

President's Message

I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Lisa Alcantar and just over there you will see a real picture of me, rather than my quickly aging head-shot from my brand new lawyer days. If you haven't met me, I've been hiding in the back pages of the newsletter, writing book reviews, though I have played many roles within BCWB over the years. Even though my favorite place to be is just to

the side of front and center,

I am honored and humbled to be at BCWB's helm for 2017. As I sat down to write this inaugural column, I scrambled for a topic, which would be meaningful to us as an organization, but also one on which I am qualified to speak.

Before we start down this path, let's detour into the recent elections. The Fourth



Court of Appeals is once again an all-female judiciary. Nine of the fourteen Bexar County District Court Judges are women. As a "young" female attorney, Bexar County is an amazing place to

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January Luncheon: Justice Patricia Alvarez

Please join us for our first luncheon of the year at St. Mary's University School of Law as we welcome Justice Patricia O. Alvarez. She was elected to Place 3 on the Fourth Court of Appeals in 2012. Justice Alvarez is from Laredo, Texas and she earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 1982, followed by a Juris Doctor from the University of Texas School of Law in 1987.

Before joining the court, Justice Alvarez was in private practice for 25 years. She primarily practiced in state and federal courts in South Texas, and handled

complex civil trial matters. She began her career in San Antonio with Thornton, Summers, Biechlin, Dunham & Brown and then moved to Butler & Binion. Returning to her South Texas Border roots, she established The Alvarez Law Firm, P.C. where she served as the lead trial attorney before beginning her service on the Fourth Court of Appeals.

When: Wednesday, January 25, 2017

Time: Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Where: St. Mary's School of Law Sarita Kennedy East Law Alumni Room

Cost: \$25 for members, \$30 for non-members, payable at the door

RSVP: Please RSVP by Thursday, January 19th. *You can now register and pay online!* Please include any dietary restrictions in your RSVP. We cannot guarantee a spot to individuals who do not RSVP by the date above. ***Walk-ins will be charged \$35 to cover the additional demands our caterers and no-shows will be billed.***

For more information, contact Rachel Skinner (rskinner@dykema.com) or Meagan McKeown (mmckeown@dykema.com)

Member Spotlight: Cassie Metheson



What's your current job?

I am a litigation attorney at Hornberger Fuller & Garza. My practice primarily focuses on trust estate and litigation.

How long have you been a member of the BCWB?

About five years. The annual retreats are my favorite!

Tell us about your morning ritual or daily routine.

I have twin 15 month old girls so my mornings are a bit chaotic (as are the afternoons, and the evenings...). I typically wake up at 5 am, go to CrossFit at 5:30, come back home in time for the girls to wake up, feed them breakfast, then it's off to work.

What's your favorite moment of your career so far?

Assisting my dad in a jury trial.

What was your childhood dream job?

I always wanted to be a veterinarian. Now I don't even have a pet.

Guilty Pleasure: What can you not live without?

Reality TV.

What's the best career advice you've offered?

Don't be afraid to try different practice areas until you find what works best for you.

So You Want To...

Volunteer In Tax Assistance?



By Julie L. Grant

Tis the season for preparing to file Federal tax returns! The 2017 filing season begins January 23 with tax returns due to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) by April 18 (due to April 15 falling on the weekend and the District of Columbia government closing on Monday April 17 for a local holiday).

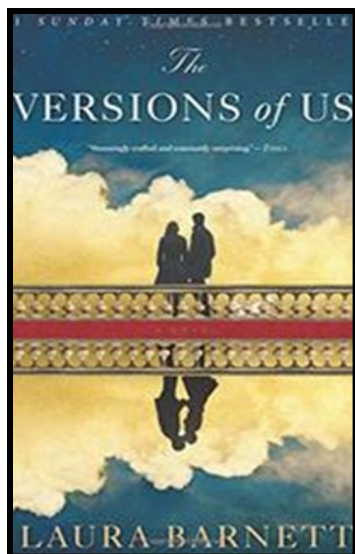
Volunteering to help low income and/or elderly taxpayers file their Federal tax returns is a great way to use your legal skills and give back to the community. I know because I did this for 2016 through the Volunteers In Tax Assistance (VITA) program and signed up for 2017 also.

The goal of VITA is to increase the financial stability of individuals and families in San Antonio and Bexar County. VITA volunteers provide free income tax assistance to taxpayers and help

them claim important tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. The VITA program continues to expand each year. Without the help of all those who volunteer for VITA, many of whom return each tax-filing season, VITA could not continue to expand touching an increasing number of the San Antonio Community and surrounding Bexar County.

Don't know current Federal tax law? Not a problem as the Volunteers In Tax Assistance in San Antonio (VITASA) program provides IRS-approved training and certification. VITASA will also help place you in a volunteer site, such as a public library or community center, convenient to you. VITASA training courses run on both weekends and evenings in January. The last scheduled training is the week of January 17 OR if you prefer the weekend option January 21 and 28. For more details, please check the Web site www.vitasa.org.

