



ALA
Association of Legal
Administrators



Arkansas Chapter

November 2010

The Legal Link

*President's
Message
by
Nancy Collins*



“I love it when a plan comes together.”

The younger chapter members probably won't recognize this quote or maybe none of you will. If you guessed the television series *The A-Team*, then you are probably over 50 years old.

John “Hannibal” Smith, a strategist and the leader of the A-Team, his ex-US Special Forces group, always had a plan for getting his soldiers of fortune out of the unusual situations they encountered. After a successful mission, he would growl, with cigar in mouth, “I love it when a plan comes together.” For some reason, this phrase stuck with me.

In April of this year, the chapter approved a budget which included a goal of \$4,000 for business partner sponsorships and a profit goal of \$5,000 for our Business Partner Forum. So far, we have exceeded the sponsorships by more than 200% and should meet our profit goal for the Business Partner Forum to be held this Friday. Our plan was to be able to offer significant education to our members in the form of scholarships. Assuming we are able to meet these goals, we should be able to offer more scholarships to our chapter members next year.

I LOVE IT WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER!

Arkansas Chapter November Meeting

Where: The Little Rock Club
Regions Bank Building, 30th Floor
Little Rock, AR 72201

When: November 10, 2010

Lunch: 11:30 a.m.

Meeting: 12:00 Noon

Topic: Roundtable -
Diversity and Other Issues

Speakers: Various Members

Note: Validated Parking
Regions Parking Deck



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Arkansas Chapter

April 2010 - March 2011

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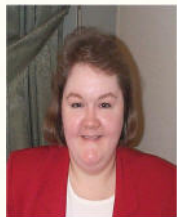
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Arkansas Chapter



COME JOIN US!

- Membership in Association of Legal Administrators offers opportunities for:*
- *Knowledge sharing and networking opportunities (locally, regionally, nationally and internationally)*
 - *Professional recognition*
 - *Chapter and leadership support (substantive educational tools, idea exchanges and workshops to educate chapter leaders)*
 - *And a whole host of resources and opportunities for professional development*

For more information, read more [about ALA](#) or contact Angelia Hadden at ahadden@fec.net.





Community Challenge Memories - 2010

For its 2010 CCW project, the Arkansas Chapter of ALA decided to work at the Arkansas Foodbank Network on Friday, October 8. The Arkansas Foodbank Network has been working since 1984 to eliminate hunger in Arkansas by providing nutritious food to those in need. In 2009, they distributed 14.2 million pounds of food in Arkansas. They serve about 23,000 hungry Arkansans in any given week. On the day we worked, our assignment was to repack huge boxes of sweet potatoes into smaller boxes to be distributed to the various agencies served by the Foodbank. Despite lots of dirt and boxes deeper than arms' length, we were successful in getting all the potatoes repacked for distribution!



ALA members hard at work sorting sweet potatoes before brainstorming and determining the best way to get the job done.

ALA members celebrate!

One box empty -- many more to go!



Julia Strickland, Carol Minor, Bonnie Vickery, Vickie Garlington, Angela Falco, Donna Blacklaw, Angelia Hadden, Marie Ray, Pat Campbell, Cathy Dille, and Diane Smith

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Community Challenge Memories - 2010



Vivian Koettel was one of several ALA members who climbed into the boxes in order to reach the sweet potatoes.

Vivian made it look so fun and so easy that the Foodbank employees seriously considered keeping her!

Nancy Collins, who was recuperating from a broken arm and surgery, prepared lunch for the CCW participants.





