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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NNWLA
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Volume 18, Issue 11
November 2015

Please Join NNWLA on November 17, 2015 for an Estate Planning Presentation by Jennifer Mahe & Alicia Johnson

Please join NNWLA on November 17, 2015 for our luncheon on estate planning by Jennifer Mahe & Alicia Johnson. The luncheon will be held at SoDo at noon. The cost for the event will be \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members in advance, and \$35 at the door. Advance payments will be due by Friday, November 13, 2015, at noon. Advance tickets can be purchased on our website (www.nnwla.com) on the "events" page or by sending a check to Anjali Webster, c/o Dickinson Wright, 100 W. Liberty Street, Suite 940, Reno, NV 89501.

NNWLA is looking forward to having both women present to us in November. Here is a bit more information about each woman in case you do not know them already.

Jennifer Mahe

Ms. Mahe is the principal of Mahe Law, Ltd. and was born and raised in Carson City, Nevada. She has been a practicing attorney in the Northern Nevada area since passing the Nevada State Bar in 2005. Throughout her years of practice she has handled legal matters in a variety of areas. She has experience with estate planning, business law, family law, real property and litigation. She has appeared before a variety of regulatory and judicial bodies including but not limited to Nevada District Courts, Federal District Court, Federal Bankruptcy Court, the State Engineer and the Nevada Public Utilities Commission.

She graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2001, with distinction, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology with a minor in developmental disabilities. Throughout her undergraduate degree she worked in the field of developmental disabilities, an area in which she continues to be involved, not only as a volunteer and as counsel for various individuals but also as the guardian of an individual diagnosed with profound mental retardation. Following graduation from the University of Nevada, Reno she attended the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law and obtained a Juris Doctorate, with great distinction, in 2005.

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Stay Connected...

Please stay connected with NNWLA through our website (www.nnwla.com) and our Facebook page.

As we continue to update our website, we will have more information about future events so you can plan in advance.

Holiday Events:

December 15th: Annual Holiday Party at 5:30 p.m. at Judge Simons' House.

December 19th: Annual Veterans Memorial Holiday Shopping Event at 8 a.m. at J.C. Penney in Meadowood Mall.





A Word From Our President



By Kimberly L.
Goodnight

First, I would like to start by thanking everyone who joined us last month for our Nevada Court of Appeals event. Chief Judge Michael Gibbons, Judge Abbi Silver, and Judge Jerome Tao graciously took the time to speak to us all individually and then collectively during our question and answer session. The judges provided us with insight as to what makes an effective appellate brief, the differences between being appellate court judges and district court judges, and what they hope to accomplish as the inaugural judges on the Court of Appeals. I would also like to thank Nevada Supreme Court Justices James Hardesty and Michael Cherry for joining us at that event. For those of you who missed this event, you can read more about Judge Abbi Silver in this month's newsletter in an article written by committee member Sally Bassett.

Second, it is with great sorrow that NNWLA inform you that one of our founding mothers, retired United States Magistrate Judge Phyllis Halsey Atkins, recently passed away at age 81. In 1978, Judge Atkins, along with Judge Patricia Lynch, Lindsay Weston, and Sylvia Thompson, founded NNWLA and were four of only twenty-three women practicing law in northern Nevada at that time. When Judge Atkins founded NNWLA, no woman had ever

served on the Nevada Bar's Board of Governors or as an officer of the Washoe County Bar Association ("WCBA"). The United States District Court, the Nevada Supreme Court, and the Second Judicial District Court were exclusively male. Judge Atkins became the first full-time female federal judge in the District of Nevada. Judge Atkins served as a part-time U.S. magistrate judge beginning in August 1980 and then was appointed full-time in October 1982. Judge Atkins retired in October 1999 but returned to the bench and served as a Recalled Retired U.S. Magistrate Judge until November 2001. In 1980, Judge Atkins served as NNWLA's second president. In 1998, NNWLA honored Judge Atkins as the recipient of its Outstanding Woman Lawyer Award. NNWLA proudly recognizes Judge Atkins as an extraordinary woman who broke barriers in our profession and paved the path for women lawyers in Nevada.