Book Review: *The Versions of Us*



By Lauren M. Horne

Have you ever wondered “what if...”? What if I had simply said “yes” instead of “no” to going to a party with a friend? What if I had chosen a different route to work, or stopped for coffee? Most of these decisions seem insignificant, but perhaps one of those moments could have changed the course of your life. In *The Versions of Us*, Lara Bar-

nett tells a story of what has been, what might have been, and what could be for a man called Jim and a woman named Eva.

Cambridge, 1958: a young Jim is walking along the streets, a young Eva is cycling towards him but swerves to avoid a small dog. What happens next causes three different outcomes, by way of three small decisions that will, for better or for worse, define the rest of their lives. Across more than five decades, the three versions of the characters’ lives unfold, leaving readers contemplating chance, fate, and the paths we too might have taken.

The books’ structure is impressive. I thought it would be difficult to keep up with three different stories spanning more than half a century, but I was wrong. Barnett moves through the storylines and vari-

ous accompanying characters with ease. She also has a terrific sense of place, transporting readers to a particular setting and moment in time.

Overall, I loved the concept of the book. While the three versions are quite different, there are certain key events and people that remain constant, which makes us ponder whether some things are inevitable, despite the choices we make.

If you are looking for more traditional romance, look elsewhere. There is no crescendo; no fireworks; no dramatic climax. This isn’t an ordinary boy meets girl love story, but three parallel stories about love, fate, parenthood and the trials and tribulations of sustaining long-term meaningful relationships.

Welcome New Members

Vivian Ethridge
Caitlin Bennett

Natalie Karge
Roxanna Parker

Jennifer Bruning
Cassidy Daniels

Wrapping Up 2016 at the Holiday Luncheon

By Lindsay Riley, Rachel Skinner, Meagan McKeown

amazing members resulted in such a substantial gifts to these organizations. We are confident the funds will be put to great use in our community to help those most in need.

BCWB will also be donating \$300 to Haven for Hope in honor of everyone who attended the luncheon. We appreciate everything our membership does to serve the community and look forward to another successful year in 2017!

In addition, so many of you who attended the luncheon brought items to donate to Haven of Hope to assist women in need. We are also pleased to announce that



Shown above: Autumn Affair Co-Chairs Shari Mao and Amanda Crouch with Representatives from Children's Shelter and Deborah's House

Over 100 BCWB members came to Tre Trattoria in December to celebrate the holidays and witness the unveiling of the two giant checks BCWB presented to the Children's Shelter and Deborah's house. We were so excited to provide each organization with \$22,000—a total of \$44,000—raised by YOU, our amazing members, at Autumn Affair 2016.

Representatives of the Children's Shelter and Deborah's House accepted the checks on behalf of their organizations. We are thrilled to know that the hard work of our



President's Message (cont.)

practice. I rarely feel as though I am an interloper in an all boys' club. Bexar County Women's Bar's work is done, right?

And, that, brings me to my topic: inequality in treatment. Recently, I mediated a case with an older, distinguished mediator, who I'll call "Mediator One." I attended the mediation with my male senior partner and a female client representative. In these mediations, my partner does much of the formal negotiating, and I am the strong arm—loaded up with facts, law, claims and defenses. On this day, our mediation lingered on without much progress; I pressed Mediator One to address a specific point with opposing counsel. Mediator One, with a cock of the head, said "Now, there's no need to get upset." Mind you, I certainly was speaking as forcefully as one does in a casual conversation, but there was nary a raised voice or change in pitch.

Fast forward a mere two days later. Different, more distinguished mediator at the helm, but otherwise an almost identical setup of players and parts. As I pushed back on Mediator Two's recounting of our opposing counsel's position, Mediator

Two responded as follows: "I love your passion. We lose that as we get older. Don't lose that passion for your clients and your case."

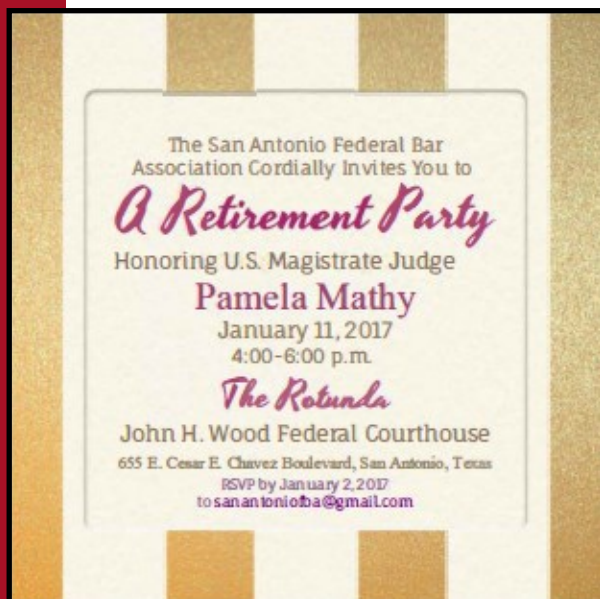
One of my mediators was a man and one was a woman. I'll leave it to my esteemed readers to guess into which camp Mediator One falls. I left the first mediation so taken aback. My client representative had not failed to notice the comment. When I pointed it out to my partner, he looked confused and said, "But, you weren't upset!" Correct; I wasn't upset and I wasn't out of control. Now, however, I was bothered. I related the story to a more experienced female colleague. She suggested, when speaking with members of the opposite sex, whether in the courtroom or otherwise, that I "control", for the lack of a better word, my pitch and tone, stripping it down in both volume and passion. In my mind, I imagine myself as the droning school teacher in Charlie Brown and I can only hope all my future motions are granted solely on the strength of my written word!

