

CBA Hosts Sold Out Connecticut Legal Conference

By Leanna Zwiebel



Leanna Zwiebel is the associate editor of Connecticut Lawyer magazine as well as the communications and editorial associate at the Connecticut Bar Association.



CBA officers (L to R): Outgoing President Monte E. Frank, Treasurer Vincent P. Pace, Incoming Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Dana M. Hrelac, Incoming Secretary Alaine C. Doolan, Incoming President Karen DeMeola, Incoming Vice President Ndidi N. Moses, Incoming President-elect Jonathan M. Shapiro, Outgoing Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Emily Graner Sexton, and Outgoing Secretary Sylvia K. Rutkowska.

Over 1,200 attorneys, judges, paralegals, and other legal professionals from throughout the state gathered on June 12 at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford for the sold out 2017 Connecticut Legal Conference. The day began with a networking breakfast, which included alumni receptions for Quinnipiac, UConn, and Western New England law schools, giving attendees the opportunity to connect with colleagues and classmates before heading to the day's first education session.

This year's conference featured over 40 CLE seminars across four different tracks with topics ranging from issues involving the opioid crisis in Connecticut, to sustaining diversity and inclusion in the workplace, as well as practice management programs on how to be more efficient in the age of distraction and what to expect when you make the decision to open your own firm.

Among the 11 seminars that began the day, Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty, along with State Representatives Rosa Rebinbas and Sean Scanlon, and Dr. Daniel To-

bin of Yale Medical School in New Haven, spoke about the opioid crisis in Connecticut to over 70 seminar attendees, informing them about the crisis and what is being done to help. Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty addressed these issues, stating, "There needs to be a lot more research in this country. It's very hard to measure pain management; it's highly subjective, which is part of the reason we are in this situation."

The CBA Annual Luncheon and Meeting recognized judges taking trial referee status as well as held the installation of the 2017-2018 officers, including the 94th President of the CBA Karen DeMeola, President-elect Jonathan M. Shapiro, Vice President Ndidi N. Moses, Secretary Alaine C. Doolan, Treasurer Vincent P. Pace, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Dana M. Hrelac, and Immediate Past President Monte E. Frank.

Guests were welcomed by CBA Membership Committee Chair Garlinck Dumont, followed by remarks from Chief U.S. District Judge Janet C. Hall regarding updates to the district court, and Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers on the biggest changes in

the civil courts, including the opening of mediation centers.

Special guest speaker, Incoming Dean of Yale Law Heather Gerken, gave an inspiring speech on the positive role of lawyers in the changing world and how to help create a diverse profession by getting young attorneys practice ready, stating, "We want people to live greatly in the law. There's no point in studying the world, you need to be in the world as well."

Immediately following the final session of seminars, the President's Reception, sponsored by UConn Law School Alumni Association, was held for all attendees to mingle with colleagues and discuss the day's events as well as the year to come, over cocktails and an assortment of appetizers.

The CBA would like to thank all those that helped make the Connecticut Legal Conference a great success—the attendees, the exhibitors, and the sponsors, particularly Platinum sponsors Kronholm Insurance Services, CATIC, and Merrill Lynch, and Gold sponsor UConn Law School Alumni Association. **CL**



Attendees enjoying snacks during a session break.



Hon. Peter T. Zarella, Hon. Christine E. Keller, and Hon. Michael R. Sheldon participating in an oral argument.



Pre-conference Mindfulness Session with Walt Hampton.



Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty discussing the opioid crisis in Connecticut.



Attendees checking in prior to a seminar.

The CBA's 94th President



Karen DeMeola is the assistant dean of students for the University of Connecticut School of Law. In addition, Attorney DeMeola implements and manages diversity programming as well as professional and community development activities for students. Prior to her role as assistant dean of students, she was a civil rights litigator in her solo practice.

Attorney DeMeola is recognized as an expert in several areas and has presented on numerous panels, conferences, and symposia on diversifying law school populations; implicit bias; intersexuality; inclusive leadership; and diversity and inclusion more broadly. She has also served as an adjunct professor at UConn School of Law teaching Critical Identity Theory.

In recognition of her leadership, Attorney DeMeola was the recipient of the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity's, Edwin Archer Randolph Diversity Award; the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) Maria Miller Steward Award; the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities Constance Baker Motley Award for Business or Law; the UConn Spirit Award; and the UConn Women's Center's Women of Color Recognition Award for Outstanding Contribution to the University of Connecticut and for Excellence in Leadership, Achievement, and Service.

Attorney DeMeola has created numerous pipeline programs, including the new CBA program, Pathways to Legal Careers: An Access and Opportunity Pipeline Program. This program is designed to provide insight about the law and the legal profession to high school students with the hope of encouraging talented and diverse students to consider a legal career. The kick-off to the program was on May 31, 2017 at UConn School of Law.



Attendees engaged in one of the day's many CLE seminars.



Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers.



Professor Sudha Setty discussing executive orders.



Inside the annual luncheon and meeting.