Finally, we hope you join us for one of our final events of the year. On November 17th at SoDo, Alicia Johnson and Jennifer Mahe will be giving a lunch presentation on estate planning. On December 15th, Judge Lynne Simons will host our annual holiday party and help us welcome the incoming executive board. On December 19th, we end the year with our annual shopping event with the students of Veterans Memorial Elementary School.

Join the 2016 NNWLA Board

The NNWLA Board is seeking volunteers for the Newsletter Committee for 2016. The members of the Newsletter Committee are expected to contribute one to two articles or interviews each year for the NNWLA Newsletter. The Committee is ideal for individuals who want to volunteer and participate, but who cannot make the time commitment required for a regular Board position.

If you are interested in joining the Newsletter Committee in 2016, please contact Lauren Berkich and Laury Macauley at LBerkich@woodburnandwedge.com and laury@macauleylawgroup.com.



Our November Presentation Continued...

Following her graduation from law school Ms. Mahe worked as a Law Clerk in the Third Judicial District Court for the Honorable Judges Blake, Estes and Pedersen. She was thereafter an associate and partner at the law firm of Allison, MacKenzie, Pavlakis, Wright & Fagan, Ltd. After pursuing graduate work at California Polytechnic University she founded Mahe Law, Ltd. As the founder of Mahe Law, Ltd. she hopes to provide individuals with assistance in their legal matters as well as donate her time to non-profit entities providing services to the community.

Alicia Johnson

Alicia Johnson was born and raised in Reno, Nevada, and is committed to serving this community. Alicia graduated from Gonzaga University in 2001, *magna cum laude*, with a degree in Public Relations and with a women's golf scholarship. In 2004, Alicia graduated from Seattle University School of Law, *cum laude*.

While in law school Alicia worked for two small businesses, a boutique employment litigation firm and a small family law firm.

After graduation, Alicia practiced law in Kirkland, Washington for over two years in the areas of real estate law, business law, and estate planning. Alicia moved back to Reno with her husband in 2007 to return to her hometown and to be close to family. From 2007 to 2013, Alicia practiced law at a large firm in Carson City, and served the needs of small businesses and families all over Northern Nevada, gaining valuable experience in the areas of business, real estate, family law, wills, trusts, probate, and litigation.

Alicia established Johnson Law Practice in 2013 to provide accessible legal services to small business and families and continues to provide legal services in the areas of estate planning, real estate and business law.

Thank You to the Judges From the Court of Appeals



In case you missed it, here is a photo of Chief Judge Michael Gibbons, Judge Abbi Silver, and Judge Jerome Tao from our October event.

We were so lucky to have them share their experience and insights about the Court of Appeals with our membership.

Thank you again to Chief Judge Michael Gibbons, Judge Abbi Silver, and Judge Jerome Tao for taking the time to speak with us.





A Discussion with Judge Silver

By Sally Bassett

Judge Abbi Silver, a native Nevadan, grew up in Las Vegas and graduated from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She briefly left Nevada to get her law degree from Southwestern University School of Law in Los Angeles. Upon her return to Las Vegas, she clerked for the Honorable Earle White, Jr., and then joined the Clark County District Attorney's office as a deputy district attorney. She was eventually assigned to the Special Victims Unit where she specialized in cases involving murder, sexual assault, child and elderly abuse cases, aggravated stalking, and domestic violence. She later became the chief deputy of the domestic violence and aggravated stalking division of the Special Victims Unit. After working as a prosecutor for 13 years, Judge Silver was elected to the Las Vegas Municipal Court in 2003. Judge Silver was subsequently elected to the Las Vegas Justice Court and then to the Eighth Judicial District Court. Judge Silver now sits on the Court of Appeals after being appointed by Governor Brian Sandoval in December 2014.

Did you always know you wanted to go into law?

Yes. In fact, another judge, Joanna Kishner, and I went to high school together and in tenth grade we wrote in our careers class that we wanted to be lawyers. And then we became law school roommates in Los Angeles.

What made you decide to be a prosecutor?

