

## Women Attorneys Life Balance



By Vanessa M. Cross, LL.M.

Whether pursuing partnership, founding a firm, or flying solo, balancing these professional pursuits with the demands of home life is a challenge for professional women. What follows are some principles and tips that may seem simple or self-evident at first glance, but if overlooked can topple any well meaning balancing act.

**KNOW THYSELF:** It is probably one of the oldest adages and for a good reason. There were a great many here before us, faced with similar challenges. Any legal career is indeed a practice and continual planning is central to manage yours successfully. As you plan your legal career engage in honest self-assessment. If you are happiest working on your own schedule or enjoy running the business of law, you may not have the disposition to trek the typical partnership course of potential earned and greater responsibility. If, however, you enjoy the law firm life, if you can avoid it, don't start a solo practice "in the meantime." Your time will likely be best utilized in a diligent application process to law firms. It helps to conduct thorough research of the firm's practice areas and its partners and employees for hopeful matches with your career goals and personality. Know thyself.

**DO GOOD WORK:** Whatever route you take, do the work. Once you say you will take on a project someone is depending on you to follow through, whether that is a work project or your son's school project that requires your assistance. If you are overcommitted, it is better to say no at the outset than to agree and produce something less than your best. This is a sure recipe for developing guilty feelings. Similarly, if you encounter unexpected issues or are starting to run out of time, it is crucial to let people know as promptly as possible. No one wants to deliver bad news, but you have to be real with yourself. Even if the other person is disappointed they will appreciate any advance notice you can provide.

**TAKE ON RESPONSIBILITY:** As you balance your professional career with home life, take on greater responsibility when the oppor-

con't on page 4

## Message from the President Shari Myers



The AWA has some exciting upcoming activities planned for 2008 such as a gallery fashion event, a fantastic public educational forum, and more great CLEs. We are all excited about being of service to the AWA and I would like to use this opportunity to introduce incoming AWA Officers & Board Members with special congratulations to LINDA SCHULTZ who is our new staff Executive Director, also serving as the Membership Chair.

SHARI MYERS, President and MALS Board Representative (The Myers Law Firm); JENNIFER S. HAGERMAN, President-Elect (Burch, Porter & Johnson PLLC); MICHELE HOWARD-FLYNN, Vice-President (Howard-Flynn Law Group); and TONYA DALLA VALLE, Treasurer (Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC)

VANESSA M. CROSS, Secretary and Newsletter Editor (Law Offices of Vanessa Cross); TRICIA M. Y. TWEEL, Historian (Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh, PLLC); VIRGINIA M. ALEXANDER, Representative to the MBA (Shelby County Juvenile Court); and LAURIE L. CHRISTENSEN, Immediate Past President, CLE Co-Chair, and CLC Board Representative (Baptist Memorial Health Care).

MONICA N. WHARTON, Community Service Chair (Glankler Brown, PLLC); LUCIE K. BRACKIN, Annual Banquet Chair (Causey & Caywood); TIFFANY JOHNSON, Publicity Chair and Special Events Chair (The Cochran Law Firm); NICOLE MANLEY, Annual Banquet Co-Chair; EMILY CAMPBELL TAUBE, Professional Liaison to the Law School Chapter (Adams & Reese, LLP); and LISA J. GILL is noted as the AWA Student Chapter Liaison.

HONORABLE KAY S. ROBILIO, CLE Chair (Judge of Div. 5 of the Circuit Court of Tennessee for the Thirtieth Judicial District at Memphis); FRANCES M. RILEY, TLAW Board Representative, IOLTA Grant Committee, and MBA House of Delegates (Farris Mathews Branam Bobango Hellen & Dunlap PLC); and ANITA LOTZ, Scholarship Chair (Farris Mathews Branam Bobango Hellen & Dunlap PLC).



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

## AWA Annual Banquet

Of the many distinguished guests in attendance at the AWA Annual Banquet on October 11, 2007, presented here is a glimpse of a phenomenal turnout from the Memphis legal community (caption from left to right):

1. Amy J. Amundsen, recipient of the Marion Griffin-Frances Loring Award, with AWA President Shari Myers.
2. Judge and Mrs. Robert Benham.
3. Judge Kay S. Robilio with her husband Victor Robilio, historian and author.
4. Amy J. Amundsen, Laurie Christensen, and Shari Myers.
5. Anita Lotz with AWA 2007 law student scholarship recipients Augusta Akpotu, Romana Jackson, Amber Sauber, and Mary Lee Kimmins.
6. Charmiane G. Claxton chats with AWA Secretary Vanessa Cross.
7. Barbara M. Zoccola, Linda Holmes, Amy J. Amundsen, Ellen B. Vergos and Judge Kay S. Robilio.
8. Byron Winsett and Dr. Fred Steinberg.

