



November 2014

The WAAT Newsletter

**The Quarterly Newsletter
of the Women Attorneys Association of Topeka**

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President's Message: Luanne Leeds

Have you ever stood at the edge of a diving board wanting to jump in, but scared that the water was too deep or too cold or too dangerous? Well, there are some women in this organization who will stand with you, patiently giving you the confidence to take the plunge; some who will coach you in proper technique so you'll have a graceful landing; and some who will strut right up on the board, hold your hand, and jump in with you. WAAT members have many different ways of supporting one another. But here's

what we all have in common — we will celebrate you when you succeed, support you when you fail, and dare you to become a better leader, lawyer and person.

True to the intentions of its founders, WAAT is an organization that recognizes its members for their achievements and inspires women to step up into public leadership roles. This year, we on the WAAT board, want to build on our past successes and increase the strength of our voice in the community. And our strength is in our members. A strong and diverse membership advances all of us and gives voice to the needs of our entire community. Our aim then, is to enhance our membership.

Many of the lawyers I meet say that they need — and really want — to get out and connect. But time is a limited commodity. We have to prioritize and balance our activities. This is understandable. So we want to make your membership in WAAT a priority by bringing you the programs and activities you really want and will look forward to attending. We're also reaching out to new and returning members through such events such as the Women's Legal Forum Tea which, members of our board attended in October, and the "Women in Law Happy Hour"; a fun networking event which some of us experienced a few weeks ago.

In short, the goals that we've set for ourselves this year are to increase our membership and to continue to deliver programs that you really want and need. I am excited to get to work on this. But your thoughts, ideas and participation are invaluable to us. So I'm asking you a favor. Give me or any of our board members a call, send us an email. You can find our contact information in the membership list. Tell us what you love/hate/want/need from the organization. We want to know you better and understand what this organization can do for you. In the meantime, come join us on the diving board with us. The water is fine!

Luanne Leeds

Constitution Day the WAAT Way: My Experience as a Constitution Day Presenter

By: Alison St.Clair



Constitution Day is an annual celebration to commemorate the signing of the United States Constitution, which took place on September 17, 1787. When I first heard that Judge Pierron invited us as was making it his mission to educate elementary, middle school, and high school students about the Constitution, I thought, “That man must love a challenge!” Thoughts of the Constitution conjured up memories of my first year in law school, sitting in a stuffy room after lunch, trying to stay awake while my constitutional law professor droned on about the commerce clause and its equally thrilling cousin, the dormant commerce clause. But, when Judge Pierron invited WAAT to join him in his mission . . . I signed up. To present to elementary *and* high school students.

Needless to say, I was skeptical about a high school student’s — let alone an elementary school student’s — ability to remain focused during a presentation about the Constitution. However, I, too, enjoy a challenge, so I volunteered to be part of these Constitution Day presentations. I had the privilege of presenting to a high school class at Topeka West High School and first graders at McCarter Elementary School. Although the two presentations could not have been more different, both were a blast, and I like to think both sets of kids learned a thing or two.

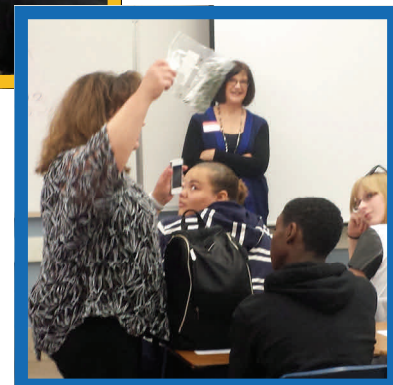
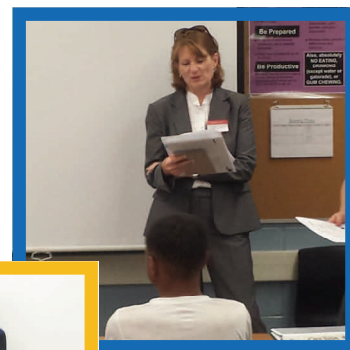
First up was the high school class at Topeka West, which I assumed would be the toughest audience. My co-presenters were Cec Mariani, who presented on Fourth Amendment search and seizure, Judge Jan Karlin, who presented on texting/sexting and cell phone searches, and Cindy Patton. I presented a few cases about students’ free speech rights. I was very nervous, but the kids were full of questions after our presentations, which I took as a good sign. Memorable highlights include Cec Mariani whipping a bag of “marijuana” out of a student’s backpack (which he let her put there before the presentation started) and dramatically pausing before assuring everyone — including a very shocked teacher — that it was, in fact, oregano.

The presentation to the first graders at McCarter Elementary School was a little different from my first presentation. Let’s be honest, you can’t fake bust a seven year old for weed to illustrate Fourth Amendment search and seizure. My co-presenters were Christina Hansen, Vivien Olsen, and Maggie Sigler, and we stuck to the basics: What is the Constitution? Who wrote the Constitution? How do the branches of government work? And why do we celebrate Constitution Day? A few of us even dressed the part, thanks to the Topeka Civic Theater generously agreeing to lend us some colonial period pieces; I rocked an ensemble I’d call “Amelia Bedelia chic.” During my portion of the presentation, I held up pictures of some famous forefathers. One little girl identified James Madison as Abraham Lincoln, while a little boy identified him as Barack Obama. I’ll give them the benefit of the doubt—James Madison is certainly not as easy to identify as George Washington, who, as one little boy correctly pointed out, is “that guy on money.” And to fully ensure our place in McCarter Elementary history as best presenters ever, we gave the kids cupcakes. Constitution Day is a celebration, after all!

