

## August 2011 President's Message

by Toni Mims, WLAC President

Over the last year and a half I have said, more times than I can recall, WLAC's motto is the voice for women in the law. Our organization is dedicated to that purpose, and our board is working diligently to create new opportunities for our members.

One of the most valuable things we can do for our members is to increase our visibility in the legal community and continue to work with other minority bar organizations or the benefit of our members. Our organization will continue to be strong with a solid membership base. I want to continue to challenge you to be champions for WLAC. Encourage your colleagues, both men and women, who support the advancement of women in the legal profession to join WLAC. Share your experience with WLAC

with others and talk about the great strides this organization taken over the last 30 years.

I'm also pleased to announce, the Spring Membership reception held at the private poolside garden of Judge Northridge and Judge McGinness was successful. There was definitely a spirit of pride in the organization and we were all beaming with pride as the scholarships were distributed to Kathryn W. Londenberg and Natalya Attestatova. You can find



pictures of the reception on our Women Lawyers of Alameda County facebook page!

Upcoming summer events will include a WLAC movie night previewing Daughters of Justice I and II, a short film, produced and directed by Abby Ginzberg, about the women judges of Alameda County; a summer networking mixer; and speed mentoring. Please look for more information regarding these events on the [wlaonline.org](http://wlaonline.org) events page.

On October 12, 2011, we are returning to the Claremont for our annual judges' dinner and our guest speaker is Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye. Save the date and look for more information in the coming months for sneak previews of our live auction and silent auction items.

One of our goals is to celebrate and acknowledge the professional milestones of the women in this county. Please do not hesitate to send us information about the achievements of fabulous women attorneys in Alameda County who are both your colleagues and friends.

As always....we hope to see, and hear from, you soon. Much love to all of my sisters!

Toni Mims-Cochran, President  
Women Lawyers of Alameda County

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## WLAC Past President Cherri Allison Receives Social Justice Service Award

by Nancy E. O'Malley

Cherri Allison, WLAC Past President and current California Women Lawyers Governor for District 3 Governor – Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, is being honored by Santa Clara University School of Law as the recipient of the 2011 Social Justice Service Award. This award recognizes attorneys and students who have significantly contributed to the social justice and public interest community

through work or pro bono efforts. Her outstanding contributions include her leadership in transforming the justice system for victims of domestic violence, her leadership in integrating the health care services with legal services for victims of domestic violence, recognizing that domestic violence is not only a justice issue, but a public health issue as well. Allison has served as Executive Director of the Family Violence Law Center and recently was named the Executive Director of the Alameda County Family Justice Center, which is a model for comprehensive, collaborative services to victims of interpersonal violence. Allison has also expanded the awareness and vital services for children who witness domestic violence. Allison will be recognized at the Benefit for Justice which will take place on September 23, 2011, from 5 8 p.m. at the Benson Center Williman Room on Santa Clara University's campus. All are welcome to attend.



# WOMEN LAWYERS OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

A VOICE FOR WOMEN IN THE LAW SINCE 1980

## ANNUAL JUDGES' DINNER & SILENT AUCTION

**KEYNOTE:** Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court

**SPEAKER:** **Tani Cantil-Sakauye**

**HONORING:** • Recently appointed to the Alameda County Superior Court, the **Hon. Ioana Petrou** and the **Hon. Victoria Kolakowski**

• Special Recognition to the **Hon. Yvonne Gonzalez Rodgers** and the **Hon. Trina Thompson** as Women Jurists of Distinction

**MISTRESS OF**

**CEREMONIES:** Nancy E. O'Malley, District Attorney of Alameda County

**Wednesday, October 12, 2011**

**The Claremont Hotel Club & Spa**

**No Host Bar & Silent Auction Preview 6:30 p.m.**

**41 Tunnel Road**

**Dinner 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.**

**Berkeley, CA**

*WLAC and Wardrobe for Opportunity invite dinner guests to donate new or gently used women and men's business clothes at the event. Bring clean coats, suits, dresses, slacks, and blouses in good condition, covered and on hangers. Handbags and jewelry accessories are especially needed.*

WLAC is an unincorporated association - TIN #94-3241007. Visit our website at [www.wlaconline.org](http://www.wlaconline.org)

To make an individual or table reservation send this form and your check **postmarked by Friday, September 30, 2011** to Patricia Delgado, 3045 - 23rd Street, San Francisco, CA 94110. Direct dinner inquiries to Ms. Delgado at [WLAC@sbcglobal.net](mailto:WLAC@sbcglobal.net). Individual Sponsors and all Tables will be acknowledged in the printed program.