After law school, I thought that I would do bankruptcy and secured transactions and go into corporate law, but then I ended up following a friend into the D.A.'s office. I intended to get some trial experience so that I would be more valuable as a corporate attorney; I never had any intention to practice criminal law, but I fell in love with it.

Four months in, they gave me a rape case—a sexual assault with multiple life sentences. I remember that most of the men in the office would

not have taken that case. They all wanted gang or drug cases. When I got the verdict of guilty, the victim sat there and she was shaking, and she came up and hugged me and told me thank you. And that was the moment when I knew I had found my calling. I started to do all of the rape, domestic violence, and stalking cases in the office. Those were the cases that I enjoyed doing because I was so sympathetic to the victims, I wanted to help them, I felt like I was their voice. I love children and I really enjoyed working with the child witnesses. To this day, what I did for them in the Special Victims Unit will always be the most rewarding of my career.

What challenges did you face when you entered law?

I was one of only five women when I started at the D.A.'s office. Before I was hired, I was asked if I was planning to have children. I said, "Absolutely not, I would never have children," and they hired me on the spot to fill their quota. I came in with one law clerk, who was male, and he got on the trial team. My team did not get trials. So I had to ask other people, "Hey, are there any trials you do not want?" And, once I started winning all these trials, I asked to be on a trial team. A man could walk in and get respect unless he messed up on a bunch of cases. When I was 24, I would come in to the courtroom and be asked, "Are you the court reporter? Can you take this down?" And I would say, "No, I'm the deputy D.A." You have to understand, I was a lawyer in the 80's with big 80's hair. So, what happened is, people really judged a book by its cover. I used it to my advantage in that people underestimated me quite a bit, and then I would win in the courtroom. I proved myself by displaying sheer professionalism and by winning trials, and they took notice. That is how I got ahead, but I have no doubt that it was harder for me as a woman going into that office. I had to work 100 times as hard as any man in that office, no doubt about it. Of course, it has gotten better, much better, for women but we still have a long way to go in my opinion.

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A Discussion with Judge Silver Continued...

What made you decide to be a judge?

I worked for a judge my first year, and I really respected the bench and my mentor. I was only 24 when I started out in law. I knew one day when I was older that I would want to be a judge but it seemed pretty far away. In 1998, I went for my first appointment. I was 35 and I made top three for district judge. I was shocked, and then I thought, "Oh, this is attainable, I can do this." I did not get that judgeship, but I was so excited and honored that they considered me. Jim Mahan got that judgeship and we laugh about how he got "my job." It wasn't my time. Timing is everything for everybody. Timing is very important.

What is the biggest difference between being a district court judge and an appellate court judge?

I miss being the only one to make the decisions sometimes. The good thing about being an appellate judge is that, when the other two judges support you, you have the comfort of feeling very secure about your decision. The downside is that there are still two other people involved in making the decision, so when there is any conflict between our views, it can be very hard to get a decision through. It can take months to get an order out, especially on a difficult decision, which is something that I did not appreciate before, not even as a district court judge. I am so used to moving cases through that sometimes at night I feel overwhelmed with what is in my chambers. As a district court judge, the volume of cases, especially in the Eighth Judicial District Court, was so massive that I had to make many decisions in a short amount of time. On any criminal day, I could have had 70 cases on calendar for decision. I had two days of criminal calendar each week; that amounts to 140 decisions a week just for criminal, and I was just one of 32 judges in the Eighth Judicial District Court. As a district court judge, you do the best you can; you do not have the luxury to sit on an issue for months and look all over the country for how other jurisdictions do it, or call down to the library and ask for

the legislative history. It can be daunting. After a difficult sentencing, you might ask yourself, "Did I make the right decision?," and only you have made that decision. You do not have that same kind of problem here in the appellate court where you have staff and other judges helping to support your decision. By the time you produce an opinion, you feel confident in your decision.

What unique asset do you feel you bring to the Court of Appeals?

