has deep roots in the Bay Area. After graduating from Harvard, Heather explored different potential career paths, including work in the budget



office for the Alameda County Superior Court (helping to produce one of the first budgets for that court). After a stint in investment banking, then elementary school teaching, and then a stretch in the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (dealing with heavy issues, such as racism and a cross-burning in a Central Valley School) Heather set her sights on a legal career.

Attending Northeastern University School of Law allowed Heather the opportunity to pursue internships in

different practice areas, including a judicial internship with U.S District Court Judge William Alsup (Says Heather, “It was a great experience for an intern to be exposed to that work ethic, and the level of work.”) Heather also served internships with the U.S. Attorney, Public Defender, and District Attorney (“The light bulb went on! Criminal Law!”) After law school, Heather volunteered in the San Francisco Public Defender’s office, trying several cases and winning her first jury trial. Then came maternity leave, and the decision to open her own law office.

“I was five months into maternity leave and missing practicing law, when I saw an office for rent,” Heather smiles. The office was close to home. With her work experience and background, Heather stepped into a solo criminal defense practice without missing a beat.

In addition to WLAC, Heather serves on the Board of Asian American Criminal Trial Lawyers, and draws on her teaching background to pass along trial practice skills to youth as well as other attorneys. As for her new role with WLAC, Heather hopes “To bring in more women attorneys to grow our organization, to help facilitate important conversations, and to develop connections and support each other.” Join us in welcoming Heather Chang!

## WLAC BOARD MEMBERS 2015

President	Brenda Aguilar-Guerrero	Judicial Liaisons	Judge Kimberly E. Colwell
Vice President	Paula Rasmussen		Judge Tara Desautels
Secretary	Nikki Vo		Judge Stuart Hing
Treasurer	Kevin Ikuma		Judge Tara M. Flanagan
Board Members	Sharon Alkire		
	Gina Boer		
	Karen Bovarnick		
	Mary Cain-Simon		
	Heather C. Chang		
	Barbara Dickinson		
	Adetunji Olude		
	Dorothy Chou Proudfoot		
	Bentrich Satarzadeh		



## California Women Lawyers Report

*by Barbara Dickinson*

California Women Lawyers had their 40th annual dinner at the State Bar convention in San Diego in October. It was a beautiful event with Retired Supreme Court Justice Joyce Kennard giving the keynote speech. In the next few months the CWL will be focusing on Northern California with an event celebrating Judge Clare Maier of Contra Costa County with the Rose Bird Memorial Award. CWL will also be mounting a program called "Elect to Run" to help educate women with political aspirations. Stay tuned for dates and times!



CWL President-Elect Kely Robbins

## HONOR ROLL

Congratulations to WLAC board member Gina Boer who has recently become a partner in her law firm of Haapala, Thompson & Abern LLP.



Former WLAC President, Toni Mims-Cochran was sworn in on January 15, 2015 as the Alameda County Bar Association President. Congratulations Toni!

# Annual Member Reception

Thursday March 19, 2015

5:30-7:30 p.m.

At the home of Judge Ford in Oakland

Light hors d'oeuvres, desserts, wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be served.

Mix and Mingle with fellow WLAC members and meet the 2015 recipients of the Margaret A. Gannon Legal Education Stipend Award.

The Margaret A. Gannon Legal Education Stipend Fund (application on the next page) provides assistance to deserving law students trying to survive the financial rigors of the bar exam. The Stipend Awards are funded through the tax-deductible proceeds received at the Annual Judges' Dinner Silent Auction and raffle for centerpieces. The Fund is named in honor of Ms. Margaret Gannon who served as WLAC President from 2007-2009, who is also the visionary behind the Fund. Ms. Gannon said she was inspired to initiate the Stipend Fund while attending a California Women Lawyers' function.

This event is FREE for WLAC members, and you are encouraged to renew your membership or join prior to the event. Non-members may pay their annual dues of \$75 at the door. Membership application form can be [downloaded](#) or you may register [online](#).

Please RSVP by Sunday March 15, 2015 to: [admin@wlaonline.org](mailto:admin@wlaonline.org).



Photographs from last year's Member Reception

## SAVE THE DATE!

Spring Member Reception! March 19 Judge Judith Ford's house in Oakland from 5:30-7:30.  
Networking mixer at the District in March.



How to become a Partner! April 2015  
MCLE event: Social Media and Litigation, May 2015



2015 Margaret A. Gannon Legal Education  
Stipend Application

**Purpose.** Women Lawyers of Alameda County (WLAC) established the Margaret A. Gannon legal education stipend fund to provide financial assistance to help offset some of the costs of a bar review course (or related study materials) for law students and graduates who are preparing to take the July 2015 California Bar Exam.

**Eligibility.** Individuals eligible to receive a WLAC Margaret A. Gannon legal education stipend must: (1) join WLAC before or at the time of submitting a stipend application (membership link: [http://www.wlaonline.org/membership\\_application/](http://www.wlaonline.org/membership_application/)); (2) have already applied to take the July 2015 California Bar Exam; (3) not currently be a member of any state bar; and (4) intend to pursue a legal career.

**Funding.** Three \$500 stipends will be awarded at the WLAC Spring Member Reception that will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2015 in the East Bay. WLAC will contact each of the three stipend recipients with information as to the reception location and time.

**Application.** Please email one PDF file that contains: (1) the latest version of your resume including your best contact information; (2) a one-page personal statement (limited to no more than 600 words) describing your professional goals and your involvement with civic and community activities — particularly with law-related organizations, such as WLAC; and (3) include the following language at the bottom of your personal statement, along with your dated signature:

**Statement Of Certification.** The information given by me on the attached resume and this personal statement is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that all application materials submitted will become the property of WLAC.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please email your stipend application PDF file to Ms. Bentrish Satarzadeh

**[bsatarzadeh@gmail.com](mailto:bsatarzadeh@gmail.com) by 6 pm on Tuesday, March 3, 2015.**