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Mothers' Group Extending Reach

By Jennifer K. Wyatt

I have to admit, in moments of particular stress when deadlines loom, the thought has occurred to me, "If I wasn't a parent, this would already be done." Certainly, lawyers are not the only professionals trying to balance work and family life. P.G. Wodehouse dedicated his book, *The Heart of a Goof*, to his daughter, "without whose never failing sympathy and encouragement this book would have been finished in half the time."

And yet, there is no question, being a lawyer and a parent is not easy. This is especially true in summer, when the careful balance of school activities and childcare schedules are upended. What to do?

The Mother Attorneys Mentoring Association of Seattle (MAMAS) provides some relief for those of us trying to juggle a law practice with raising a happy, healthy family. MAMAS started in October 2006 as an informal group of attorney mothers, providing support and a place to network, share experiences and solve problems in a safe and child-friendly environment.

To that end, MAMAS meets the first Saturday of each month, and members are expected to bring their children along. MAMAS also sponsors brown-bag lunches on the third Wednesday of each month, which include panel discussions on topics of particular interest to attorney mothers. For example, a recent panel discussed alternate work schedules and various Seattle law firm policies relating to maternity/paternity leave and part-time policies. The June brown bag included a viewing of excerpts of the documentary *Motherhood Manifesto*; a representative from the MomsRising organization moderated the viewing.

Says member Crystal Grace Rutherford, "It's very important for lawyers to network amongst themselves, not only because it can generate new business, but also because it helps build relationships within the legal community that help all of us become better lawyers."

"Good lawyers are necessary for a highly functional society," she says. "Women lawyers with young children all too often have to choose between networking and their family life. The combination of networking events [and a philosophy] that not only permits children, but in fact expects their presence, creates a holistic experience necessary for the modern lawyer to survive in today's environment. I don't have to pretend that I do not have a life outside of the office."

MAMAS aims to empower attorney moms and encourage them to succeed and celebrate their roles as attorneys and mothers. This goal has struck a chord with mother attorneys all over Seattle. In less than a year, MAMAS has grown to more than 275 members and now includes partners, associates, sole practitioners, in-house counsel, general counsel and public service attorneys.

Upcoming Events

On July 17, Perkins Coie will host a brown-bag lunch featuring a panel of attorney mothers discussing strategies for work/life balance in various legal settings. This event is specifically for summer associates, although all MAMAS members are welcome.

This summer, MAMAS has decided to move its monthly Saturday networking events outside. MAMAS will host three barbecues open to attorney mothers and their families:

- o July 14 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Woodland Park;
- o August 12 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Lid Park on Mercer Island; and
- o September 8 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Magnuson Park.

Each event will feature games and entertainment for children of all ages, and a barbecue with grilling items and beverages provided. For more information about these events, contact Amy Reischauer at areischauer@drugstore.com.

If you would like more information about MAMAS, including membership information, please visit www.mamaseattle.org. You may also contact Mary Rebecca Knack at mknack@williamskastner.com.

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