*Banquet photographer: PR Consultant Kim Brukardt*



This Valentine's Day, give back to those who have made a difference in your life while making a difference in the lives of others. Make a tribute gift to **DRESS FOR SUCCESS MEMPHIS** and they will send you and your honoree(s) a beautiful Valentine's Day card

created by renowned local artist Danny Broadway. Also, join Dress for Success Memphis in celebrating 10 years of service to the Memphis Community at their First Annual Valentine's Luncheon: "Develop a Pattern of Giving". Joi Gordon, CEO of Dress for Success Worldwide, will be the special guest keynote speaker. The event is Thursday, February 7, 2008 from 11:30 am - 1:30 pm at the Holiday Inn at the University of Memphis on Central Avenue. The cost is \$50 per person. For more information or to make reservations call Dress for Success Memphis at (901) 725-8077.

*The Association for Women Attorneys  
invites you to the annual*

### Mentor-Mentee Reception

Thursday, January 31, 2008

Time: 5:30 p.m.—7:00 p.m.

hosted at the home of

**Frances M. Riley, Esq.**

327 Central Cove, Memphis, Tennessee

(Central Avenue between Highland and Patterson)

A professional black purse and/or a gift certificate (\$10—\$20) for donation to Dress for Success Memphis accepted at the reception

Appetizers and beverages will be served



Anyone wishing to share their AWA photos for the AWA scrapbook should send them to Tricia Tweel, AWA Historian, at trishy914@yahoo.com.

## Memphis Bar Foundation Fellows Class

The Memphis Bar Foundation is the charitable foundation affiliated with the MBA. Its mission is to support scholarship, equal access to justice, professionalism, and lawyer assistance. Each year a Memphis Bar Foundation Fellows Class is inducted. The AWA would like to congratulate the 2007 Memphis Bar Foundation Fellows:

Mary L. Aronov, Leslie I. Ballins, James P. Barry, Mary H. Beard, Louis P. Britt, III, Thomas R. Buckner, E. Franklin Childress, Jr., Stephanie Green Cole, Betty Cooper, Hon. Paulette J. Delk, Donald A. Donati, Katina H. Gaines, Linda N. Harris. Hon. Deborah M. Henderson, Odell Horton, Jr., Harry L. Goldsmith, Elbert Jefferson, Jr., Viola Johnson, Teresa D. Jones, Linda Parson Khumalo, Connie Lewis Lensing, Venita M. Martin, Thomas L. McAllister, Lorna S. McClusky, Hon. Betty Thomas Moore, Hon. Patricia A. Odell, Hon. Tu M. Pham, J.N. Raines, Ted C. Raynor, Frances M. Riley, Hon. Gwen Rooks, Michael E. Scholl, Dewun Settle, Diane C. Spears, Christine W. Stephens, Hon. Jerry Stokes, and Lang Wiseman.

## Congratulations to New MBA Board Members

New Board members of the MBA Board of Directors include Sam Blaiss; Louis Britt of Ford & Harrison, LLP; Laurie Christensen of Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation; Bobby Martin of Godwin Morris Laurenzi & Bloomfield, P.C.; Amy Pepke of Butler Snow; Kevin Walsh of Harris Shelton Hanover Walsh, PLLC; Buck Wellford of Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC; and Monica Wharton of Glankler Brown, PLLC.

# rakiya

... is a Counsel On Call Attorney. She's also a talented professional musician.

She graduated *magna cum laude* from Berklee College of Music and later toured with major recording artists. After earning her law degree from Vanderbilt University, she practiced for two years with an Amlaw 50 firm in Atlanta. Long hours at the firm limited the time she had to pursue her music career.

Then Rakiya found Counsel On Call. Now she works 40 hours per week on a wide variety of assignments that have included drafting and negotiating contracts and handling general corporate matters. She's gotten the in-house experience she was searching for, too.

