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'Women Making History'

*Former U.S. Attorney General
Janet Reno— page 4*



The Hillsborough Association for Women Lawyers Mentoring Program 2009-2010

by Rachael Greenstein, Esq.

The Hillsborough Association for Women Lawyers Mentoring Program, established in 2005, matches law students at the Stetson University College of Law with practicing attorneys in the Tampa Bay area. Mentors are encouraged to answer questions and give advice about the

This event was a huge success and resulted in 36 mentors and 46 mentees signing up to participate in the program.

practical and substantive aspects of practicing law as well as to provide mentees with opportunities to observe their mentors in practice. The Mentoring Program is intended to help mentees transition out of law school and to provide them with a realistic impression of the practice of law.

The Mentoring Program held its Second Annual Speed Mentoring event in September. Prospective mentees were given five minutes to speak with each of the prospective mentors. Mentors and mentees were encouraged to discuss topics involving their interests in the law, hobbies and other general information

to help them choose the person with whom they wanted to be matched.

At the conclusion of the event, the attorneys and students anonymously ranked their top five choices. The two co-

chairwomen for the Mentoring Program, Rachael Greenstein and Victoria McCloskey, then matched the students and the attorneys based on their preferences, areas of practice, interests and schedules.

This event was a huge success and resulted in 36 mentors and 46 mentees

signing up to participate in the program. This is over a 41-percent increase from last year's participation, and the numbers are expected to grow! With the downturn in the economy and the scarcity of legal positions in the area, the Mentoring Program received a lot of interest from law students looking for alternative means for networking and receiving professional guidance.

In addition to the Speed Mentoring event, the Mentoring Program developed its first Shadow Day at the Courthouse event this past year with some assistance from several judges, including the Honorable Claudia Isom, the Honorable Emily Peacock and the Honorable Elizabeth Rice. Approximately 30 mentors and mentees attended the event. Many of the judges in the 13th Judicial Circuit also participated in the event by welcoming the mentors and mentees into their courtrooms. Mentees and mentors began the day with an informal breakfast mixer with the judges, followed by presentations from several court programs, including Hillsborough County's Mediation and Diversion Services. The mentors and mentees then toured the Hillsborough County George Edgecomb Courthouse and observed open court. The event concluded with a luncheon with the judges, where an open discussion ensued concerning topics such as courtroom decorum and lawyers' etiquette. The mentees were very enthusiastic about the event and truly appreciated the candor of their discussions with the judges.

The Mentoring Program intends to host a similar event next year due to the great response received from the mentees as well as the judges. When asked about the event, Judge Isom commented, "What a great opportunity for our mentees to get a behind-the-scenes view of our



Thirty-six mentors and 46 mentees signed up for the Mentoring Program as a result of HAWL's Second Annual Speed Mentoring event.

Mentors and mentees spend five minutes getting to know each other during HAWL's Second Annual Speed Mentoring event.

judicial system! I was impressed with the level of professionalism and maturity demonstrated by the mentees' questions and their approach to the shadow experience."

Judge Isom's mentee, Dara Cooley, who is president of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers at Stetson, remarked, "For some students, this was their first time visiting the courthouse. While the courthouse remains a colossal building, for most students, the intimidation has departed due to the warm welcome and personal interactions with judges and attorneys experienced during this unique opportunity."

All of these great events contribute to the continued success of the Mentoring Program. In August, the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations (NCWBA) will award the Mentoring Program with its Outstanding Member Program Award during the NCWBA Women's Bar Leader Summit. Furthermore, The Florida Bar's Young Lawyers Division recognized the Mentoring Program for its accomplishments during its Affiliate Outreach Conference in January. At the conference, the Young Lawyers Division awarded the Mentoring Program a grant for its Shadow Day at the Courthouse event and presented the program with the Most Outstanding Member Service Project Award. In years past, the Mentoring Program has received several other grants from the Young Lawyers Division for its Speed Mentoring Event and its Annual Recognition Banquet. With all of these achievements and accolades, the Hillsborough Association for Women Lawyers is optimistic that this program will carry on to assist future generations of law students while promoting professionalism in the practice of law.

