



State of the ACBA

By **Melissa Rosenblum, Esquire**

As I begin to write my first article as President of the ACBA, I am amazed that five months has already passed since our annual Installation Event. Again, I want to thank all the civic leaders and judges who attended the installation. I truly appreciated your kind words and support. You all truly made the event an unforgettable night both professionally and personally.

I also want to thank everyone who wore PINK to the Installation Dinner. As you know, ACBA donated \$5.00 for each person wearing PINK to JFS and Rooted Kinctions. In addition, my law office matched the ACBA donation to support the amazing programs of JFS, a non-profit that provides housing, mental health care, the food pantry, and Justice Involved Services (JIS) for Atlantic and Cape May residents and Rooted Kinctions, a non-profit that reunites siblings in South Jersey who have been separated and/or impacted as a result of being placed in foster care. Both non-profits are near and dear to my heart.

The ACBA is a very well-run organization thanks to our amazing Executive Director Tamara Lamb. She truly makes the magic happen of ensuring all our events are well promoted and executed flawlessly. With that said, as I began my Presidency, I knew that I wanted to accomplish a few goals to continue the success and growth of the ACBA.

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First and foremost, I wanted to create the Atlantic County Bar Association Foundation, non-profit 501(c)(3) that would spearhead charitable efforts for the ACBA. I am happy to report the ACBA Foundation has been established. The Haneman-Perskie Scholarship is now part of and included in the foundation. In addition, the ACBA Foundation just held our first event- our annual golf tournament. The proceeds from the golf tournament will benefit the ACBA Foundation, future scholarships and philanthropic donations to agencies connected to or impacted by the law.

While focusing on establishing the ACBA Foundation, the Board of Officers and Trustees have also been working on updating the ACBA by-laws. Our by-laws have not been updated in over fifteen (15) years. Updating our by-laws recognizes how the practice of law has changed, including up-to-date technology, voting by email, notice to the association and more inclusive language. This project has been spear-headed by President-Elect Van MacPherson, Joanna Sykes-Saavedra and Jake Perskie. The new by-laws will be disseminated shortly to membership for a full vote.

Next, I wanted to re-energize camaraderie, mentoring and networking among our membership. As such, we have reinstated Bar at the Bar Event. For those who have not attended a Bar at the Bar Event, it is a networking event that doesn't cost anything to attend. We already held two Bar at the Bar Events with approximately 30-40 members at each. It is a great event attended by experienced lawyers, judges as well as attorneys in our Young Lawyer Division. Our next event is November 2, 2023 at Bocca in Margate.

ACBA is committed to providing quality CLEs and programs throughout the year. On October 12, 2023, Vice-President Rick McKelvey and chair of our CLE Committee organized a Professionalism CLE that focused on Lawyer Wellness. A topic that the ACBA will be focusing on throughout the year. The dynamic panel of speakers included our Assignment Judge, the Honorable Michael Blee, A.J.S.C., Moderator and NJSBA Professional Award Recipient for Atlantic County, Eric Wood, Fox Rothschild, Scott Sherwood, Deputy Public Defender and Vice President of District 1 Ethics Committee, and John Koufous. In November, during Judicial College, ACBA is again offering three (3) CLE programs virtually. Each course is two (2) credits, and you can sign up for 1, 2 or all 3 courses.

Finally, I want to encourage all our members to take a more active leadership role and ownership of the ACBA's programs and activities. If you have an idea, whether it is a CLE, a networking event, fundraiser or charitable event, please reach out to me, Tamara Lamb or any ACBA Board member. Atlantic County is a unique place to practice law. We are a community that welcomes new lawyers. We are a community that helps young lawyers. We are a community that want lawyers to succeed. Simply and directly, I am asking you to volunteer your time, knowledge, and expertise to the ACBA to ensure the ACBA remains relevant. Thank you for the opportunity to lead ACBA.