

# Call to Action to Increase the Level of Female Leadership in Chicago's Legal Profession

by Jane DiRenzo Pigott, R3 Group LLC

**F**emales have been roughly 50% of the graduates from our nation's law schools for decades. Moreover, females have been recruited into Chicago's law firms in numbers roughly proportionate to their graduation from the top law schools for many years. Statistics kept by the National Association for Law Placement indicate that the proportion of female associates has exceeded forty percent since 1998. Yet females still comprise a disproportionately low percent of the leadership ranks in Chicago's law firms: equity partners, practice group leaders, committee chairs, and managing partners. The leaders of Chicago's law firms must address and solve this issue.

The Chicago Lawyer's Diversity Survey of Chicago law firms (July 2004) has identified the top twenty firms in Chicago with regard to female representation in their partnership ranks (the percentages are female partners as a percent of total partners—the total number of partners include both equity and nonequity partners at law firms that have a two tier partnership system—and are self-reported by the law firms) as follows:

According to statistics kept by the National Association for Law Placement, in 2004, the average percent of women partners was 18.12 for Chicago law firms. Only ten law firms in Chicago are above that average, a disappointing showing, even on a relative measure that is disappointing in itself. In addition, since most of the firms

Rank	Law Firm	Percentage
1	McDermott, Will & Emery	26.7
2	Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal	24.3
3	Katten Muchin Zavis Rosenman	23.3
4	Gardner Carton & Douglas	22.7
5	McGuire Woods	22.5
6	Schiff Hardin	20.1
7	Kirkland & Ellis	19.3
8	Piper Rudnick	19.0
9	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom	18.9
10	Winston & Strawn	18.3
11	Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw	17.8
12	Lord, Bissell & Brook	17.6
13	Sidley Austin Brown & Wood	17.5
14	Chapman & Cutler	17.0
15	Seyfarth Shaw	17.0
16	Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon	17.0
17	Jenner & Block	16.7
18	Vedder, Price, kaufman & Kammholz	16.7
19	Bell, Boyd & Lloyd	15.6
20	Foley & Lardner	15.4

have two-tiered partnership systems, their numbers with regard to percent of female equity partners are even lower than the numbers in the above chart.

The Chicago Bar Association recently adopted a Call to Action developed by the Alliance for Women. This Call to Action, like the Calls to Action disseminated by other bar associations around the country, asks its signatories to commit to certain goals with regard to increasing the percent and number of female leaders within their organization in the next three years. The specific goals of the Call to Action are:

1. to increase the percent of its women partners by 3 percentage points from its 2004 levels by December 31, 2007;
2. to have women represented on every firm committee in the same proportion as the number of women partners by December 31, 2007;
3. to increase the number of women practice group leaders by December 31, 2007;

4. to review its flexible hours policy and its use in order to ensure that alternative schedules are an equitable and viable option by December 31, 2007; and

5. to improve materially any disparity in the rates in which men and women are retained, promoted and laterally recruited at the firm by December 31, 2007.

The goals of the Call to Action are specifically tailored to Chicago's law firms, but any legal organization in the Chicago area is welcome to adapt the goals to their organization

and sign onto the Call to Action.

The Call to Action and its signatories are posted on the CBA's website, <http://www.chicagobar.org/calltoaction>. Nine law firms are the leadership signatories, having signed the Call before its "official" announcement: Baker & McKenzie, DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary, Jenner & Block, Katten Muchin Zavis Rosenman, Kirkland & Ellis, McGuireWoods, Schiff Hardin, Sidley Austin Brown & Wood, and Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal. Becoming a signatory is a simple process: provide the name and contact information for the firm and the contact person at the firm who will be responsible for meeting the goals of the Call to Action. The Calls to Action created by other bar associations around the country have gotten broad participation by the local law firms. Since many of the Chicago law firms have signed these other calls to action, the Alliance for Women expects to get broad support from the Chicago legal (See *Leadership, Page 5*)

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of my law firm and the legal community. When friends and colleagues asked me what I was doing on the committee, I often wondered what I could possibly add to the planning. At the time, I did not realize the impact such an event would have on me personally.

