



SPOTLIGHT ON THE GEORGIA ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN LAWYERS (“GAWL”) GWINNETT CHAPTER

By Tuwanda Williams, GCBA Vice President

How much do you know about the Georgia Association For Women Lawyers (“GAWL”)? As articulated on GAWL’s website, it is “the premiere association for women lawyers throughout Georgia. We support and promote women lawyers by providing networking opportunities, personal and professional development programs, leadership training, and community outreach. We enhance the self-defined success and satisfaction of women lawyers, using our circles of influence to achieve tangible results for our members.” The “Welcome to GAWL” page further states that “[o]ur members are diverse – from law student to seasoned attorney, from large law firm to public sector to in house counsel, from liberal to conservative. Likewise, people join GAWL for a myriad of reasons: networking, rainmaking, leadership training, socialization among lawyers, mentoring opportunities, to join a committee, promote themselves and women lawyers in genera, the list goes on.” But I bet you did not know that GAWL had the only female member on the Warren Commission, or that GAWL played the decisive role in allowing women to serve on juries in Georgia. Impressive, isn’t it? The truth is, GAWL has done a lot of impressive things throughout its 84 year history.

Today, there are several GAWL chapters throughout the State of Georgia. The Gwinnett Chapter of GAWL (commonly referred to as “GAWL Gwinnett”) was established in March 2009 under the vision and leadership of Tuwanda Rush Williams, who was serving as Statewide Chair of GAWL’s Membership Committee at the time, and Lisa Schrage, who had just started organizing monthly Neighborhood Networking Breakfasts (NNBs) at that time.

At our initial interest meeting in January 2009, twenty-one (21) women attorneys completed applications for membership in the proposed Gwinnett Chapter. The Statewide GAWL Board of Directors approved our request to become a chapter and adopted our proposed bylaws on March 2, 2009.

GAWL Gwinnett has been busy over the past two years since our inception. We host monthly Neighborhood Networking Breakfasts (NNBs) and Neighborhood Networking Lunches (NNLs) at area restaurants in Gwinnett County. Our past activities have included social wine tastings, a book club, holiday parties, game night, and an overnight retreat at Chateau Elan (complete with workshops and CLE credit available). We are particularly pleased to have organized a variety of community service projects, including a sponsorship of Partnership Against Domestic Violence, adoption of a Legal Aid Low-Income Family for the holidays, facilitating a Community Wills Clinic in conjunction with Atlanta Legal Aid, and partnering with the Georgia PTA to present a seminar entitled “It Takes a Parent: Strengthening Effective Parent Involvement”.

GAWL’s newest initiative is a Mentoring Program in which we link experienced women lawyers who work or practice in Gwinnett with less experienced, newer lawyers. In addition to the continuation of our NNBs, NNLs, Book Club this year, and Game Night, plans are also underway for a hiking trip, cooking class, and judicial tea for women judges in Gwinnett. We will also sponsor our second Gwinnett GAWL Retreat at the Chateau Elan on September 10-11, 2011.

Do you want to make a difference in the lives of women lawyers who work and/or live in Gwinnett? If so, please become a member of GAWL Gwinnett, support our events with your attendance, or become a GAWL Gwinnett sponsor. We would love to have you aboard, and you'll be glad you did!

For more information about GAWL, please visit www.gawl.org/. For information about GAWL Gwinnett, you may contact our current President, Michelle E. West, at michelle@westosondulaw.com. You may apply for membership in GAWL Gwinnett by downloading an application on the aforementioned website by clicking on Membership on the left hand side and selecting "Join Now".