

THE AWA BRIEF

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year! The beginning of a new year is a time of fresh starts. Let go of the disappointments of the past and focus on what you want to accomplish this year, and how you will do it. The German writer Goethe wrote, "Whatever you can do or dream that you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, magic and power in it. Begin it now." I love this quote, not only because it inspires me to believe I *can* do anything I set my mind to, but also reminds me that to achieve my goals, I must start with the first step. Somehow my goals become less daunting when I think of them in terms of steps.

What goals do you want to achieve in 2011? Have you thought about how you will achieve those goals? After all, you can't get someplace if you don't know how to get there. The first step is to *believe* you can achieve whatever goals

you have set for yourself. Your attitude is the one thing over which you have total control. Sure, money or time or negative people are factors. But if you have the right attitude, I bet you will be surprised to see how much you can achieve, despite those negative influences. The second step is to create pictures in your mind of what you want. Focus on the things you really want. Take a few minutes every day to focus on those goals. It will set the stage for success. Believe. Focus. But most important, begin it now.



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*Happy
New
Year*

AWA HOLIDAY PARTY 2010

By Joanne M. Ericksen, President

The 2010 AWA Holiday Party was a wonderful evening of fun, friendship, and charitable contribution. The Hon. Keith Ellison and his wife, Kathleen, hosted the party in their beautiful home in River Oaks. Thank you both for your abundant graciousness and welcoming us all into your home!

It was so good to see so many of our members at the party! It was a time to catch up with new friends, and old, while enjoying a lavish array of delicious food catered by Not Just Cakes. Owner Christina Hurd and her warm and friendly staff made sure everyone had a full plate at all times.

This year, Houston Achievement Place was the chosen charity for the AWA Holiday Party. Houston

Achievement Place was founded in 1974 to help children and their care-providers to learn skills and develop relationships for success at home, school and life. Both Judge Ellison and Paul Gilford, Executive Director of Houston Achievement Place, spoke to us passionately about the importance of helping those less fortunate. It was a humble reminder that our AWA members are blessed with opportunities that so many do not have, and it is important, now more than ever, to help. Our generous members rose to the challenge and donated several boxes of toys, as well as over \$1,200.00 in cash donations. If you were unable to attend the holiday party but would like to contribute to Houston Achievement Place, please go to their website: www.h-a-p.org.



From left to right: Deborah Lawson, Rusty Williams, Ashlee Ross, Joanne Ericksen, and Meha Gargi

Buffet provided
by the caterer,
Not Just Cakes



FORMER AWA PRESIDENT UPDATE—WENDY S. BURGOWER

By Lorie M. Robinson

As we continue our journey of interviews with amazing women who are recognized leaders with the Association of Women Attorneys and beyond, I would like to acquaint you with Wendy S. Burgower.

I was able to sit down with Wendy at her beautiful office a couple of months ago to discover where she is today and how her life, both professionally and personally, has been impacted by her involvement in the AWA. This was the second time I had met Wendy, but my first opportunity to really get to learn about her. Our first introduction was made by my boss, Steve Lindamood, as we passed each other in the courthouse one morning. I was immediately struck by her vivacious personality, confidence and her sharp wit. When I learned that she was a past president of the AWA, I jumped at the chance to interview her.

Wendy was the 10th president to serve the Association of Women Attorneys (1986-1987) and was also the youngest person to serve as president. Her path to AWA president was unlike most and involved her having never served as an officer within the AWA until her appointment to that of president. In fact, she was nominated from the floor at the request of Burta Rhoads Rayborn and Judge Ruby Sondock. Burta and Judge Sondock, two of the original founders of the AWA, had a vision about what they perceived to be the path for the future of the AWA, and they believed Wendy's youthfulness, charisma, and drive would take the AWA in the right direction. Apparently, other members of the AWA believed in her as well and supported her nomination. And the rest, as we say, is history.

