



FAWL

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN LAWYERS

MIAMI-DADE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER / Winter 2009

Miami-Dade FAWL 2009-2010 Installation Honors Cynthia Everett

By Julie Braman Kane,
Miami-Dade FAWL President

On Friday, July 10, 2009, Miami-Dade FAWL hosted over 250 local legal luminaries at its Annual Installation Luncheon at the Conrad Hotel in downtown Miami. There, after an inspirational invocation by United States District Court Judge Marcia Cooke, Chief Justice Joel Brown installed the 2009-2010 Miami-Dade FAWL Officers and Directors, featured on this newsletter's inside cover. The Board was privileged to honor our 2009 Mattie Belle Davis Award Winner, Cynthia Everett. The Mattie Belle Davis Award is bestowed annually to a woman in the legal profession who exemplifies the ideals of professional achievement, perseverance and dedication as demonstrated by the late Judge Mattie Belle Davis. Attorney Edith G. Osman introduced Ms. Everett, whose remarks motivated those in the room to increase the diversity of leadership in our community.

We also had the benefit of hearing from Miami-Dade FAWL's Past—President, Stacey Koch. Ms. Koch encapsulated the year in review, highlighting such notable achievements as Miami-Dade FAWL's receipt of FAWL's statewide Outstanding Chapter Award and initiation of new programming concepts such as the monthly Table for 8.

The event was made possible by the generous support of our sponsors. Grand Benefactors of the event included: the law firms of Colson Hicks Eidson, Greenberg Traurig, and Shubin & Bass. Benefactor sponsors included: Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod, LLP, BNY Mellon, Boies, Schiller & Flexner, LLP, Carlton Fields, P.A., Fowler, White, Burnett, P.A., Kozyak, Tropin & Throckmorton, and Shook, Hardy & Bacon, LLP; Sponsor law firms included: the Law Offices of Brenda B. Shapiro, LLC, Gamba & Lombana, P.A., Gwen S. Cherry Black Women Lawyers Association, Inc., Podhurst Orseck, P.A., Smith & Carson, and Veritext-National Deposition & Litigation Services. Patron Sponsors included: L. Gabriel Bach, P.A., Cozen O'Connor, Damian & Valori, LLP, Deehl & Carlson, P.A., Elser & Foster-Morales, LLC, Carrie Feit, P.A., Florida Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company, Grossman Roth, P.A., Deborah Jofre, Esq., Kenneth M. Swartz, P.A., Walton, Jones & Browne, P.L., and Weiss Serota Helfman Pastoriza Cole & Boniske, P.L.

Miami-Dade FAWL would like to thank all of our wonderful sponsors for their continued support of the advancement of women in the legal profession.



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President's Message

By Julie Braman Kane



Demand Diversity in Our Community

In South Florida, diversity is perhaps more apparent than in other areas of the state. Notwithstanding, decision makers in critical areas in the field of law are not representative. For example, our federal Judicial Nominating Committee lacks necessary diversity. Under Florida's system for the selection of federal court officials, the federal Judicial Nominating Commission serves a critical purpose. The Commission, or the JNC as it is commonly known, evaluates candidates for these federal positions and interviews those whose applications are appealing to the JNC members. Ultimately, the JNC offers a narrow selection of candidates to Florida's two Senators, who offer a recommendation from the list to the White House for appointment and confirmation by the Senate as a whole.

The solemn and weighty obligations of the JNC do not run solely to the lawyers who practice in the federal system and the litigants who will be directly impacted; the JNC has a duty to the community as a whole. Its role in the selection of our community's lead prosecutor, federal judges to fill vacant positions on the federal bench, and the US Marshall offer those commissioners an opportunity not just to protect the court system but to protect the community at large. With the Office of the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida one of the busiest in the country and a federal judgeship one of life tenure, the significance of these appointments cannot be overstated.