I have been at every level of the court system—municipal court, justice court, district court, and now the appellate court. I think each court has made me a better judge. I have learned from every single court, and I understand limited jurisdiction courts and appreciate what they do. My experience at all of the courts has given me insight into what happens "behind the scenes" and has been very helpful in reviewing appeals from those courts.

In your 26 years in law, what changes have you seen in the legal community and practice of law in Las Vegas?

I think the civility and the professionalism that is given to opposing counsel is not what it used to be. In the old days, you could be advocates in the courtroom and really go at it and then go have a beer with them and have the best time ever and they could still be your close friend, because they did not take things so personally. From the bench side of it, people are really cut-throat. I don't know if it is because we have so many attorneys now and everyone thinks that they have to be the best and win at all costs or if it is because of pressure from their clients. But what they do not understand is that this is a great close-knit community. The friends that I had when I was a law clerk are the friends that I still go to lunch with, many of whom are judges now. It does not seem like a lot of attorneys now have that camaraderie that we used to share being a small legal community.

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A Discussion with Judge Silver Continued...

What have been your biggest achievements, both personally and professionally, thus far?

In my personal life, my biggest achievement easily is my kids. I struggled to have kids for about 10 years. Both of mine are IVF. I had one at the age of 40 and the other at almost 44. And I am just so proud of them. Being a mom, I am happy as a clam.

Professionally, I am really blessed. I feel like I have had a lot of fulfilling achievements. Being head of the Special Victims Unit was a great achievement for me professionally. When I started at the D.A.'s office in 1990, I got all of those cases but the unit did not exist. In 1994, Stewart Bell came in and created the Special Victims Unit. I was assigned to that unit and became the chief of that unit in 1998 after about four years of doing it. By the time I had become chief, a third of all homicides were domestic related. I would be watching TV while getting ready for work and I would learn about a murder and then I would walk in to work and be assigned that murder. I averaged about five murder trials a year; that was my forte, the domestic homicides. Another achievement was being

in every seat that I have been elected to. It is an incredible feeling to be elected by the people. And this . . . being selected to sit on the Court of Appeals. To have the governor call me and ask me to be on the Court of Appeals was definitely a pinnacle of my career. I was pinching myself for the rest of the month.

How do you balance your personal life with your professional life?

I do not sleep a lot. I am turning 51 and, for whatever reason, I do not sleep anymore. I get up at 5 in the morning, and I do a lot of my reading between 5 and 8am, when my daughters wake up, and I get so much done in that chunk of time. This job gives me the flexibility of being able to see my children off to school and occasionally attend school events. But, no matter where I am, I have reading material because I could be reading a brief while I am waiting for something. My girls had tennis last night and we had a draft conference today, so I spent an hour and a half there reading briefs. I do the best I can at both, just like every mom out there.

Save the Dates for Our Annual Holiday Events

In December NNWLA will host two of its annual events. On December 15th, Judge Simons will welcome members of NNWLA and their guests into her home for our Annual Holiday Celebration. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. At this event we will be introducing our new 2016 Board. Please RSVP to nnwla.rsvp@gmail.com. When you RSVP, we will send you Judge Simons' address for the party.

The following Saturday, December 19th, NNWLA will host its Annual Veterans Memorial Holiday Shopping Event. The event will be held at 8 a.m. at the J.C. Penney Store in the Meadowood Mall. We are in search of volunteers and donations for the event, so please consider brightening a child's holiday by volunteering to shop with a student and/or making a donation to help pay for the gifts. We have already received a generous donation in the amount of \$500.00 for the Veterans Memorial Holiday Shopping Event from Davis Graham and Stubbs LLP's Charitable Fund. Please consider joining them and donating to the Holiday Shopping Event, so we can make this year the most successful year yet. You can mail your checks for the event to Anjali Webster, c/o Dickinson Wright, 100 W. Liberty Street, Suite 940, Reno, NV 89501. There is also a PayPal link on our website on the "events" page. If you would like to volunteer for the event please e-mail nnwla.rsvp@gmail.com and let us know.