Rachael L. Greenstein is an assistant county attorney in Hillsborough County. ●



Mentoring: A Student's Perspective

by Dara Cooley, President, Florida Association for Women Lawyers at Stetson

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Shortly after the HAWL Speed Mentoring Event, as the student members of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers at Stetson (FAWLS) awaited a welcoming email from their HAWL mentors, Hon. Claudia Isom sent the above passage from Marianne Williamson to me, her mentee. Being the president of FAWLS, I've used this inspirational message as the guidepost for the mentoring program, encouraging students to seek wisdom and support from their mentors.

During this year, I realized my own potential and the possibility of becoming a political figure or even a judge due to my mentor's determination to provide me with access to the right people and the right information to actualize this vision of myself. She opened my eyes to a new world of possibilities that prior, I might never have considered. This program is necessary not only for networking opportunities and career advice, but also for the reassurance of knowing there is a network of women out there who support you as a person. The level of passionate understanding the mentors and mentees exchange regarding the charted yet bumpy road that lies ahead for female lawyers makes this program unique.

A first-year law student shared with me that she was afforded the opportunity to speak with her mentor about the hurdles she had to overcome. Her mentor understood the challenges and provided the advice and encouragement the student needed to keep things in perspective and to forge ahead in building a stronger foundation for her legal career. Another student expressed gratitude for her mentor for carving out time in a demanding schedule to meet twice a month; this student treasured the breadth of their conversations. Another found confidence in a crowded room of legal professionals when a HAWL mentor, not even assigned to the student, extended a welcoming hand.

This program is about more than simply giving career advice or the how-to's for becoming a successful lawyer; this program is about true mentoring, sharing dreams and fears, as well as changing a mentee's perception of herself and her abilities. Our HAWL mentors are liberating us from our own reservations and self-limiting thoughts, and through their professional guidance and personal encouragement, our mentors are revealing to us our greatest potential as women lawyers. ●

Miami-Dade FAWL Holds Inaugural Speed Mentoring Event

by Carly Hammond, Esq.

On Oct. 20, 2009, Miami-Dade FAWL kicked off its inaugural Mentoring Program with a Speed Mentoring event. Sixteen local attorneys and judges mingled with 38 students from four area law schools—University of Miami, Florida International University, Nova Southeastern University and St. Thomas University—at an event modeled after the phenomenon of “speed dating.” Mentors were divided into four groups and remained stationary while four groups of mentees traveled from one area to the next. At each station, the mentors and mentees had several minutes to speak with one another before moving on. At the end of the event, each mentor or mentee was asked to rank his or her potential matches in order of preference. In addition, persons who were not able to attend the event were asked to submit applications detailing their work experience, desired practice areas and the like. On this basis, the Mentoring Committee was able to match 48 students with mentors, a smashing success for its first year of the program.

Mentors and mentees alike enjoyed the Speed Mentoring event.

“I met dozens of bright, interesting students, and the setup was ideal for getting to know each of them,” says Shook Hardy & Bacon attorney and Miami-Dade FAWL Director Alexandra Bach Lagos.

Students found it was a rare chance to speak to practicing attorneys and judges in an informal setting, and they were grateful for the generosity of the mentors who donated their time, energy and guidance.

Says St. Thomas student Samantha Burmeister, “I thought it was absolutely



Sixteen attorneys and 38 law students gather for Miami-Dade FAWL's first Speed Mentoring event.



great and cannot wait to have more events, either with a mentor or in a group setting.”

The Speed Mentoring event kicked off Shadow Month, in which mentors and mentees who have been matched are encouraged to have their first face-to-face meetings in any setting they choose—for example, lunch, a tour of the office or judge’s chambers, sitting in on a hearing or a deposition or attending a networking event together. Many students have not yet been able to see what a lawyer’s or a judge’s day-to-day responsibilities entail and are anxious to take advantage of this opportunity. After their first in-person meetings, mentors and mentees may have as much phone or email contact as they wish throughout the remainder of the school year.

Going forward, the Mentoring Committee hopes to gain feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the program from the initial mentor-mentee group so that it can strengthen the program for next year’s participants. Also, the committee hopes to involve the Broward Chapter of FAWL in the future in hopes of broadening the reach of this effort.

Several students who requested a mentor have not yet been matched. If you are an attorney or a judge who would like to participate, please contact one of the co-chairwomen of the Mentoring Committee: Carly Hammond, Lott & Friedland PA, chammond@lfiplaw.com, 305/448-7089; or Maria Enriquez, Holland & Knight, maria.enriquez@hklaw.com, 305/789-7769. ●