

**This month:** Register now for our [Annual Wine Tasting & Leadership Networking Event](#)



## The Benefits of Spring Cleaning

Spring is in the air! As we dig our way out of the winter doldrums, it's a great time to take a fresh look at our lives and "clean house." I can only speak for myself but, after the long winter, I've found myself spread too thin and bogged down with too many commitments. Spring is a great time for all of us to re-evaluate our personal and professional goals and consider whether the tasks that are filling up our days (and sometimes nights) are furthering those goals or holding us back. Because, while the days may be getting longer, the number of hours in the day remains the same.

"Cleaning house" can mean looking at the items on your calendar and on your to-do list and asking yourself why those items are there. It means asking: Why I'm doing this; how does this further my goals; what are the consequences of not doing this; do I realistically have the time to do this; and what am I giving up to do this?

Cleaning house can also mean taking a step back and looking at what is missing from your current calendar and to-do list, and whether you're leaving yourself enough time to address all of the things that are important to you, including spending time with friends and family.

In the interest of investing in myself, one thing I will be setting aside time for this month is AWL's [Annual Wine Tasting and Leadership Networking Event](#), co-hosted by the Milwaukee Bar Association and sponsored by Gramann Reporting. This year's event, held on Thursday, April 6 at 6:00 pm at Ruby Tap in Wauwatosa, is a great way to kick back and relax while reconnecting with old friends and (hopefully!) meeting some new ones. I hope to see you all there!

Happy Spring!  
Malinda Eskra



Malinda Eskra

## Upcoming Events

Wine Tasting & Networking	Litigation Discussion Group	Estate Planning Disc. Group
<b>Thursday, April 6 6-9 pm</b> <a href="#">Ruby Tap</a> , Wauwatosa	<b>Thursday, April 13 noon-1:30</b> <a href="#">Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren</a>	<b>Wednesday, May 17 noon-1:30</b> <a href="#">Godfrey &amp; Kahn, S.C.</a>
Wines, hors d'oeuvres, and the company of fellow AWL and MBA members as well as current and future State Bar leaders. <a href="#">Details...</a>	Ann Reed will discuss her research on women litigators and how to present your case to a jury. <a href="#">Details...</a>	Phil Miller of Husch Blackwell LLP will speak on "Estate Planning with Gun Trusts." <a href="#">Details...</a>



## Member Profile: Rebecca Coffee

By Jill Kastner

Since before she entered Marquette Law School, Rebecca Coffee knew what she wanted to do. "For me, law school was a means to an end. I wanted to work on civil rights issues. I wanted to help people who were wrongly accused or had their rights violated," said Coffee.

Ever since graduating in 2002, that is exactly what Rebecca has done – and done well. She was named a Rising Star each year from 2008 to 2012 and listed among Wisconsin’s Super Lawyers from 2014 to present. In 2015 she was named one of *Wisconsin Law Journal’s* Women in the Law for her work as a leader in the criminal defense bar. Rebecca chaired the State Bar’s Criminal Law Section from 2012 to 2014 – all while having a successful criminal defense practice with Mastantuono & Coffee, SC in Milwaukee.

“It’s important to defend those wrongly accused and those who did commit a crime,” explained Coffee. “Part of my job is to show a judge or prosecutor that, even if my client did commit a crime, they are more than that - more than just the worst day in their life or the worst deed that they committed. You need to look at the whole person and the issues that underlie the criminal behavior.”

To help reduce crime in Milwaukee, Mastantuono & Coffee SC host an annual “Lawyers for Boys and Girls Clubs” event that last year raised over \$15,000 for local Boys and Girls Clubs. “Meeting the kids at the clubs is really inspiring,” said Coffee. “It’s a real respite from the sad part of our city that I see in my job.” Rebecca is proud of her firm’s commitment to the Boys and Girls Clubs. “They do a tremendous job providing a safe place for kids to go and reach their full potential.”

