

# THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

## A new bar year begins

About a month ago, I had lunch with several of the former women presidents of the Monroe County Bar Association.

They gave me lots of helpful advice, and since we had Chinese food, we ended our meal by reading fortune cookies, and each of the fortunes provided additional advice.

One stated, "If you have no critics, you'll likely have no success."

When I was in Chicago a few months ago at the American Bar Association's Bar Leadership Institute, they showed a video featuring several innovative programs throughout the country, exhibiting how bar associations can assist their members and the community in challenging economic times.

The video also showcased the MCBA's incredible accomplishment in establishing the Telesca Center for Justice, the first — and as of now only — center of its kind in the country that co-locates the bar association with various civil legal service providers.

Although I've long known that our bar association was exceptional, I did not fully realize how well-regarded the MCBA was by other bar associations both state- and nationwide. Many questioned whether collocation was possible, and whether we'd be able to raise enough money to accomplish it. But we were able to raise more than \$1.8 million to pay for renovations and moving costs, and establish an endowment to fund future projects. I know that we need to continue to innovate to achieve that type of success in other endeavors.

As my term as president approached, many asked me what my "initiatives" as president will be. President Obama said recently that 10 percent of his agenda is set by him and 90 percent is set by circumstances. Although I'm hoping that ratio is less severe for a bar association president — I'm not anticipating any oil spills in Monroe County waters in the coming year — I do realize many issues outside of my control will arise that will need to be handled.

Most MCBA presidents have a year to prepare as president-elect, but I have had longer than that. Having served as treasurer the previous two years, I have been on the board during the presidencies of Tom Smith and Andrew Brown as well as Harold Kurland. We have focused on maintaining a consistency of purpose so we are not whipsawed from initiative to initiative but remain focused on our core mission: to serve our members so that the bar

can better serve the community. We need to ensure that we provide the best possible programs and services to all members, particularly in today's economy, but especially for the 45 percent of our members who are solo and small firm attorneys.

As those who know me are aware, I am a technophile and an admitted "crackberry" addict. Through the past few years, we have used technology to run the bar association more efficiently and reach our members more effectively through e-mail, our improved website and conducting our judicial evaluation survey electronically, to name just a few.

This year we plan to continue our technological outreach. In the fall, we hope to offer our first web casts to allow attorneys, especially those in outlying areas, to access our high quality continuing legal education programs more easily. We also are working toward offering an online attorney directory that will be updated continuously instead of just once a year as is the case with our annual printed directory.

Internally at the MCBA, we are having the ABA visit in the fall to perform an operations and governance audit to help us to improve our efficiency. We are fortunate to have a wonderful staff at the bar association, led by Executive Director Mary Corbitt, but we also are looking for ways to continue to improve.

One of the other fortune cookies advised, "it is better to be an optimist and proven a fool than to be a pessimist and be proven right." I am optimistic that our efforts will result in an even better bar association for our members and our community.

I was excited to hear from Liz Wolford about her plans for the Foundation of the Monroe County Bar, and I look forward to helping her "Raise the Bar" so that we can continue to support many worthwhile programs, including the Rochester Legal Diversity Clerkship Program, the Deaf Equal Access Fund and Rochester Teen Court, among many others. I also look forward to collaborating with Laurie Giordano, president of the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys and Karen Bailey Turner, president of the Rochester Black Bar Association. Together, there is much we can accomplish for the Rochester legal community.

I think perhaps my favorite of all of the fortune cookies was the most playful: "Don't worry about the world coming to an end. It's

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already tomorrow in Australia.”

While I take my responsibilities as bar president very seriously, it is important that we all remember not to take ourselves too seriously.

So, what did my fortune cookie say? “Your golden opportunity is coming.”

I feel very fortunate to have this golden opportunity to lead our

organization in the coming year and to give back to the legal community that has given so much to me through the years.

I look forward to working with Brian, Harold, the trustees, the staff and the rest of the Rochester bar in the upcoming year to continue the good work of the MCBA.

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