October 6, 2015 NNWLA Board Minutes

1. Present: Kimberly Goodnight, Laury Macauley, Marilee Breternitz, Sally Bassett, Lauren Davis Berkich, Jennifer Gustafson, Tara Zimmerman, Katie Hoffman.
2. Bank Balance: \$5,241.84.
3. Discussion of Upcoming Events: October 20th evening Intermediate Appeals Court event at the Nevada Supreme Court in Carson City; November 17th Estate Planning lunch event at SoDo (Jennifer Mahe and Alicia Johnson to speak); December 15th Holiday Party at Home of Judge Simons.
4. Discussion of possible self defense event for 2016 year.
5. Next Newsletter deadline: 10/28/15.
6. Next Board Meeting: 11/02/15.

2015 Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association Membership Registration

Name: _____ Telephone (work): _____
Mailing Address: _____ Fax: _____
_____ E-Mail: _____

(Personal information will not be published or provided to third parties)

State(s) and Years (s) admitted to practice:
_____ Nevada _____ Others: _____

- Membership Type/Annual Dues:
- _____ Fewer than two years of practice in Nevada - \$50.00
 - _____ Government attorneys (regardless of years of practice) - \$50.00
 - _____ Retired attorneys (regardless of years of practice) - \$50.00
 - _____ More than two years of practice in Nevada - \$75.00
 - _____ Sustaining member - \$125.00

Please make checks payable to "Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association" or NNWLA and remit to:

Anjali Webster
100 W. Liberty St., Ste. 940
Reno, NV 89501

More information about you (check all that apply): My practice areas include:

- _____ Solo practitioner
- _____ Fewer than 5 attorneys in firm
- _____ 5-10 attorneys in firm
- _____ More than 10 attorneys in firm
- _____ Contract Attorney
- _____ Employed by Government
- _____ Agency/Court
- _____ Judicial Law Clerk
- _____ Not currently practicing
- _____ Seeking employment

What subjects/activities would you like to see as topics for the monthly lunch meetings?

- _____ political/legislative issues
- _____ family law issues
- _____ career options
- _____ local legal community issues
- _____ other (please specify) _____
- _____ mentoring
- _____ stress management
- _____ CLE credit
- _____ issues particular to women practicing law

Do you have any suggestions as to activities and/or events that you would like NNWLA to sponsor or participate in during 2015? _____

Other comments: _____



Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association

Please Join Us for Our November Lunch Event

Estate Planning

with Jennifer Mahe & Alicia Johnson

**Tuesday, November 17th at 12 noon
SoDo Restaurant, 275 Hill Street**

Presentation: Attorneys Jennifer Mahe and Alicia Johnson will discuss estate planning matters.

Cost: \$25 for NNWLA members in advance, \$30 for non-members in advance, and \$35 at the door.

CLE: 1.0 hour of CLE credit

RSVP: Advance payments may be made via PayPal at NNWLA.com. To pay by check, please RSVP to nnwla.rsvp@gmail.com and send the check to Anjali Webster, c/o Dickinson Wright, 100 W. Liberty St., ste. 940, Reno, NV 89501.

www.NNWLA.com



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**Please Join the NNWLA
*For our Annual Holiday Party***

**At the home of the
Honorable Lynn Simons**

**Tuesday, December 15th
5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

***Come celebrate the holidays and
new year as we welcome the
2016 NNWLA Board of Directors***

**Please RSVP to
nnwla.rsvp@gmail.com by December 8th
Directions will be provided to
respondents via email**





Please Join

Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association

As We Partner With Veterans Memorial Elementary School

For Our Annual

Holiday Shopping Event!

December 19th at 8:00 a.m., J.C. Penney Store in the Meadowood Mall

Please consider brightening a child's holiday by volunteering to shop with a student or by making a donation to help these children pay for their gifts

Donations may be made at NNWLA.com or by sending a check to Anjali Webster, c/o Dickinson Wright, 100 W. Liberty St., ste. 940, Reno, NV 89501. Please include a notation that the check is for the holiday shopping event.

If you would like to volunteer to help one of the students shop, please email nnwla.rsvp@gmail.com.

All volunteers and donations will be acknowledged in the NNWLA January Newsletter, thank you!



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