Wendy is a native Houstonian who completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Texas at Austin in 1976 and later pursued her law degree at Bates College of Law, University of Houston. In 1985, six years into her law career, she became board certified in family law and has since then continued to concentrate her practice in this area of the law.

Since completing her term as president of the AWA, Wendy became the founding attorney of her law firm, Burgower and Rainwater, has continued to build her family law practice. Over the last 25 years, she has authored and published a variety of articles; taught

lectures for the State Bar of Texas, South Texas College of Law and The University of Texas Austin School of Law; and led continuing legal education for several Family Law seminars. She has established herself as a leading family law attorney and has been chosen by her peers as a Texas Super Lawyer consecutively since



2004. In addition to her involvement in the AWA, Wendy is also a member of the Gulf Coast Family Law Specialists; Burta Rhoads Raborn Inns of Court; the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers; as well as a Fellow with the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. She has also held leadership positions with the Gulf Coast Family Law Specialists and the Burta Rhoads Raborn Family Inns of Court.

When asked what the highlight of her career has been since serving as AWA President, Wendy quickly claims, "being a member and eventually Chair of the Texas Family Law Council." She says that being Chair of the Family Law Council helped propel her to many of the various positions she has held over the years and also to developing her practice.

Wendy credits her mentor, Candice Cowan, for directing her path to that of family law and claims that Candice's guidance afforded her the wisdom to transpose gender differences encountered in the field. Candice Cowan was one of the original founding members of the AWA and also worked in President Nixon's administration. Wendy says, "Candice never talked in terms of gender, but rather talked in terms of competency." This is a concept Wendy continues to espouse today.

*Continued on page 6.

TAKE A MEMBER TO LUNCH—HEATHER BENZENHOEFER AND ALLIE R. BOOKER

By Joanne M. Ericksen, President and Deborah Lawson, Treasurer

Being a newly solo attorney can be exciting, but also scary. Being a newly solo attorney AND a new mom can be exciting, scary, and challenging. This month, we introduce you to two of our amazing members, who have accepted the challenge of simultaneously opening new law practices and raising baby boys. They're loving it! We caught up with these two go-getters recently at the Mason Jar where they shared some of their secrets with us.

Meet Heather Benzenhoefer

Heather's path to the courtroom started years before she set foot in a law school. In fact, her original plan was to "go into advertising and have a bunch of babies." We're glad she changed her plans and found her way to the AWA.

Heather was working at a daycare when she witnessed a child make a sexual abuse outcry that was not properly reported. This inspired her to volunteer as a guardian ad litem for Court Appointed Special Advocates of Travis County, which put her on the path to being a lawyer for abused and neglected children. During law school, Heather held several jobs representing children and also worked for the County Attorney's Office in the sexual abuse division.

After graduating from South Texas College of Law in 2007, Heather Benzenhoefer joined the team at Myres, Dale & Associates, P.C., where she developed her skills as a family lawyer. Early in her career, she had the opportunity to work with some of the children removed from the Yearning for Zion Ranch just outside of Eldorado. It was an interesting and emotional experience that she'll never forget, but it reminded her of why she chose this profession.

In the summer of 2010, Heather was licensed as a "foster to adopt parent" and received her first foster child – a baby boy. Heather is seeing firsthand the how important it is for every child in Children's Protective Services custody to have a zealous advocate and is witnessing the challenges that foster parents face when trying to navigate the system to help their foster children. Living the process motivated Heather to follow her dream of representing abused and neglected children. In the fall of 2010, she opened her own practice

where she specializes in adoptions and child advocacy matters in Harris and Fort Bend counties.

Heather likes helping people build their families through adoption. She believes that it is important to have an attorney who not only understands the adoption process, but has lived it. Her personal experience as a foster to adopt parent allows Heather to connect with her clients on a more personal level.

Heather is enjoying the challenge of balancing work and family. Working is sometimes a nice break, but when she's at work, she can't wait to get home to play with her little boy.