What a predicament. Should we, as women, subtly assert ourselves and change other people's perceptions of us? Or do we directly challenge and shake up the percep-

tions, essentially forcing the system to adapt? If there's one right answer, I don't know what it is. It is doubtful Mediator One's comments were meant as a rebuke, but that's how I took them. My reaction to Mediator One was to basically be quiet for the remainder of the mediation. My anecdote is hardly a jaw dropping story of sexism and inequality. For me, it served as a reminder of the subtle differences in how women are treated and reminded me of BCWB's continuing purpose.

As an organization, we have the ability to hear each other's stories and learn from them. It is BCWB's continuing mission for equality in treatment, as well as assuring women's presence in the bar. Our inaugural LEAD Academy class is tackling these goals head on. The class kicks off with a Spring Seminar in February. Our goal is that each LEAD class becomes a springboard for developing other women into leaders in their professions, in BCWB, and our greater community. Women are born leaders, but we often have to be asked to lead, to be reassured that we are qualified enough. It's my turn to ask you: how will you help us lead in 2017?

BCWB Lites



The investiture of Irene Rios as a Justice on the Fourth Court of Appeals will be on Thursday, January 19, 2017 at 1:00 pm at the Bexar County Courthouse located at 100 Dolorosa (2nd floor, former Civil District Presiding Courtroom).

The Rosenblatt Law Firm is proud to announce that as of January 1, Senior Associate Attorney Tiffanie Clausewitz was named a Partner in the Firm. Tiffanie continues to manage our litigation department. In addition, transactional attorney Molly E. Neck has been promoted to Senior Associate, and Shellie R. Reyes and Jule J. Chung have joined our litigation department as associate attorneys.

Congratulations to Emma Cano and Mark Tapia on their new addition—
Owen Michael Tapia



Congratulations to Brittany and Charlie Weil on their new addition—

Benjamin Bruce Weil



LEAD Academy Receives Grant from Texas Bar Foundation

The Bexar County Women's Bar Foundation (BCWBF) recently announced that it has been awarded a \$7,500 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation to help launch LEAD Academy, a year-long leadership-development program for women attorneys.

The Bexar County Women's Bar Foundation's LEAD Academy was born out of a desire to combat the attrition of women in the legal profession. The program's Steering Committee has spent three years developing the program, which aims to assist women attorneys in attaining the highest level of success in their firms and organizations, their communities, and the legal profession by teaching class members to lead in a way that is authentic and effective; empower themselves with self-awareness and self-confidence; advance in their firms or organizations; and develop robust professional networks.

"We are incredibly thankful for this generous grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, which will allow us to give women attorneys a unique opportunity to grow professionally and personally," said LEAD Director Tiffanie Clausewitz. "LEAD will also benefit our San Antonio community by enhancing the ethical and professional practice of law, and by developing strong community leaders." The Academy will begin with a two-day symposium in February 2017, followed by quarterly seminars and a graduation celebration in December 2017. Faculty for the symposium and seminars is made up of local, statewide, and national speakers, who will educate class members on a wide-range of topics. Class members are chosen based on their accomplishments in the legal community and demonstrated potential to become leaders.

The members of LEAD Academy's 2017 inaugural class are:

Lara Brock, Espinoza Law Firm, PLLC
Stephanie Curette, Hornberger Fuller & Garza Incorporated

Ashley Senary Dahlberg, Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP

Jane Ann Fosson, Schmoyer Reinhard LLP

Vanessa Hernandez Kemmy, Frost Bank

Rebecca Magee, Haynes and Boone, LLP

Cassie Matheson, Hornberger Fuller & Garza Incorporated

Mary Lisa Mireles, Rosenblatt Law Firm

Patti Oviatt, Cokinos, Bosien & Young

Lindsay Riley, Dykema Cox Smith

Christine Rudy, Tessmer Law Firm PLLC

Vanessa Russell-Evans, Randolph-Brooks Federal Credit Union

Shavonne Smith, Thornton, Biechlin, Reynolds & Guerra, L.C.

Nada Ismail Taha, NuStar Energy L.P.

Kayla Tanner, Jackson Walker L.L.P.

Dannick Villaseñor-Hernandez, Plunkett & Griesenbeck, Inc.

Congratulations to these outstanding women, from whom the Bexar County Women's Bar Foundation expects to see great things in the coming year and well beyond.

Since its inception in 1965, the Texas Bar Foundation has awarded more than \$16 million in grants to law-related programs. Supported by members of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Bar Foundation is the nation's largest charitably-funded bar foundation.

For more information, or to partner with Bexar County Women's Bar Foundation's LEAD Academy, please contact LEAD Director Tiffanie Clausewitz at tiffanie@rosenblattlawfirm.com or 210-562-2900.