Community Challenge Memories - 2010

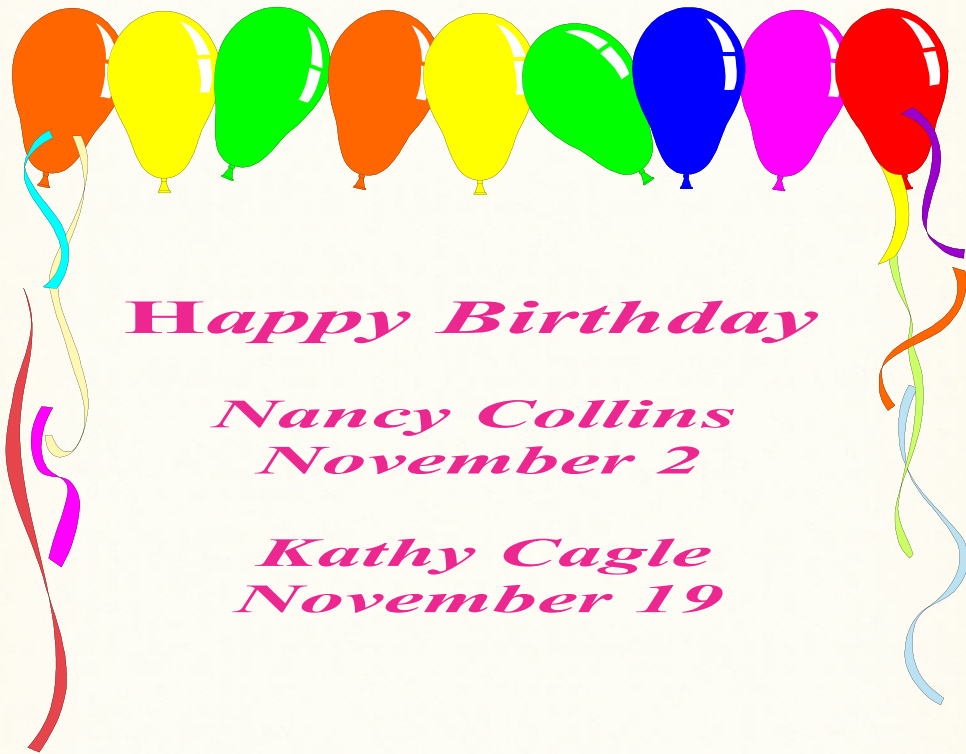


ALA members Angelia Hadden, Gina Richburg, Marie Ray, Angela Falco, Donna Blacklaw, Cathy Dille, Diane Smith, Vickie Garlington, Carol Minor, Julia Strickland, and Pat Campbell celebrate the completion of their CCW project for the Arkansas Foodbank Network!

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Celebrations



Happy Birthday

***Nancy Collins
November 2***

***Kathy Cagle
November 19***

*Join us for the
Business Partner Forum
at the Doubletree Hotel
Friday, November 12, 2010*



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**The Arkansas Chapter of the
Association of Legal Administrators
Would like to thank its Business Partners for their Support.**

Silver Partnership and Friend & Supporter opportunities are still available.

Please contact Carol Minor at cminor@laxvaughan.com or Bonnie Vickery at bvickery@mwlaw.com for more information on how your company can benefit from partnering with our chapter.





Question of the Month

Question:

Some of our attorneys have poor timekeeping habits; they're often late submitting their timesheets, and I'm sure they don't remember all their billable hours. How can I persuade them to do better?

Answer:

The whole issue of timekeeping is one of those eternal questions that has no single good answer, unfortunately – some suggestions will work in certain firms and not others, but it's a pretty good bet that no method will work all the time in any individual firm. The following may help persuade your attorneys to get their hours in timely.

In a 1995 *ALA News* article, finance expert Ron Seigneur stated that studies have shown that a firm can easily lose as much as 15 to 20 percent of billable efforts when time is not captured on a contemporaneous basis. (Source: "It's About Time! Improve Profits Through Better Timekeeping." *ALA News*, February/March 1995.)

In the [*ALA Management Encyclopedia*SM](#) article "Attorney Timekeeping: It Matters!" the author, Patti Harris, a partner in a New York firm, makes the following statement:

"It is crucial that the attorney capture all of that billable time. Consider an attorney who fails to capture one billable hour per day. Assuming that a firm's attorneys' billable rate is \$200 per hour, the loss of one billable hour per day will cost the firm revenues of \$200 per day, \$1,000 per week and almost \$50,000 per year, per attorney. Good timekeeping habits are essential to good financial health for firms that live and die by the billable hour."

Contemporaneous Timekeeping: In addition to improving efficiency of the time entry function, it is critical for the attorney to keep track of time on a contemporaneous basis. Obviously, the memory is freshest at the time the task is performed. It is in the nature of many practices to thrive on interruptions – the 10-minute phone call – and the details are easily forgotten. In fact, studies have shown that if a person records time on the day after the work was performed, up to 15 percent may be lost; attorneys can fail to recall up to 40 percent of their billable time if they wait until the end of the month to record it.

