

LCL

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, Inc. is a private, non-profit corporation. As the State's sole lawyer assistance program, LCL assists lawyers, judges and law students who are experiencing any level of impairment in their ability to function as a result of addiction, mental health, personal or medical problems.

briefings

LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS, INC.

FALL 2000

from the director..

A NEW LOOK FOR BRIEFINGS

LCL's newsletter has a new look - new features and new articles with expanded information. Lawyers come to LCL with a wide range of problems. Many of these are substance abuse based, but many are work family and career related concerns that are manifested in depression, anxiety, stress and burnout. In the editions ahead, we plan on providing our readers with comprehensive information on relevant topics by featuring articles by experts in the field, relevant resources and suggested reading. There will also be features on quality of life concerns and member related information such as recovery stories and a calendar of activities.

Our Annual Report has also been re-designed to accommodate your limited elective reading time. If you are interested in learning about what we do, the new format will give you program and service information at a glance. The graphs and activity outlines are quick and easy to read.

Recently, you were informed that LCL was dispensing with this year's membership fund drive and instead, asking members to recommit to active involvement in LCL. Involvement can mean many things. From helping another attorney to working with the director on arranging for a LCL presentation to your bar association. From starting a lawyer support group meeting to attending LCL functions. To insure that our requests for help reach you, the first thing you need to do is update your confidential information - address, phone, fax and email - especially your email address. If you are on line, please email me (bonniew@lclma.org) your address so that we can send and receive information in a more efficient and effective manner. It is important for us to keep you updated and informed of all the things we do, but we need your cooperation to do so.

inside this issue...

- 1-- A New Look For Briefings
- 2-- Cheryl Conner, JD, Director Of Internship Program And Adjunct Professor At Suffolk University Law School.
- 5-- Seasoned Attorney Group - Rerun Planned
- 6-- LCL News In Brief
- 7-- Divorcing Families & The Holidays

special feature...

With this issue, Briefings is introducing a new Interview feature. Let us know what you think. And please feel free to suggest an individual or topic for future issues that would be of interest to you and our readers.

an LCL special feature...

An interview with . . .

Cheryl Conner, JD, Director of Internship Program and Adjunct Professor at Suffolk University Law School

LCL: Cheryl, you are a graduate of Harvard Law School and have extensive legal experience that includes litigation for a prestigious firm, the Department of Justice in D.C., the US Attorney's Office in Boston, and the Attorney General in Massachusetts. You have also helped run a gubernatorial campaign and worked as an economist for large NYC law firms.

Most recently, in addition to your busy law school schedule, you are the founder of an organization called Lawyers with a Holistic Perspective (LHP)(cconner@acad.suffolk.edu), which, I understand, is akin to a larger organization, the International Alliance of Holistic Lawyers (IAHL)(www.iah.org). When and how did you become aware of this organization and what moved you to launch a local group?

C: I consider it serendipity! A Boston lawyer and fellow Buddhist friend gave me the name of William van Zyverden and said, "You should meet this guy!" He's a Vermont attorney who created the Holistic Justice Center (HJC1@aol.com) in Middlebury and founded the International Alliance. We talked. I told him a little bit about a course I was teaching at Suffolk Law entitled, "Peace Training for Lawyers." Before I knew it, I was speaking at an Annual Conference of the IAHL in Washington, DC. That was was 4 years ago.

The conference was a very exciting and inspiring event. It was accompanied by a swearing in, at the U.S. Supreme Court, of all these holistic lawyers. We met all of the Supreme Court Justices. Many sincere, high energy, committed attorneys from around the country, some of whom were published authors in areas of law practice and spirituality, holistic health, and related issues, were trying to practice law in a different way. They were transforming their legal practices to reflect a bigger vision of the role of lawyers in our society.

To my complete surprise, the Boston Herald did a story on the conference including my role in it. I then began receiving coverage in a lot of other newspapers around the country. I started receiving several phone calls daily from practicing lawyers all over Massachusetts wanting to talk about integrating a spiritual approach into their work. Because I did not have time to talk to each one

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individually, and realized that many needed to talk with other like-minded lawyers, I started compiling a list of names.

Clearly, there was a great need among many lawyers to find or recover meaning in their work. Others have a great need to heal themselves. That experience of lack of meaning is often the beginning of a journey, whether it's changing careers, seeking some form of counseling, or connecting with like-minded people engaged in a similar process.

LCL: What do you observe to be the most prominent issue for the attorneys you have spoken with?