**Individual Ticket Reservations**

WLAC Member (*)	\$ 125	_____
Non-Member	\$ 150	_____
Individual Sponsor	\$ 200	_____

**Table Reservations (Table of 10)**

Supreme	\$3,000	_____
Appellate	\$2,000	_____
Superior	\$1,500	_____

(\*) Non-members may qualify for the member price by including an additional \$75 for 2012 dues.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Please Check Entree Choice (check one) Salmon \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian \_\_\_\_\_

*(If reservation is for more than one person, please attach list with additional names and entree options.)*

# WLAC Spring Members Reception: WLAC Confers Three Bar Exam Stipends at Alameda Fete

*By Gail Mitchell, WLAC*

Over fifty local legal glitterati partied poolside at the WLAC Annual Members Reception on Thursday evening, June 23. Alameda County Superior judges Yolanda Northridge and Robert McGuiness generously provided this idyllic spot, complete with cabana and lovely landscaping, for the second year in a row. There was lots of chatting, laughter, food, wine and soft drinks - plus plenty of networking. The party had been scheduled to occur earlier in the season, but was postponed due to inclement weather (read: rain!). This time, however, no one's spirits were dampened.



*WLAC President Toni Mims-Cochran (R) and member Cheryl Hicks enjoy the summer evening*

Margaret A. Gannon Stipend, which was created to provide assistance to deserving law students trying to survive the financial rigors of the bar exam. Ms. Gannon, who served as WLAC President last year and is currently serving as Chairman of the Past Presidents' Council, said she was inspired to initiate the Stipend while attending a California Women Lawyers' function, where she became aware of a similar program. Initially, funding for the stipend program came from her idea of auctioning centerpieces at the WLAC Fall Judges' Dinner. Ms. Gannon only recently learned that there had been a unanimous WLAC Board vote to name the stipend program after her.



*Event Co-Host Judge Robert McGuiness enforces pool rules with WLAC President Toni Mims-Cochran (L) and Treasurer Tara Flanagan*

Amongst those present were Alameda County Superior judges Tara Desautels, Evilio Grillo, Stuart Hing, Iona Petrou, Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, Patrick Zika, as well as Commissioner Charles Smiley. WLAC Board member Mala Sahai was the chairman for the reception and headed the committee charged with the difficult task of selecting the recipients of this year's stipends for bar examinees. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the



*WLAC Past President Margaret Gannon and two recipients of the first awardees of WLAC's Margaret A. Gannon Stipend*



*WLAC Members and Board Members mingle poolside*

Recipients of the three student stipends this year are Kathryn W. Londenberg, Lynn Ta, and Natalya Attestatova. Kathryn and Natalya were able to be present at the event to receive their stipend checks. They were introduced by Board member Roksana Bidgoli, who also served on the stipend committee.

Natalya Attestatova recently graduated from University of California, Hastings College of Law. She is the mother of two boys and a girl – all under the age of eight - and is a Certified Public Accountant who operates her own accounting business. Resilient and optimistic, she looks forward to starting her own legal practice and giving back to the community by providing legal services to victims of domestic violence.

Kathryn W. Londenberg was admitted to law school through the Legal Education Opportunity Program (LEOP) and recently graduated cum laude from the University of California, Hastings College of Law. During law school, she served as an executive member of the Hastings Law Journal, interned for California's Legislative Counsel, and externed for former Chief Justice George. While many law students rely on family for financial assistance during law school, Ms. Londenberg has worked since age sixteen to help provide assistance to her family, including an autistic sibling.

Lynn Ta recently graduated from the Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California at Berkeley. This new mother and prospective bar examinee aspires to be a civil rights attorney, advocating for immigrant and refugee communities. Ms. Ta has worked with the Accountability Counsel, East Bay Community Law Center, International Human Rights Law Clinic, California Asylum Representation Clinic, and the U.S. Department of Justice. In addition, Ms. Ta holds a doctorate in Literature from the University of California at San Diego.

New members and student members were welcomed at the reception, as well. One first-time attendee, Elizabeth Combs, a 2L at Golden Gate University School of Law and summer intern at the Alameda County Courts' Self-Help Center said, "It was a fabulous presentation. I met amazing women and supportive men!"



*Alameda Co. Superior Court Judge Hing is welcomed by our hosts, Judge Northridge and Judge McGuiness*



*WLAC President Toni Mims-Cochran and Treasurer Tara Flanagan recognize Alameda County Superior Court Judge Gonzalez-Rodgers in light of her recent federal court judicial nomination.*

*Judge Northridge and WLAC members mix and mingle*



## Member Spotlight: Cassie Springer-Sullivan

by Roksana S. Bidgoli, WLAC Board Member

This month's member spotlight focuses on Cassie Springer-Sullivan, a partner with Springer-Sullivan & Roberts LLP, in Oakland, California.

Cassie primarily represents plaintiffs in ERISA disability benefit litigation. She is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, Phi Beta Kappa, and of the Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California at Berkeley. She is a frequent speaker and author on the topic of ERISA litigation and co-chairs the ABA Section of Labor & Employment Law's Law Student Outreach Task Force as well as the Employee Benefit Committee's section on Benefit Claims and Individual Rights. Cassie attended this year's California Women Lawyers Annual Conference in Los Angeles in April and participated on a panel discussing the keys to opening and maintaining a successful law practice. Her wisdom worth repeating, WLAC was thrilled when she graciously agreed to a telephone interview less than a week back from the conference.