Try creating your own scenario for your partners. Start with the assumption that an attorney loses one billable hour on each day that he/she does not record time

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Question of the Month

contemporaneously. Then multiply that number by the average billing rate. Extend that out a full year for each attorney and then for the entire firm. Even if you are conservative and assume that each attorney loses only half an hour per day, the final total will be impressive. If your attorneys argue that they never forget to record all time, challenge them to the test: keep contemporaneous time for one week and compare that time to any other week previously recorded.

In the fourth edition of his book How to Start and Build a Law Practice, Jay Foonberg says “[t]he famous Missouri Bar Survey shows that lawyers who keep time records earn 40 percent more than lawyers who don’t. Recent studies indicate that lawyers who keep good time records earn 15 percent more than lawyers who keep poor time records.” The bar survey mentioned has been out of print for many years, but this does go along with the comments above. After all, no matter how good an attorney is at collecting on a bill, he/she can’t collect something that was never billed out in the first place, and you can’t bill without good records.

Timekeeping incentives. In the Encyclopedia article mentioned above, the author provides three ideas for incentives for getting lawyers to record and submit their time daily.

“Sometimes attorneys and other timekeepers need some additional inspiration to submit and review their time entries in a timely manner. Given the economic impacts suffered by the firm due to tardy timekeepers, a small economic incentive may be well worth it. For instance, in the author’s firm, each attorney starts out the year with a timekeeping bonus of \$1,000. If complete time entries are not submitted for the prior week by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, the bonus pot is docked \$100. If the attorney is late more than 10 times, the firm begins to deduct the \$100 penalty from the regular year-end bonus. This has been a very effective tool for the firm, particularly once the firm informed the attorneys’ spouses of the arrangement.

“In one firm, for every day an attorney submits his or her time by noon of the following day, the attorney receives a \$5.00 credit. Each week, the firm pays each attorney cash in the amount of credit earned in submitting time. As a result, this firm’s attorneys at all levels work hard to submit time by noon each day to get the

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Question of the Month

to get the additional money, even what must be a modest amount for senior partners. The firm found that it had significantly increased the hours it bills to clients more than offsetting the cost of the credit.

“Other inspirational methods include making the tardy attorney collect his or her paycheck in person from the managing partner, withholding partner draws, and eliminating direct deposit benefits for the habitually tardy timekeeper.”

While some of these incentives may seem silly, the partners and legal administrators claim that they work. If you implement one of these ideas, report back to the entire firm, on a monthly basis, how much “new” time was captured.

This topic has come up a number of times in ALA’s [online discussion groups](#). Some administrators mentioned various “motivators” ranging from cash to chocolate (very effective) – and all said that nothing works for a long time, so you’ll have to revisit this issue on a regular basis. It does help, though, that attorneys as a group tend to be very competitive, so any public distribution of information on whose timesheets are falling behind can encourage them. One experienced administrator said that a chart on his office door, with gold stars next to the name of each attorney who’d met daily timekeeping requirements, did wonders. You never know what will work!

The [ALA Management EncyclopediaSM](#) has an article by Patricia A. Harris, “Attorney Timekeeping: It Matters!” in which the author discusses timekeeping as a critical part of good business for a healthy law firm.

The [ALA Legal Management Resource Center \(LMRC\)](#) has a number of articles from associations, consulting firms and government agencies, as well as ALA sources on general management. Log in using your ALA username and password for access to all ALA members-only materials. Review the materials in the Financial Management area of the Document Directory, under the heading Revenue & Expenses / Billing & Recording Time.

Special Note: ALA members have free access to the ALA Reference Desk. Send any question on legal management to infocentral@alanet.org. Staff will conduct personal research on each question.

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Education

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE IN PREPARATION FOR CLM “CERTIFIED LEGAL MANAGER” EXAM

1. What is a Contrast Error?
2. What is a Contra Account?
3. What is IOLTA?

Did You Know . . .

ALL Webinars are scheduled the 3rd Wednesday of the month! You can save 20 percent by ordering all 11 Webinars in advance and enjoy the convenience of only having to sign up one time.

ANSWERS TO TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

1. A contrast error is a tendency to rate people relative to others rather than against performance standards.
2. A Contra Account is an account considered to be an offset to another account. Generally established to reduce the other account to amounts that can be realized or collected.
3. IOLTA is interest on lawyers' trust accounts.