Today, Rebecca litigates serious felony and misdemeanor cases. In law school, however, she did not see herself as a litigator. “I was not a natural public speaker and didn’t see myself in the courtroom,” she said. Instead, she went to Washington D.C. after graduation to advocate for policy change. She did policy work for the American Bar Association Death Penalty Representation Project. There she saw lawyers in the courtroom defending against death penalty cases and realized that if she wanted to make real change in the lives of individuals, she needed to be in the courtroom. “I moved back to Wisconsin, which thankfully has no death penalty, and started doing criminal defense work.”

In addition to her paying clients, she takes state public defender and federal appointments as well as some pro bono cases. “We make a commitment to do pro bono work each year to ensure that even the least among us get quality representation.” Rebecca has also remained committed to seeking policy changes to improve the criminal justice system. She is involved in community forums to help prevent crime. She serves on the board for the Wisconsin Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and is an active member of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. She recently attended the State Bar Symposium on the issue of Disparate and Mass Incarceration in Wisconsin, where she hopes the State Bar will facilitate changes to reduce the disparate incarceration of blacks and Native Americans in our state.

Rebecca enjoys being a member of AWL. “I love that its membership is varied. It allows me to meet and get to know attorneys outside of my area of practice,” said Coffee, who tries to attend Women Judges’ Night each year. “I love that it’s an organization of women lawyers promoting other women lawyers.”

Rebecca doesn’t spend all her time fighting the good fight. “It took me a lot of years to find that balance between work and my personal life,” she says. She encourages all young attorneys to work hard, join and be active in a bar group that helps them in their practice, but to also not forget about their own personal needs. “You have to prioritize time for yourself, your family and your friends,” said Coffee. “It helps you to be more creative as an attorney when you spend time enjoying other parts of your life.”

## **AWL Board of Directors Slate of Nominees**

Based on nominations we received, which were reviewed by the Nominating Committee, the following slate is put forth for your vote. Please note that there were no nominations of more than one person for each position.

- President-Elect: Kelly Noyes
- Treasurer: Patricia Jenness
- Secretary: Hon. Rebecca Dallet
- Director of Membership: Renee Nawrocki
- Director of Professionalism: Jennifer Hong Dudzik
- Director of Programs: Rebecca Kiefer
- Director of Special Events: Shauna Manion

Voting will be held [online](#) and will remain open until May 31, 2017. Board members shall be elected upon an affirmative vote of the majority of members who have replied to this electronic ballot. By the terms of the Constitution, Shannon Braun will serve as President and Malinda Eskra will serve as Past President.

## AWLF Scholarship Applications Now Accepted

The Association for Women Lawyers Foundation (AWLF) is the charitable arm of AWL. Each year, the AWLF awards scholarships to law students enrolled in Marquette University Law School and the University of Wisconsin Law School. Applications are currently being accepted until June 15, 2017. Applicants must satisfy these requirements:

- Applicant must be attending a Wisconsin law school in September 2016 and have completed the first year.
- Applicant must be in good academic standing.
- Applicant must be a woman.

Applications consist of a current resume, official law school transcript and cover letter. For details, visit the [AWLF page of our website](#).

## What Else is Going On

AWL is pleased to be a partnering organization of the **National Association of Women Lawyers' 2017 Seattle Conference** on Tuesday, May 9, 2017 at the Renaissance Seattle Hotel. We have arranged a special 10% discount for our members. More information, and a registration form, is available on the [NAWL website](#). Use the code SCAWLWI2017 to get the discount.

NAWL is also offering the following [webinars and teleconferences](#):

- **Hot Topics in Retail Law** (Women in Fashion Law Practice Area Affinity Group) - Tuesday, April 11 at noon
- **Supplier Diversity Survey & Carrier Diversity Initiatives** (Women in Insurance Practice Area Affinity Group) - Wednesday, April 26 at 1 p.m.
- **Shopper and Retail Technology** (Women in IP & Technology Practice Area Affinity Group) - Thursday, April 27 at 10 a.m.

The ABA has launched a **Diverse Speakers Directory**. Open to ABA and non-ABA Members, the Directory allows you to create a customized profile and market your experience and skillset to more than 3,500 ABA entities seeking speakers around the country and the world! [For more information...](#)

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AWL Office: 414-750-4404 | 3322 N. 92nd Street | Milwaukee, WI 53222  
[Email](#) • [Website](#) • [Facebook](#)  
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