Born and raised with her five brothers and sisters in San Diego, Cassie fell in love with the University of California at Berkeley's sprawling campus visiting the Bay Area on a childhood family trip. Coupled with her love of reading and writing, Cassie knew she wanted to be a lawyer at sixteen and followed her dreams to Berkeley.

Honored with the Super Lawyers distinction of 2010 Rising Star, Cassie's list of notable decisions impacting ERISA disability benefit litigation is significant. She began working with the ERISA firm of Lewis, Feinberg, Renaker & Jackson, PC while in law school. Finding work on individual cases rewarding, she continued with



the firm until 2008 when she left to start her own firm with law partner Michelle Roberts. She acknowledges that women-owned firms are a rarity in the legal community and offers sage advice for a successful partnership: "Treat it like a marriage, become best friends with your partner, check in with each other regularly and view it as the last job you'll ever have, not as a stepping-stone for anything else."

True to her words, Cassie and Michelle sit down every six months, revisit the vision they cast for their firm and make sure they are still on track with their core values. One of those core values is community service. While Michelle serves on the AIDS Legal Referral Panel's Board of Directors, Cassie was recently recognized in the April 2011 edition of the ABA Journal's "Lawyers Giving Back" section for her notable volunteer work for the March of Dimes. Having lost one of her twin girls in 2008 due to consequences of infant prematurity, Cassie's support of the March of Dimes is a family endeavor.

Cassie is also committed to showing that women can practice in a rigorous work environment and be parents at the same time. Leading by example, Cassie is unabashed about the crib, bouncy seat and child's activity mat in her personal office; she will frequently bring her baby to a conference or along for a meeting with a colleague. She reports that she is generally met with a warm reception from the legal community when she publicly merges motherhood into lawyering.

However, even in this day and age, it isn't always the case. Cassie recalled attending an ABA Employee Benefits Committee conference in Georgia. At the time, Cassie was still nursing her baby and attending the conference as a keynote speaker. Both baby and Cassie's mother accompanied her to the conference. At the last event, held at a popular dining establishment, Cassie and her baby were barred admission into the restaurant. Cassie assured the staff she fully intended to respect the other patrons' dining experience and, if need be, Cassie's mother would take the baby outside. The restaurant was unmoved, but her colleagues were not. In a show of solidarity, about a third of the attorneys, including men, walked out of the restaurant with her and they happily dined elsewhere.

Should you have the opportunity to meet Cassie at a WLAC event, in court, or out in the community, be sure to say hello! She is smart, engaging, a fantastic lawyer, and a warm human being- admirable traits in a WLAC member.

QUEEN'S BENCH (San Francisco) CELEBRATES 90th REFLECTING ON HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN ATTORNEYS

By: Gail Mitchell

Queen's Bench, the San Francisco-based women attorneys' organization, celebrated its 90th Anniversary with a luncheon on April 7 at the offices of Sedgwick, Detert, Moran & Arnold, LLP in the City. WLAC Board Members Toni Mims-Cochran, Gail Mitchell and Mala Sahai joined in the festivities honoring our sister organization.

Three of Queen's Bench Past Presidents, Hon. Barbara J. R. Jones, Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, First Appellate Dist., Hon. Lee D. Baxter (ret.) and Hon. Ina Levine Gyman (ret.) of the San Francisco Superior Court, received Lifetime Achievement Awards presented by QB President Sarah King. Each award winner impressed the crowd with her personal testimonial as to the benefits of belonging to professional women's' organizations.

The keynote speech was given by Stanford Law Professor Barbara Babcock who shared incidents from the life of Clara Foltz, an early California woman attorney who became a national force for progressive jurisprudence. Foltz is the subject of Babcock's new book entitled *The Trials of Clara Foltz*.

Clara Foltz noted at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair that women would change the world. She then found the SF Bay Area to be the cradle of that change. In 1878, Clara Foltz was admitted court in San Jose, California after unimaginable difficulty. She, in fact, became a trial attorney before women could serve as jurors. Her practice focused on representing criminal defendants and the underdog.

Those in attendance at the QB lunch also learned that Foltz was a fashionable reformer who was both heroic and energetic, working for equal rights for all for over 50 years. The press of her time marveled that Foltz was also the mother of five children. At 15 she had married a man who later abandoned her, but she often said claimed that she was a widow. Hers is a fascinating and inspirational story that is more relevant today than one might have thought.



Author Barbara Babcock signs her book for a Queens Bench Anniversary Luncheon attendee



WLAC President Toni Mims-Cochran and author Barbara Babcock



WLAC President Toni Mims-Cochran listens intently to the guest speakers at Queens Bench luncheon