The rules that govern the JNC provide that "the JNC selection process shall be open, inclusive, and afford any applicant an equal opportunity to receive consideration to the office to which he or she applies." Further, the commitment to diversity in our society has never been more apparent or critical than it is today. The groundbreaking election of an African American president, the historic appointment of an African American Attorney General of the United States, and the confirmation of a Puerto Rican female jurist to the United States Supreme Court establish this administration's commitment to supporting and elevating talented candidates who are truly representative of the American Community to significant positions in our justice system, when in the past all these voices have not been heard.

It is in this context and ignited spirit that the starkness of the under-representation of women and minorities on the JNC for our federal district has surprised our community and resulted in so much public attention. Despite calls from multiple organizations, there has been no definitive explanation of whether the JNC members were selected based on merit, leaving the implication that the appointments were the result of political connections or contributions. It is beyond question that the JNC for the Southern District of Florida is far from representative of the community of the Southern District of Florida, and certainly is not representative of those who practice in the federal system. It consists of eighteen men and three women, and of those three women, only one is an attorney.

The dearth of appointments of qualified women to the JNC is inexplicable and requires an immediate remedy. No one has, or could, speculate that this situation is caused by an absence of qualified women willing to serve on the JNC.

It is fundamental that those applying for these federal positions have the right to appear before a commission of their peers. Moreover, the presence of women in the deliberations ensures the vitality of the decision-making insofar as other perspectives will be heard. It is noteworthy that at least one female applicant was asked a question about working hard and balancing such work with other aspects of her life. This is an atypical question asked of ambitious men, which raises concerns about the fairness of the process for women applicants. Indeed, federal courts, including the United States Supreme Court, have found that assumptions that women cannot perform a job in light of perceived family responsibilities is a form of sex-stereotyping and decisions based upon such stereotypes constitute illegal discrimination. Thus, it is indisputable that such questions directed solely at women applicants is inappropriate.

We commend the JNC for its tremendous efforts and do not seek to criticize in any way the very fine people serving on the JNC nor the very fine candidates it has recommended. Instead, I suggest we must work together, as leaders in the community, to address the makeup of the JNC, which was determined by Senator Nelson and former Senator Martinez. Simply stated, "politics as usual" at the expense of diversity cannot go on; those days are or should be long over in Florida.

The recommendations by our JNC must come from a body of men and women who are as diverse as the community they represent. If the decision makers are not diverse, their decisions will be questioned, regardless of the caliber of the decision. Let's eliminate the need to question the appointments of these talented people and demand reconstitution of a diverse JNC.

Join Miami-Dade FAWL, along with the various voluntary bar organizations supporting diversity within your community, to help ensure the diversity of our decision makers. Miami-Dade FAWL looks forward to your continued involvement and welcomes your input and ideas to support fundamental diversity in South Florida's legal practice and profession.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Past Presidents' Brunch

