



OAAAP

JUNE 2010

Issue No. 78

OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## *IN SIGHT* for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

### WOMEN LAWYERS: EMBRACING OUR AUTHENTIC SELVES

On April 23-24, 2010, the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program and Oregon Women Lawyers cosponsored the third annual Women's Wellness Retreat at the scenic Oregon Gardens in Silverton. This year's theme was "Women Lawyers: Caring, Capable, and Congruent." The program offerings provided three MCLE credits, and the beautiful grounds and spa provided plenty of opportunity to enjoy and restore.

Registration opened at 1 p.m. on Friday, followed by a light lunch, an opening circle, and group introductions. University of Oregon Law School professor Caroline Forell began the afternoon program with her presentation, "Making Our Mark: Women's Impact on the Law," a lively tour of the evolution of the law and the status of women over the years.

While the legal standard remained the "reasonable man" until the 1970s, Ms. Forell noted that the current standard, the "reasonable person," still uses men as the norm. She questioned whether the "reasonable person" incorporates the values and perspectives of women, or whether there is still a need for a "reasonable woman" standard, particularly when women now constitute more than 55 percent of college students and almost 50 percent of law students.

The program continued with lawyer and therapist Nancie Potter (2010 recipient of the Oregon State Bar Litigation Section's Annual Owen M. Panner Professionalism Award). Ms. Potter presented on "Being an Effective Lawyer by Being Authentic," sharing inspiring advice from seasoned attorneys that the key to being an effective lawyer lies in being true to

your character and purpose. In addition to describing the qualities of authenticity, she discussed ways that we can cultivate and enhance those values in our lives by expanding self-knowledge, expanding self-awareness of our needs and wants, and fully living with intention.

A subsequent break of a few hours allowed time to wander the grounds, take a nap, or access the spa facilities before the group gathered for a satisfying dinner featuring Oregon salmon, vegetables, and potatoes. Dinner conversation was enlivened by discussing "table topic" questions such as, "What is the biggest impact the law has had on you?" and "In a perfect world. . ." while indulging in delicious slabs of chocolate cake. Later, lawyer and returning presenter Zan Tewksbury led a relaxing meditation practice.

On Saturday, a varied continental breakfast buffet provided sustenance throughout the morning, and Ms. Tewksbury led the retreat participants in an energizing and invigorating Nia class, which is a blend of dance, martial arts, and healing arts in a free-form expression of movement set to music. A joyful yet effective workout, it was an exhilarating way to begin the day.

After breakfast, OAAAP Counselor Meloney Crawford invited the retreat participants to consider a different way to manage time, focusing on connecting with inner needs and wisdom rather than the tyranny of "to-do" lists. She urged women to consider their essential needs for nurturing self-care, instead of being consumed by "time monsters" – activities that steal time from more important pursuits – or "shadow comforts" – activities that numb, rather

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than renew. Finally, she suggested that we eliminate from our schedule delayed projects that we feel we “should” do – and that make us feel guilty because we keep putting them off – in favor of pursuing activities that give our lives meaning and satisfaction.

That message was a natural prelude to Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Sharon Flegal’s presentation, “Giving Voice to Every Part of Yourself.” Ms. Flegal introduced the concept of “voice dialogue,” a tool to become aware of our varying selves and how those “disowned” parts of us are still needed, valuable, and coordinated by a sense of consciousness above it all – an “aware ego.” Incorporating colorful props and visual aids, she used volunteers to dramatize the inner dialogue that occurs within us daily, showing a way to value every part of our self, including our “worrier” and “inner critic.”

Box lunches during the afternoon break allowed attendees to take the tram ride around the gardens, explore the grounds on foot, tour the unique Frank Lloyd Wright house, or fit in one more spa treatment. At two, everyone gathered for the final sessions.

Licensed Professional Counselor Virginia Terhaar presented on “Meaningful Relationships.” She discussed the growing disconnection in society – quoting a study showing that *twice* the number of people today as in 1985 say that they have no one to confide in – and noted that love and intimacy are the greatest factors influencing our quality of life and health. Ms. Terhaar led the participants in a silent exercise to foster connection with others nonverbally.

The weekend concluded with a closing circle led by Meloney Crawford, encouraging everyone to consider the gifts received during the retreat – of legacy, growth, connection, self-care, inner awareness, and nurturing – and to be conscious of carrying those experiences with them as they returned to their routines. Some people continued their stay through the weekend, while others set out on a relaxing Saturday afternoon drive home, centered and renewed with an intention to return for next year’s retreat.

MELONEY C. CRAWFORD  
OAAP ATTORNEY COUNSELOR