C: The most common themes, in order of occurrence are:

- a. The very aggressive, adversarial roles contemporary litigators feel pressured to perform.
- b. The stress imposed by intense competition and client demands.
- c. The deprivation of mutually nurturing activities with family and friends due to excessive work hours.
- d. Frustration with the fundamental weaknesses of our system such that justice is not always done, e.g., when a client's goal is simply economic, or demands strategies that the lawyer finds dishonest, even repugnant.
- e. An experience of inner emptiness despite the seductive social and financial rewards.

It is not, however, that everyone in the group is unhappy. Increasingly, lawyers who have created some other way of practicing law are happy to share what they're doing with their peers.

LCL: Could you offer an example?

C: Sure. Rita Pollak, Co-coordinator of LHP, is a great example. Rita Pollak and David Hoffman created the Collaborative Law Council in Massachusetts (ritapollak@aol.com). Collaborative Law is a growing movement in the US to assist individuals and corporations in solving conflicts without using the court system. There are 40 such lawyers now in Massachusetts committed to this approach.

LCL: Such a process and outcome is certainly consistent with the ideals of LHP, and probably more satisfying and emotionally rewarding - for everyone! However, is there an earnings consequence for those attorneys using this more even-handed and humanistic approach?

C: Many lawyers in our group do very well financially. Income may decrease during a time of transition from one type of practice to another, but ultimately, I don't believe so. The excitement and joy experienced in working with clients this way attracts all kinds of benefits including economic ones.

LCL: The IAHL, and your local organization, LHP, almost have the ring of a "movement." And one that challenges many of the ways in

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The next meeting of LAWYERS with a HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE will be held Friday, 12/8/00, from 8:30 -10:00 AM, in the Suffolk Room, 7th floor of the Suffolk University Law School. Join in a lively discussion with your colleagues and Judge James Dolan, Judge Gail Garinger, and Professor Catherine Wells on the topic of "BRINGING WISDOM to the ART of JUDGING."

which law is currently practiced. Have you experienced any opposing forces to this mode of lawyering?

C: Well, I have to say that the word "holistic," like the words "psychotherapeutic" or "transformative," pushes people's buttons. Many of us have done some study of psychotherapy or some spiritual tradition. Our more conservative East Coast is somewhat wary of these New Agey-sounding words. Fundamentally, I think there is a lot of skepticism in our profession about how beneficial (in the wider sense) or how idealistic we can be in the practice of law. And skepticism creates certain obstacles.

Further, a holistic approach to law practice challenges the very way we teach law. We are taught to represent anybody who needs representation, to be the detached professional, to dampen our personal value system or personal feelings about what we're doing. So to suggest that an attorney, perhaps after many years of faithful adherence to that model, should uncover his or her deep-felt concerns is tough. It can involve questioning one's whole identity.

LCL: So, this movement is helping some lawyers to accept and incorporate, or re-discover and reintegrate, aspects of themselves that are sometimes casualties of traditional law practice - which requires having to overcome some powerful training and experience.

C: That's right. It's a very demanding proposition, and can be very time consuming. I am really very encouraged, however, by the success of many attorneys creating new forms of practice. Organizations or firms such as Just Peace and the Collaborative Law Counsel generate wonderful stories from satisfied clients.

LCL: Where would be a good place for someone to start who is interested in finding out more about all of this?

C: Well, I invite them to come to a meeting of Lawyers with a Holistic Perspective, held once a month. I would also refer them to a book called Transforming Practices, by Steve Keeva. Steve, a senior editor of the American Bar Association Journal, came to interview me 3 years ago. He got so turned on by what I and others were doing that he ended up taking a sabbatical from the ABA Journal. After traveling the country to meet with all our friends and colleagues, he wrote a book about lawyers transforming their practices. His web site (www.transformingpractices.com) has interviews and articles about our work nationwide. One can also get on the mailing list (E or snail) of the International Alliance of Holistic Lawyers which sponsors annual conferences. Other related organizations include Therapeutic Jurisprudence (www.law.arizona.edu) and Restorative Justice (www.ccnj.org/methods.html). The Fetzer Institute in Michigan, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation in NYC are also supportive of holistic type themes.

LCL: A parting comment for our readers?

C: Hmm. I wish I had a soundbite for you. For now, let me just say, I think we're living in challenging times. This great democratic nation of ours has created a glorious and sometimes unwieldy legal system that has a life of its own. Our knowledge and power as lawyers confers a special role and responsibility to continually examine how and whether these legal structures and practices serve us. We do this best when we draw from our most deeply held wisdom about the human condition, thereby supporting the healing of ourselves, our clients, the profession and the broader society. The times require this deeper engagement of the "whole" of us.