By Kristy Johnson,
Miami-Dade FAWL President-Elect



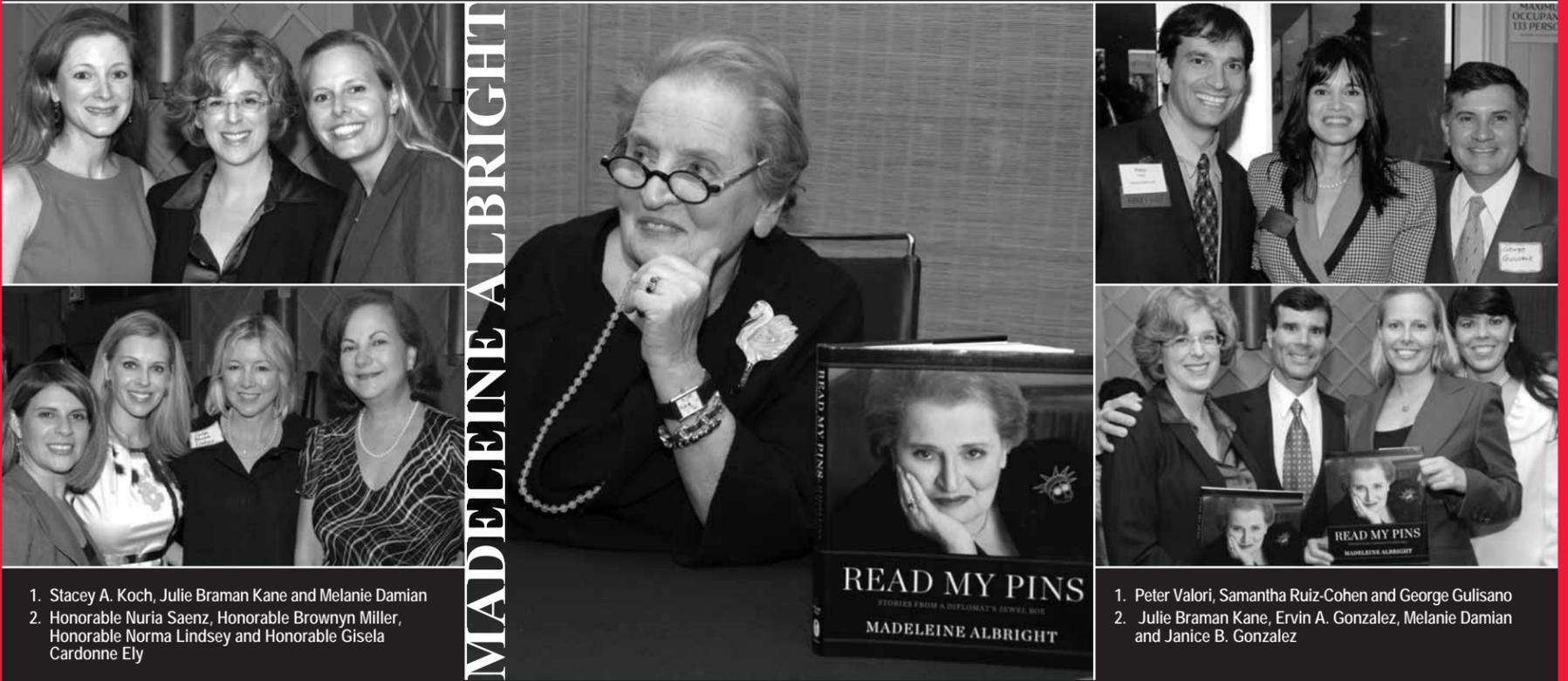
On September 13, 2009, the current Board of Directors of Miami-Dade FAWL hosted a champagne brunch in honor of the past Presidents of Miami-Dade FAWL at Marinheiro Restaurant on Brickell. This annual event provides an opportunity for the current Board to seek input and advice on a variety of issues impacting Miami-Dade FAWL and women lawyers in Miami-Dade County. This year, approximately half of the 30 past Presidents of Miami-Dade FAWL attended the event. We, wholeheartedly, thank our past Presidents for taking time from their busy lives to attend this event and providing guidance to our Board.

MIAMI-DADE CHAPTER

Miami-Dade FAWL Co-Hosts Cocktail Reception and Book Signing for Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright

By *Stacey A. Koch*,
Miami-Dade FAWL Past President and Event Chair

On October 6, 2009, Miami-Dade FAWL and the Women's Chamber of Commerce of Miami-Dade hosted Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright for a sold out cocktail reception and book signing at The Viceroy, Club 50. Guests were treated to a signed copy of Secretary Albright's new best selling book, "Read My Pins, Stories From A Diplomat's Jewelry Box." Ms. Albright spoke briefly at the reception and shared her inspiration for the book and stories from her past terms as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and as the first female Secretary of State. She also graciously took questions from the audience. Miami-Dade FAWL extends a special thank you to Janice Gonzalez, President Elect of the Women's Chamber, for sharing this wonderful event with our Miami-Dade FAWL Chapter. We also thank our Miami-Dade FAWL event sponsors for their generosity: Kluger, Kaplan, Katzen, Silverman & Levine, P.L., Shubin & Bass, P.A., and Weiss Serota Helfman Pastoriza Cole & Boniske, P.L.



