

Georgia Association of Women Lawyers Addresses Women's Particular Needs

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Not many male attorneys worry about when to return to work after the birth of a child or what to do about childcare.

Passing the bar exam may make you an attorney whether male or female, but women continue to have concerns that set them apart from their male counterparts.

Locally, women attorneys can discuss those concerns at the Savannah chapter of the Georgia Association for Women Lawyers. The local chapter started in 1991. The statewide association began in 1928 and serves the more than 7,000 women who are admitted to the State Bar of Georgia.

Savannah lawyer Kathleen Aderhold said she joined the organization after graduating from law school in 1991 to meet other women lawyers and to have an opportunity to talk to other lawyers in a smaller group setting. She said there weren't many women attorneys in 1991.

"It was nice to have a group of women to talk to; it still is," Aderhold said.

Aderhold said the law profession is still a very male dominated field. In fact, women

comprise 29.1 percent of all lawyers, according to the American Bar Association's 2003 report, *A Current Glance of Women in the Law*, published by the Commission on Women in the Profession. By the year 2010, women are expected to constitute nearly 40 percent of the legal profession.

"The boys network and there's no reason for the girls not to," Aderhold said. "Besides, women have concerns that men don't have."

She listed such concerns as daycare, starting one's own practice and deciding on when and how long to take maternity leave. Aderhold said she knows some women who have gone back to work a week after

giving birth because of the pressure of being the only female lawyer in a firm. Women lawyers also consider job flexibility when choosing a position because child rearing still mainly falls on them, she noted.



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Savannah attorney**

The networking and support group meets for monthly luncheons. Association President-Elect Susannah Pedigo, a personal injury and

domestic issues attorney with Lewis, Owens and Mulherin in Savannah, coordinates speakers for the meetings. She said guests have spoken on mentorship, generating business, time management and work-life balance.

"We try to have some sort of program

that's going to have a wide appeal," Pedigo said, adding that the 65-person membership includes judges as well as first-year lawyers. "It really just runs the gamut."

Pedigo said the work-life balance discussion was popular because many of the attorneys in the group are mothers who also work full time. Pedigo, who graduated last year from the law school at the University of Georgia, said she joined the group to meet people in Savannah and because she heard that it was an excellent organization.

The group also is involved in numerous community service projects. The group recently helped the Picking Up the Pieces project to adopt two elementary schools in the Hurricane Katrina stricken gulf coast region. The attorneys bought stockings and stocking stuffers such as small games and school supplies to give to children there.

Pedigo said the association would choose another major project in the spring. Previous projects have included food drives and Pedigo said the group is open to suggestions. (Details: www.gawl.org) ■