SEASONED ATTORNEY GROUP - RERUN PLANNED

A previous issue of briefings described the formation of a time-limited "mid-life" support group for experienced lawyers finding diminished rewards (financial, spiritual, etc.) in their practices. The first group met for 12 weeks. All those present at the final session expressed a sense of having benefited from the experience.

- One member described reaching a new appreciation for all that she had to offer as a lawyer. *Another reported and exhibited a renewal of energy and enthusiasm based on changes made with the group's support.
- A man who had entered feeling discouraged and cynical about the field left the group with a more positive outlook and new plans (both within and outside the field).
- Even a member, who ultimately decided to walk away from her original plans for redirecting her career, saw development itself as a needed step toward eventual fulfillment.

We currently have about half the number of lawyers needed for another round of the group. Now called Reinventing our Careers: A Group for Seasoned Attorneys Adjusting to Change, this is not a structured career counseling or educational group. Rather, it is a setting in which to share both feelings and ideas, examine obstacles (both internal and external), and give and receive feedback/support in search of more career gratification.

This time around, the group will be planned as a 6-week process, with the option to "renew" for another 6 sessions if members so desire. If interested, please call or email Dr. Jeff Fortgang at 617-482-9600 or email@LCLMA.org

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DIVORCING FAMILIES & THE HOLIDAYS

By Patty Marquis, LICSW

Divorced or divorcing parents facing the holiday season can feel like participants in a Shakespearean tragedy or Theatre of the Absurd. It may be more like the unscripted Improvisational Theatre. A situation of enormous loss and upheaval is coupled with a season flooded with images of family merriment and joy.

The challenge during the emotional roller-coaster ride of divorce is to both care for yourself and to provide comfort, connection and reassurance to your children. Here are some ways to ease the pain for you and your children, and help you create moments of joy and harmony:

- a. Spread out the days of celebrating - in order to reduce the intensity of the “official” day. Divorcing parents can change the calendar and celebrate the holiday on a different day. This avoids splitting yourself and your children in half, making everyone feel shortchanged.
- b. Involve your children in the planning process to enhance their sense of control. Allowing them valid and limited choices reduces their stress. Make a calendar so they can see concretely and can look forward to when, where and with whom they will be.
- c. Understand that aggravating behaviors from your children may, or may not, be related to the divorce. Your strength in patiently listening, and setting and enforcing the usual limits provides a sense of security.
- d. Be aware that your physical and emotional availability to your children is crucial. Divorce can create intense fears of abandonment. Spend “hang-out” time with them, and find toys that will increase your connection with them. Keep promises!
- e. Maintain old traditions but be aware that they can also evoke feelings of loss. Therefore, also create new, simple rituals that provide warmth, such as introducing new tastes, smells or sounds in the home.
- f. Create structure. Single parents are understaffed. Try to have certain nights dedicated to pizza, games or movies so you can be on “automatic” and free of extra planning.

The challenge during the emotional roller-coaster ride of divorce is to both care for yourself and to provide comfort, connection and reassurance to your children.

Another time-limited group waiting to start is an Attorneys' Depression Support Group.

This newsletter is published quarterly by Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, Inc. for its members and constituents. We welcome your comments and questions. Please feel free to write me:

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Depression Group Offered

Lawyers are no more immune than anyone else from severe depression or bipolar disorder. In fact, they may have even more tendency to withdraw and keep the problem to themselves, which tends to worsen the depression.

The purpose of this group is to provide a safe and confidential place to talk, offer support and reduce isolation. Potential members should be familiar with their disorder and symptoms, and be willing to participate actively by talking and listening. This group is not meant to serve as the primary form of treatment, and is not for the newly sober. We have several people already on the waiting list and need a few more.

If interested, contact LCL Group Coordinator, Dr. Jeff Fortgang at 617-482-9600.

Divorcing Families & the Holidays (con't)

- g. Help your children name and appropriately express feelings that might underlie certain behaviors. You thus give them new tools to manage their stress and behavior, and thereby strengthen your relationship with them.
- h. Keep hostility between you and your X private. Do not put your children in a loyalty bind. It is likely to impede their adjustment and spoil the holidays.
- i. Nurture yourself, so that you will have the energy to nurture your children. Give yourself some "alone time" every day. Seek help as needed.
- j. Surround yourselves and your children during the holiday season with "those who wish you well, your soul team."

With or without divorce, family life always mirrors moments of light and darkness that is the human condition. Parents need to rewrite and make adaptations to the script of their unique family drama all the time - in order to respond to their own and their children's ever changing needs. Divorce ups the ante. When managed "well enough," holidays, and times in between, can offer happy scenes and memories that prevent the drama of divorce from becoming a full-blown tragedy.

Patty Marquis, LICSW, is an individual and family counselor who practices in Lexington.