1. Stacey A. Koch, Julie Braman Kane and Melanie Damian
2. Honorable Nuria Saenz, Honorable Brownyn Miller, Honorable Norma Lindsey and Honorable Gisela Cardonne Ely

1. Peter Valori, Samantha Ruiz-Cohen and George Gulisano
2. Julie Braman Kane, Ervin A. Gonzalez, Melanie Damian and Janice B. Gonzalez

Miami – Dade FAWL's Table for 8

By *Sherril Colombo*,
Miami-Dade FAWL Director

Sherril Colombo hosted Miami-Dade FAWL's Table for 8 on October 28, 2009 at Senora Martinez in Miami's Design District. It was a wonderful evening with attendees, Sean Santini, Karen Evans, Skip Pita, Shannan DelPrado, Pat Kopco and Jacqueline M. Valdespino attending October's Table for 8 event.

The Table for 8 events are hosted throughout the year by a different Miami-Dade FAWL Board member. The events bring attorneys and judges together for dinner at a restaurant chosen by the individual Board member. These dinners are great networking opportunities and enable members and non-members to meet each other while enjoying a wonderful meal.

Miami-Dade FAWL Promotes Diversity

By *Carly Hammond*,
Miami-Dade FAWL Director

Miami-Dade FAWL and the Gwen S. Cherry Black Women Lawyers Association are thrilled to have reinvigorated the practice of co-hosting diversity events, kicking off this year's program with a fascinating presentation by Paula Black, legal marketing and diversity expert.

The sixty members of FAWL and GSCBLA who attended the November 19, 2009 luncheon at the Banker's Club each received a copy of Ms. Black's latest Amazon Bestseller: *The Little Black Book: A Lawyer's Guide to Creating a Marketing Habit in 21 Days*. Ms. Black, who has worked specifically with small to mid-size law firms for the past several years, shared specific tips and strategies for busy attorneys who think they "don't have time" to develop business, including how to bring your name to the top of a Google search results page and where to post articles online for maximum exposure.

Miami-Dade FAWL looks forward to future diversity events aimed at bringing members of our community's various voluntary bars together.

Miami-Dade FAWL Participates in the 6th Annual Minority Mentoring Picnic

By *Laura K. Wendell*,
Miami-Dade FAWL Director

The Florida Association for Women Lawyers made a strong showing at this year's 6th Annual Minority Mentoring Picnic, held on Saturday, November 14, 2009 at Amelia Earhart Park. Our Miami-Dade Chapter, as well as State FAWL, was again a proud sponsor. A very big "Thank You!" goes to the law firm of Kozyak, Tropin & Throckmorton, P.A., which every year organizes this wonderful event.

The atmosphere this year was heightened by the amazingly cool and sunny Florida "winter" weather we enjoyed. As in previous years, our Picnic hosts outdid themselves with a superabundance of delicious foods, drinks, music and games. And, while the atmosphere was wonderfully festive, the important goal was served. Eager minority law students, many of whom traveled across the state for the event, were matched with willing mentors from the Miami legal community, with FAWL members present in full force.

This year, Miami-Dade FAWL greeted numerous participants at its own table and booth. Members promoted Foster Care Review, an organization of volunteer citizen workers who donate their time to assist the courts in their review of case files for local foster care children. The Chapter donated candy bags advertising the Chapter's upcoming fundraiser on behalf of Foster Care Review, to be held this Spring. We greeted the numerous law students who stopped by to learn about our organization. We became mentors, and all of us, some with our face-painted children in tow, had a wonderfully fun and fulfilling day. We are already looking forward to the 7th Annual Minority Mentoring Picnic. If you could not make it this year, we hope to see you then!

Spotlight on Foster Care Review: A Safety Net for Children in Foster Care

By Ana Maria Pozo,
Foster Care Review

Foster Care Review, Inc. (FCR) is a volunteer-driven, not for profit organization that helps the Juvenile Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit monitor the safety and wellbeing of children living in Miami-Dade County's foster care system. Since its creation twenty years ago, FCR volunteers have reviewed the cases of over 41,000 abused, neglected and abandoned children from our community. Florida law requires that each child in the foster care system have a judicial review hearing every six months, conducted by a judge or citizen review panel, with the goal of ensuring the child's welfare and progress towards permanency. After receiving training, FCR's citizen review panel volunteers meet one full day each month at the Juvenile Justice Center to conduct reviews. At each review, the 5-member panel examines written reports and interviews witnesses to determine whether or not the child's basic needs, such as health care, stable schooling and safe housing, are being met. Panel recommendations, once approved by a juvenile judge, become orders that are carried out by the agency responsible for the care of the child. FCR also captures the information gathered during these reviews in a database that provides crucial reports used to advocate for system improvements.