Meet Allie R. Booker

Allie Booker always knew that she wanted to be a lawyer, so the 2010 opening of The Booker Law Firm was a real-life dream come true. Allie has always liked the idea of empowering women and being a lawyer fit that bill. "It's very hard being a woman in a male dominated industry," says Allie. "I wanted to branch out and make a name for myself." And that is exactly what Allie intends to do.

Allie graduated from Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University, in 2009, thinking that she would like to practice property law. After interning for Senator Mario Gallegos, however, she fell into a criminal practice and realized that she likes it.

Unlike most AWA members, Allie specializes in criminal law and traffic tickets, with a little bit of family law thrown in for good measure. In fact, it was as Allie was leaving traffic court downtown that Allie's second son, Ayo Noah decided to make his appearance. Court appearances are hard enough without having your water break as you leave the courtroom. I won't share the entire story here, but next time you are at an AWA function with Allie, it's a great ice-breaker.

As a new lawyer, Allie says that she is still looking for her niche, but we're betting that it will find her first. And...for those of you, like me, who are still stuck in that last paragraph, dying to know: Ayo means blessing or joy – a very fitting name for this little boy who brings so much joy to his mom.

AWA SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION AND FASHION SHOW

By Rebecca Thai, Newsletter Editor

On November 17, 2010, the AWA recognized our foundation scholarship winners: Amber Bogney, South Texas College of Law; Martha Gomez, Texas Southern University; and Melissa Grobler, University of Houston. The event was held at the Michael Kemper Salon and included a fashion show. AWA members and judges modeled the latest fashions from JoAnn's in Rice Village. Also in attendance was renowned jeweler, Jill Reno. AWA scholarship recipients modeled Jill's beautiful pieces. It was an evening filled with style and celebrating outstanding achievements.

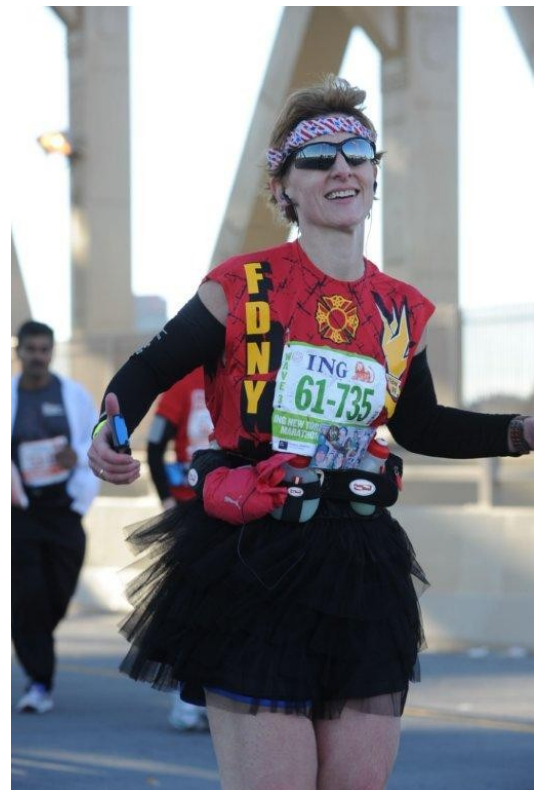


From left to right: JoAnn's Jeannette Burrell, Hon. Belinda Hill, Viane Robinson, Joanne Ericksen, Tammy Kidd, Rebecca Thai, and Hon. Caroline Baker

CONGRATULATIONS TO AWA MEMBERS SHANNON POWERS AND REBECCA THAI FOR COMPLETING THE 2010 NEW YORK CITY MARATHON ON NOVEMBER 7, 2010.



Rebecca Thai



Shannon Powers

IN MEMORIAM—FROST HAENCHEN

By Joanne M. Ericksen, President



Sadly, one of our members, Frost Haenchen passed away on December 10, 2010. Frost, and his wife, Judge Elizabeth Ray, have been long-standing members and avid supporters of the AWA. If you ever had the pleasure of meeting Frost, you knew he was never at a loss for words and always had something funny to say. He will be greatly missed.

