

*Women Attorneys Association
of Topeka*

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OF HISTORY

HISTORY:

In late 1983 Topeka, Kansas attorneys Cathy Reeder and Barbara Rankin discussed the need for an association to address the needs of women attorneys in the Shawnee County, Kansas area. They felt there was sufficient interest in a group which would provide monthly programs and yearly functions, as well as an opportunity for women attorneys to gather together to discuss their common goals and concerns.

With the help of other women attorneys, a mailing list of all women attorneys in Shawnee County, Kansas was compiled and a mailing was made announcing an organizational and informational meeting. Thirty people attended, all expressing an interest in the formation of an association of women attorneys. In 1984 officers were elected, committees formed and by-laws drawn. With Cathy as president and Barb as vice-president, the organization began to take shape. The name Women Attorneys Association of Topeka, Inc. (WAA) was chosen.

During the first year over 60 attorneys became dues-paying members. Dues were set at \$15.00 for those admitted to the Bar one to three years and \$25.00 for those admitted over three years. The membership was composed of 50 percent government attorneys, 35 percent in private practice, eight percent corporate attorneys, four percent in the judiciary and three percent in education.

Barb Rankin served as president in the Association's second year. In 1986 Lori Callahan was elected president and the number of members increased to 82 after a by-law change allowing law students to become affiliate members for a \$5.00 annual fee. The organization is now in its fourth year, Marty Marsh Snyder is the 1987-88 president and membership continues to climb. A charter member of WAA, Christel Marquardt currently serves as the first woman president of the 6,000 member Kansas Bar Association.

PURPOSE:

A. To promote the efficient administration of justice and the constant improvement of the law, especially as it relates to women;

B. To encourage the advancement and support of women in the law;

C. To encourage the participation of women in existing professional and bar organizations, particularly at the committee and officer level;

D. To promote equality and social justice for all people;
and

E. To improve relations between the legal professional and the public.

ACTIVITIES:

Some the activities sponsored by the WAA in the past three years are:

A. Monthly membership luncheons with speakers on a variety of topics;

B. Semi-annual membership newsletters;

C. Annual wine and cheese reception each fall for all new bar admittees practicing in Shawnee County;

D. Co-sponsorship of Christmas party with the Topeka Bar Association Young Lawyers Section open to all Shawnee County attorneys;

E. Annual social event for members and their guests;

F. Annual continuing legal education seminars approved for credit by the Kansas Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Committee, with attendance open to all Kansas attorneys; and

G. Continental breakfast suite for attorneys and their guests attending the annual convention of the Kansas Bar Association.

Specific plans for 1987-88 include production of a photo directory of WAA members including information on primary areas of practice for referral and networking purposes. WAA looks forward to increasing women attorney membership on the governing boards of other professional associations, providing low cost continuing legal education programs for its diversified members and continuing to add additional benefits for its members.

Membership in the WAA is not restricted to women. Men who live or practice in Shawnee County are also welcome as members, and, while many men have attended luncheons and CLE seminars, only two have been courageous enough to become members.