Finally, Christina Hansen and Kathleen Urborn presented to Jason Meyer’s 7th grade history class at Landon Middle School. They focused on the history of the Constitution, the events that led up to it finally being signed, and what life might be like without it. The students in this class were prepared and very interested, asking a lot of questions and posing hypothetical situations.

I highly recommend that everyone volunteer to be a Constitution Day presenter. I had a lot of fun researching and putting together my presentations, and I was able to present with some brilliant and talented women. Most importantly, I learned that constitutional law *can* be exciting, especially when viewed through the eyes of young students who may be learning about it for the first time. I think as attorneys, we sometimes take for granted how much we know about the law. Constitution Day was great opportunity to share that knowledge with kids in the Topeka community.

Constitution Day the WAAT Way (continued from Page 2)



WAAT Happenings

Thanks to the leadership of Past President, Laura Graham, and the talents of Website Chair, Whitney Casement, we are technologically up to date with a great new, user friendly website. Members can stay up-to-the-minute on WAAT news and events, conveniently register for events, and pay membership dues online. We've also increased our social media presence with a Facebook page and Twitter account. Please check it out and "like" our page. Whitney has graciously agreed to stay onboard as website chair again this year, so we look for even more good things in the future.

We are also continuing to deliver the high caliber lunch programming you've come to expect from our Program Chair, Rachel Pickering. For our August meeting, we presented "A View from the Bench." Chief Judge Evelyn Wilson, Court of Appeals Judge Taylor Melissa Standridge, and Justice Carol Beier, treated members to a candid discussion about women in the judiciary. Each of the judges talked about her individual path to the bench, entertained questions about the nomination process, and discussed the judicial experience from a woman's perspective.

Then in September, WAAT presented its annual "Read to Me" event, expertly coordinated by President-Elect, Alison St. Clair. Members generously donated a mountain of books to the Highland Park Parent-Child Learning Center (PCLC). Michelle Kmiec, the engaging director of PCLC, discussed the importance of early childhood child literacy and the wonderful work that she and her colleagues do to encourage young, disadvantaged mothers to read to their children.

Finally, in October, we presented a lunch and CLE, starring Topeka's own resident SCOTUS expert, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Jared Maag. Jared discussed the most interesting and important decisions coming out of the U.S. Supreme Court in the last session. So, that's it for now. Stay tuned to our website for information on the other great programs that we have in store this year.



Chief Judge Evelyn Wilson, Justice Carol Beier & Judge Melissa Taylor Standridge share their experiences on the bench.



Our local U.S. Supreme Court maven, Jared Maag, presented us with fascinating insight and updates to recent Supreme Court decisions and upcoming cases.



Alison St. Clair (with Luanne Leeds) presents Michelle Kmiec, Director of PCLC, with new books for kids during the WAAT annual Read to Me event.

Painting Party/Fall Social!

On Friday, November 21st, we are planning an evening at Paint Therapy Uncorked. This will be a unique opportunity to relax, mingle, uncork your inner artist, and really get your "ART" on! Bring your favorite bottle of wine, or other liquid refreshment, and local artists will take you through step-by-step instructions as you transform your blank canvas into your very own masterpiece.

We are trying to assess interest, so that we can reserve space. So if you are interested in this event, please send an email to **Madeline Rogers** at madeline.rogers@law.washlaw.edu **ASAP**.



Fun Opportunity to get Involved!

This year we celebrate the 30 year anniversary of the founding of WAAT. We want to honor the occasion with a fun and unique event, and would like to set up an ad hoc committee to explore the possibilities. If you have some ideas to share, we would love for you to consider being on the committee! If you are interested, please contact Luanne Leeds at Leedslua@gmail.com.

Save the Date!

Upcoming General Membership Meetings & Other Events:

- ◆ November 19th at noon — General Meeting.
- ◆ November 21st at 6:30 p.m.—Painting Party & Fall Social.

What do you get with your WAAT Membership?

- ◆ An instant network of like-minded women lawyers (from the judiciary, law firms, solo practices, corporations, non-profits and the government) who support one another in a variety of ways (as friends, mentors, role models, and who help create opportunities for one another);
- ◆ An opportunity to gain leadership experience by participating in our committees and boards;
- ◆ Access to a wide variety of dynamic programs featuring experts (many of whom are our very own WAAT members), that address substantive legal issues, provide practice and career development and speak to matters of general concern to all women;
- ◆ An opportunity for speaking engagements through WAAT programming; and
- ◆ An opportunity to give back to your community.

WAAT is an amazing organization!

We hope you will take an active role this year and fully benefit from all that WAAT has to offer!





WOMEN ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION OF TOPEKA
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
2014-15

NAME: _____

_____ Renewing My Membership (only indicate changed information below)

FIRM: _____ TITLE: _____

Address: _____ City/ST/Zip: _____

_____ Check here if you do NOT want your address listed in directory or used for related mailings

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email Address: _____

Practice Areas: _____

Undergraduate Institution: _____ Degree: _____ Year: _____

Law School _____ Year: _____

Annual Dues (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015)

New Admittees 2013, free _____ Admitted to Bar 1-3 Years, \$25 _____

Admitted to bar 4+ Years, \$35 _____

Committee Preferences:

I am interested in serving on one of the following committees:

Membership _____ Bylaws _____ Social _____ Young lawyers _____

Program _____ Newsletter _____ Public Relations _____ Website _____

RETURN WITH CHECK TO:

WAAT
P.O. BOX 2483
TOPEKA, KS 66601