Over the ensuing 6 months, the committee and subcommittees met on a regular basis and, after several months of planning, the first annual conference and luncheon was held on November 10, 2004, at the Marriott Hotel Downtown, in Chicago. More than 350 people attended and more than \$220,000 was raised for research and education programs dedicated specifically to women and lung disease.

Many great people supported the event, including **First Lady Patricia Blagojevich**, who served as an honorary chair, **Attorney General Lisa Madigan**, who received the Legislative Award, **Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky**, and **Michelle Obama**. Additionally, many of Chicago's finest medical professionals taught conference sessions, and **Dr. James Kiley**, the *Director of the Division of Lung Diseases at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health*, delivered the research keynote. Numerous celebrities also participated, including **Kathy Brock** of *ABC7 News*, who served as the Mistress of Ceremonies, and **Kaitlin Sandeno**, *Olympic Swimmer and four-time medalist*, who delivered the Keynote Speech.

What was eye opening for me during the planning process, the many pre-events, and the luncheon, however, was to learn the facts about lung disease, something I have not had the opportunity (or the need as I previously thought) to think about, and to hear the stories of so many who have been affected, either personally or through a loved one, with lung disease. First, obviously, was the reality of the story of Lynn -- a perfectly healthy young woman who lost a battle to a disease she never should have gotten. Second was seeing the many attendees who were obviously afflicted with lung disease and attended some portion of the event to show their support for the Catch Your Breath cause. Finally, was the story of Kaitlin Sandeno, who, through careful management of her asthma, has led a very active lifestyle and has won gold, two silver and bronze medals; has broken the 800m freestyle relay record; and has been a two-time NCAA champion.

Through these stories and observations,

I now realize that lung disease is a reality; it is not just a smoker's disease and does not affect just those who do not care about their health. Additionally, my eyes have been opened to the fact that lung disease could affect me or my family and friends.

More needs to be done in the areas of research and development of treatments so that the Lynns of this world can survive and overcome, or at least manage, their diseases. In this regard, I have already

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much. Pick a program designed for your goals, one you can enjoy and stick with.

**3. Make a 3-month commitment.** It takes about 3 months to develop a habit, then continuing to exercise is easy.

**4. Make a buddy connection.** Your exercise buddy will help you keep from slacking off, and you'll help them too, so you can both get the support to achieve your fitness goals.

**5. Make it public.** Let friends and family know you've begun exercising. It's amazing what a little peer pressure will do to get us back on track if we waiver, and they'll

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community for its Call to Action.

The Call to Action will be sent to the Managing Partners of Chicago's law firms. In addition, it will be sent to the General Counsels of Chicago businesses. The leaders of the Women's Initiatives at Chicago firms will be invited to a meeting to discuss the Call to Action. Moreover, we are asking all Alliance for Women members to present the Call to Action to their employers for consideration.

A yearly report card will be issued to the Chicago legal and business communities to monitor progress of signatory firms in meeting the stated goals. A final report card will be issued in 2007.

Any person or firm interested in more information or a copy of the Call to Action,

committed to serving on next year's committee to plan the second annual conference and luncheon. I invite you to get involved or attend the conference and luncheon — I promise you, it will be time well spent. ☞

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be your best cheerleaders too.

**6. Make it even more rewarding.** Fitness itself is a reward, but when you achieve a goal level, give yourself a nice reward. How does a 30-minute massage for every 30 workouts sound?

Bring on the exercise! ☞

*Mr. Glendinning is a fitness enthusiast and an associate real estate tax attorney at Amari & Locallo. Please email fitness and health questions to Joe at jglendinnin g13@yahoo.com.*

the Addendum to the Call to Action or the Signature Page to the Call to Action may contact anyone of the members of the Call to Action Committee: Leslie Dent (ldent@kmzr.com), Lynn Grayson (lgrayson@jenner.com), Jennifer Nijman (jnijman@winston.com), Jane DiRenzo Pigott (jdpigott@r3group.net), or Kathy Roach (kroach@sidley.com). All of these documents are also available at <http://www.chicagobar.org/calltoaction>. ☞

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