There are 3,000 children living in Miami-Dade's foster care system, ranging from infants to 17 years of age. Their history is one of poverty, abuse and rejection, and multiple school and foster home disruptions. Many have serious health, educational or emotional issues. Many of the older foster youth are unprepared for adult living. FCR volunteers help these children by combining their passion and skills to advocate for resources and services that will enable foster children and youth to lead stable, healthy lives as productive members of our community. FCR's 120 volunteers come from many different social, racial and professional backgrounds. About 40% have volunteered over 5 years; 15% have volunteered 10 years or more—a proud statement of the quality of the program and our community's commitment to its children.

Miami-Dade FAWL has chosen to support Foster Care Review through a fundraising extravaganza—"It's About Time"—to be held in the Spring of 2010. Details will be available soon on Miami-Dade FAWL's website. Funds raised at this event will allow FCR to continue recruitment and training of volunteers, helping the Juvenile Court with its caseload, advocating for normalcy in children's lives, creating community awareness and most importantly, providing a safety net for children who are sometimes forgotten by a foster care system that has historically been under funded and overwhelmed. For more information about FCR, please contact Ana Maria Pozo, JD at (305) 573-6665 ext. 110 or visit www.fostercarereview.org. For more information about the upcoming fundraiser, please contact Julie Wieliczko at (305) 807-9360 or Patricia Kuendig at (305) 577-3861 ext. 2.

Member Achievements

By Alexandra Bach Lagos,
Miami-Dade FAWL Treasurer

This new column will highlight significant professional accomplishments of our members.

Miami-Dade FAWL offers a hearty congratulations to: Edith Osman, an attorney at Carlton Fields, P.A., who received the Anti Defamation League's Miami 2009 Jurisprudence Award; Marisol Gomez-Decena, an attorney at Gamba and Lombana, P.A., who was newly installed as President of the Puerto Rican Bar Association of Florida; Ivelisse Berio LeBeau, an attorney at Sugarman & Susskind in Coral Gables, Florida, who has become a Co-Chair of the Board of Senior Editors for the legal publication Employee Benefits Law; and Monica C. Segura, an attorney at Rumberger, Kirk and Caldwell, who was recently recognized as a "Rising Star" by Florida Super Lawyers and an "Up & Coming Attorney" by Florida Trend Legal Elite. Miami-Dade FAWL welcomes its members to share their recent achievement with us, for inclusion in our newsletter. Please send all information to Alexandra Bach Lagos at alagos@shb.com

Speed Mentoring

By Maria Enriquez,
Miami-Dade FAWL Director

On October 20, 2009, Miami-Dade FAWL kicked off its inaugural Mentoring Program with a "Speed Mentoring" event. Sixteen local attorneys and judges mingled with thirty-eight 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 forty-eight 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 set-up was ideal for getting to know each of them", said 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 were grateful for the generosity of the mentors who donated their time, energy, and guidance. Said St. Thomas student Samantha Burmeister, "I thought it was absolutely 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 meeting in any setting they choose—for example, lunch, a tour of the office or judge's chambers, sitting in on a hearing or deposition, or attending a networking event together. Many students have not yet been able to see what a lawyer's or judge's day-to-day responsibilities entail, and are anxious to take advantage of this opportunity. After their first in-person meeting, 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 judge who would like to participate, please contact Mentoring Committee Co-Chairs Carly Hammond, Lott & Friedland, P.A., chammond@lfiplaw.com, (305) 448-7089, or Maria Enriquez, Holland & Knight, LLP, maria.enriquez@hklaw.com, (305) 789-7769.