Counsel On Call assignments also allow Rakiya to pursue her artistic endeavors. She's even traveled to shoot music videos and regularly plays concerts throughout the region. The traditional practice of law might not have afforded her these opportunities.

To learn more about Rakiya and bringing flexibility into your career, visit [counseloncall.com](http://counseloncall.com)



Hear from more of our attorneys on our website.

## Counsel On Call

Your life. Your career. Your way.

[www.counseloncall.com](http://www.counseloncall.com)



Atlanta | Boston | Charlotte | Chicago | Memphis | Nashville



The AWA newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Association for Women Attorneys. Please submit your articles, article ideas, feedback or advertisement requests to the AWA Newsletter Editor, Vanessa M. Cross, LL.M. at [crosswriting@yahoo.com](mailto:crosswriting@yahoo.com). You may view this publication and past publications online at [AWAMEMPHIS.ORG](http://AWAMEMPHIS.ORG).

tunity presents itself. This works best if the increase in responsibility is gradual. Also, don't forget that volunteering for public speaking or writing articles for publications. These is public service and can serve to show your developing expertise in your practice.

**YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM & DEPENDENTS:** Do you have children, a spouse, or parents who can help you, or conversely, whom you must care for? Evaluate how this network will be affected by what you propose to do at work. Going solo does give you more personal autonomy, but you will also be responsible for everything from getting the clients in the door to making sure there is paper stocked in the copy machine if you don't have a legal assistant. Don't be afraid to ask family members for help during these times. Delegate at home and even ask siblings and parents for assistance with the kids when you have to work on an important project or meet a crucial deadline.

**SHAPE YOUR OWN DESTINY:** Seize

the opportunity to plan your career development. The planning process is ongoing and as you move forward you may find that what you initially thought you wanted doesn't look as rosy as it once did. A change of course is not necessarily a failure.

**IS IT REALLY STILL THE DIRTY LITTLE PHRASE IN LAW? "THE PART-TIME ATTORNEY":** Life is not static. Babies are born and no one

can guarantee against a disaster. Your law firm may be willing to work out a temporary or permanent part-time arrangement as you juggle your work and home responsibilities. Do your research before approaching your law firm about these arrangements. Some firms are more receptive to part-time arrangements than others. Timing your request is important, don't put this on the partner's agenda when you have just been given a major project. Also, be

## Women Attorneys Life Balance



prepared to deal with clients and colleagues who may never have worked with a part-time attorney. The added pressure on others while you adjust your life can be uncomfortable. Remember, clients and colleagues are usually concerned more with whether you can still deliver the work. Establish a daily schedule that works for the firm, the children/family, and you.

**RUN THROUGH THE FINISH LINE:** There really

is no one finish line. There are just a series of life's finish lines. Plan well, stick to your strategy, don't be afraid to change courses, take on responsibility, use your resources, lose the guilt and work hard. Last, but certainly not least, set up rituals for putting everything to the side to unwind from the balancing act. This will surely rejuvenate your body, mind and spirit.



## AWA Officers & Chairpersons

SHARI MYERS  
President  
MALS Board Representative

LAURIE L. CHRISTENSEN  
Immediate Past President  
CLE Co-Chair  
CLC Board Representative

TRICIA M. Y. TWEEL  
Historian

JUDGE KAY S. ROBILIO  
CLE Chair

FRANCES M. RILEY  
TLAW Board Representative  
IOLTA Grant Committee  
MBA House of Delegates

JENNIFER S. HAGERMAN  
President-Elect

TONYA DALLA VALLE  
Treasurer

LINDA SCHULTZ  
Executive Director  
Membership Chair

LUCIE K. BRACKIN  
Annual Banquet Chair

VIRGINIA M. ALEXANDER  
Representative to the MBA

TIFFANY JOHNSON  
Publicity Chair  
Special Events Chair

LISA J. GILL  
AWA Student Chapter Liaison

MICHELE HOWARD-FLYNN  
Vice-President

VANESSA M. CROSS  
Secretary & Newsletter Editor

NICOLE MANLEY  
Annual Banquet Co-Chair

ANITA LOTZ  
Scholarship Chair

EMILY CAMPBELL TAUBE  
Professional Liaison to the Law  
School Chapter

MONICA N. WHARTON  
Community Service Chair