The AWA extends our deepest sympathies to Elizabeth Ray and their four children. In honor of Frost, the AWA has provided a \$150.00 book scholarship to Lacey Treadaway, an AWA member and law student at Thurgood Marshall School of Law. If you would like to honor Frost's memory, donations can be made to the Houston Livestock and Rodeo – Steering Committee, P.O. Box 20070, Houston, Texas 77225-0070.

FORMER AWA PRESIDENT UPDATE (CONTINUED)

*Continued from page 3.

Wendy also credits the women of the AWA with helping her learn how to be a successful lawyer and how to run a successful law practice. In 1976, women were not allowed to be members of the Houston Bar Association. They were primarily solo practitioners, wives, daughters, and in some instances, a small number of them worked in large law firms. Wendy said, "The women of the AWA were successful women who were making it on their own. There was always someone who understood and someone to give you advice." She says that at the time of her presidency with the AWA, she needed the AWA, because she had nowhere to go. The organization afforded her the ability foster networks, social engagements, life-long mentors, referrals from other great lawyers and to tap the strength and experience

of successful women. Today, she continues to be a member - not because she needs to - but because she wants to.

Twenty-three years after her AWA presidency, Wendy has taken her place among Houston's top family law attorneys and wants to share the knowledge and guidance she acquired over the length of her career with others. Today, her goal is to assist young attorneys as they establish themselves in the legal community, to help them be successful lawyers, and to ideally make their paths to success a little smoother than her own. No doubt, we have a lot to learn from Wendy – including the value of giving back when we have been given much ourselves. Thanks for being a shining example of a strong, competent, successful woman with a heart for service, Wendy!

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Ashley
a t



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MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Rebecca Thai has launched Rebecca Thai, LLC, rthai@IntlCorpCompliance.com, 713.204.4652. Ms. Thai focuses on corporate compliance issues such as antitrust, foreign corrupt practices, and export sanctions and controls. www.IntlCorpCompliance.com.

Judge Ellen Shelton accepted an appointment from **Judge David Farr** as associate judge in the 312th Family Court.

The AWA is now on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/awahoustonfan

Have something you'd like to share with the AWA members? E-mail Rebecca Thai at rthai@IntlCorpCompliance.com with your special announcement!

If you need to update your membership information, please email Janet Schafer at janet.schafer@comcast.net.

awalker@ilsa.org to volunteer.

DON'T MISS THESE UPCOMING EVENTS...

January 26, 2011, 6:00 p.m.: AWA General Membership Meeting, Daily Review located at 3412 West Lamar, 713.520.9217. Our very own board member, Rebecca Thai, will be speaking to our group on What You Need to Know About the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. This is a very timely topic given the great deal of scrutiny companies are facing in this area. No charge for AWA members; \$15 for non-AWA members. To RSVP or for more information, visit www.awahouston.com or email Stacy Grant at sgrant@ogblh.com.

February 11 and February 12, 2011: THE JESSUP INTERNATIONAL LAW MOOT COURT COMPETITION AND CLE CREDIT OPPORTUNITY

The Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition seeks volunteer attorneys to judge the South U.S. Rounds of the Competition on Friday, February 11 and Saturday, February 12, at the University of Houston Law Center. This year's Jessup Problem concerns the legality of the use of unmanned predator drones, a national ban against wearing a traditional head covering, and international anti-corruption law. Two hours of free Texas CLE credit will be earned for each two-hour oral round judged, plus one extra hour of credit for preparation time, up to a maximum of five total credit hours. The Competition also needs to volunteer attorneys to grade the competitors' written briefs remotely. For more information, please visit the South U.S. Jessup Judges' webpage at <http://www.ilsa.org/judges/south/south.php>,