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Mark Your Calendar

Important Dates

Business Partner Forum
November 12, 2010
Doubletree Hotel
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
May 18 - 21, 2011
Orlando, Florida



ALA - 2011 WEBINAR SCHEDULE

January 19, 2011	Health Care Reform: What's Happening
February 16, 2011	The Writing Wheel
March 16, 2011	Conflict Resolution: Why Can't Everybody Get Along

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ALA CHAPTER PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

1. The chapter provides, on a regular basis, quality educational opportunities (beyond routine networking and/or social events) for its members and individuals of the legal management team. On a regular basis, the chapter will provide a Chapter Education Summary of all its educational programs and presenters to the Regional Education Officer. [See Chapter Management Guide for sample form].
2. The chapter creates an awareness among its members of the Association's mission statement, goals and Code of Ethics, and highlights the activities of all levels of the organization. This awareness can be developed through written communication (e.g., newsletter, minutes, etc.) which are provided to members on a regular basis and during chapter meetings or events.
3. The chapter strives to enhance the visibility and credibility of the profession and the Association through activities such as community service projects, and alliances with bar associations and other law-related professional associations.
4. The chapter creates a workable structure to maximize its efficiency which focuses on member involvement and capitalizes on the interests, enthusiasm and expertise of its members.
5. The chapter maintains a continuous recruitment effort to attract a diversity of new members to the Association.
6. The chapter's president and/or president-elect participate(s) in at least one ALA leadership training session each year. To facilitate effective leadership training opportunities, all chapters will install officers in April of each year.
7. The chapter has a regional council representative who attends council meetings and provides reports of each meeting to the members of the chapter.
8. The chapter obtains tax exempt status and files annual tax returns, where appropriate and as indicated by pertinent regulatory bodies. The chapter also maintains procedures for ensuring that annual filings and renewals are made with appropriate agencies. In addition to any insurance coverage the chapter may secure, the chapter takes appropriate action (such as by incorporation) to ensure the personal assets of its members are protected.
9. The chapter's treasury is not commingled with employer or personal funds and the chapter maintains appropriate internal controls to ensure financial security. The chapter maintains procedures for regular, periodic review of books, accounts and records by chapter officers (other than the treasurer or other officer with primary financial responsibilities) and/or by outside, independent auditors.



10. The chapter adheres to and abides by its own bylaws. In addition, the chapter seeks and obtains Headquarters' approval of proposed amendments to chapter bylaws prior to a vote by members to make them effective.
11. All compensation/economic survey questionnaires are reviewed and approved by Headquarters prior to dissemination. The chapter is responsible for creating and maintaining awareness of antitrust issues, including those published in ALA's Antitrust Guide.
12. The chapter uses the ALA logo and other Association symbols pursuant to guidelines provided by Headquarters.
13. Immediately following the chapter's election of officers, the chapter president (or designee) provides ALA Headquarters with a list of the individuals who will assume chapter office as of April. Within 45 days of taking office, the chapter president updates and returns the chapter's Chapter Profile to ALA Headquarters. Semiannually, chapters will review and return chapter member verification reports to ALA Headquarters.
14. The chapter will, at all times, ensure that all members of the chapter are members of ALA. On an annual basis, the chapter president will submit a timely statement certifying compliance with this bylaw provision.

ALA MEMBER PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

- A member will abide by the Association's Code of Professional Ethics.
- A member will take an active part in ALA through participation in chapter, regional, and/or international activities.
- Through continuing education and other activities, a member should enhance his/her skills as a professional manager and as a responsible leader within the employer organization. Members are encouraged to communicate to the appropriate leaders topics or issues which will benefit them and enhance their ability to perform their job responsibilities.
- A member should share his/her knowledge and expertise with other ALA members through volunteer efforts and activities.
- A member should support the governance policies which outline the roles between and among ALA, its regions, its chapters, and its members.
- When acting for or on behalf of a chapter, region or the Association, a member should do so in a responsible manner by utilizing appropriate due diligence and/or following appropriate and necessary bylaws, rules, standards and guidelines of the Association.
- A member should make every effort to advance the profession of legal management and to help the Association of Legal Administrators increase its stature within the legal community.



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- Order in pizza for lunch
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Morale is also improved when employees are allowed to telecommute when possible. Some studies have proven that employees are happier, and they are more productive when they are allowed to work at home. Acceptable levels of work and performance must be established before an employee is allowed to begin telecommuting.

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