Then-CBA President Monte E. Frank presenting plaques to officers who've completed their 2016-2017 terms: Secretary Sylvia K. Rutkowska and Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Emily Graner Sexton.



Incoming CBA Vice President Jonathan M. Shapiro, Incoming CBA President Karen DeMeola, Incoming Dean of Yale Law School Heather Gerken, and Outgoing CBA President Monte E. Frank.



Heidi Alexander discussing how to be more focused and efficient.



Outgoing President Monte E. Frank installing Karen DeMeola as the new CBA president.



Robert Ambrogi discussing artificial intelligence.



Incoming CBA President-elect Jonathan M. Shapiro, Outgoing Secretary Sylvia K. Rutkowska, and Garlinck Dumont.



The following is an excerpt from Incoming President Karen DeMeola's 2017 CBA Annual Luncheon and Meeting

As Monte indicated, this year has been a year of many successes for the CBA and for our members. We played a significant role in the Task Force to Improve Access to Legal Counsel in Civil Matters, and will continue to play a role in the implementation of some of the recommendations contained in the taskforce report. Our sections and committees kept our lobbyist Bill Chapman and our Legislative and Policy Review Committee busy by supporting legislative actions to protect refugees, ban conversion therapy for LGBTQ youth, ensure the right to civil counsel in certain domestic cases, protect against the threatening of judges, LLC Act, and others, too many to name. We will continue to be active in legislative initiatives and policies that impact our practice and the communities that need access to, and the protection of, the judicial system.

We have participated with the Connecticut Bar Foundation's Pro Bono Colloquium on next steps and will be a continued part of addressing the ways in which pro bono service can help the access to justice problem.

Our education team, under the direction of Suzanne Hard, continues to produce and develop new and innovative programs. We are steering the conversation around diversity and inclusion, and we have a more engaged membership that will bring us into the future.

The CBA leadership team has committed, for the long-term, to work toward and continue to play a role in advocating for access to justice, the rule of law, and diversity and inclusion in the profession.

In Connecticut, the greatest immediate challenge we face is the potential erosion of access to justice brought about by the state's prolonged fiscal crisis. We must vigorously guard against trends that may lead to a two-tier system of justice that favors citizens who possess the time and financial resources necessary over those who do not enjoy those same advantages. In addition, a system that favors or disfa-

vors a party to an action, a witness, juror, staff member, or an attorney based on their identity is one that should be challenged.

The three cornerstones, along with, of course, our constitutional mission, guide us. But we have more work to do. As James Baldwin aptly stated, "The price one pays for pursuing any profession, or calling, is an intimate knowledge of its ugly side."

For years, I have taught and counselled students and attorneys about identity. I start each year talking about authenticity and maintaining a sense of self and wellness to new law students. All of my counsel centers on wellness and professionalism and the importance of the narrative. The narrative not only of the individual but the ability to convey the narrative of future clients. It is in this vein that I approach my role with the CBA; what is the current narrative and what do we want it to be.

Diversity in the legal profession, as you all now know, lags behind all other professions. We have come further in our diversity efforts than I thought possible but we are now ready for the next steps.

Access to the profession continues to be onerous for many. For some, going to law school is a dream, and for others it is, or is perceived to be, out of reach. Our diversity and inclusion efforts will explore such barriers from entry to law school and thereafter to the profession.

One way to increase diversity is to increase the pipeline. To that end I created, Pathways to Legal Careers, a pipeline and mentorship program aimed at recruiting prospective students from diverse and marginalized communities into the legal profession. The Pathways kick off on May 31 saw participation from the branch, local, and affinity bar associations. The program has the potential to increase the pipeline to our law schools but we cannot stop there. Challenges with respect to inclusion, accommodations for dis-

abilities, mental health issues, economic difficulties, and other factors often create additional barriers. Focusing on access to the profession is an essential next step for our diversity efforts. We cannot just hope for diversity without taking steps to seed our system, and grow future generations of potential lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals, who truly represent the diversity of our state's population.

Many of us have seen the impacts of addiction on our friends and family. Lawyers are not immune to addiction and as a group have higher rates of mental health concerns than other professions. Partnerships with Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, the Dave Nee Foundation, and others to provide support and training will help not only with access but also with simply taking care of each other.

Our membership is strong and engaged thanks in part to our membership chair, Garlinck Dumont. Our largest groups are our young lawyers and our solo and small firm attorneys. Engaging members from these groups will help drive initiatives and programming moving forward. We must be relevant to our YLS in particular as they are the future of the profession and most certainly the future of the CBA.

As I attended meetings, meals, and events hosted by local and affinity bar associations as well as sections and committees it was quickly apparent that each entity has its own feel; its own identity and its own sense of pride. I am hopeful that a year from now, more attorneys in our state will, like you, feel that sense of pride for the CBA. We are doing and will continue to do great things. We will advocate for the needs of all lawyers, make sure citizens of the state understand the importance of lawyers in their lives and work to ensure that the rule of law and access to justice are realized. The profession will become a reflection of all of us.

I am proud and honored to serve as your next president and look forward to being part of our narrative. Happy Pride! **CL**