

COLAP Annual Meeting 2011

A Preview of Things to Come

By Martha D. Burkett

There is much that I love about the work I do, and one of the best perks of being program administrator for the SBM Lawyers and Judges Assistance Program (LJAP) is the privilege of attending the annual American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (ABA COLAP) international meeting.

The meeting is traditionally held in the fall in a desirable (and sometimes warm) location in the United States or Canada. This noteworthy event is planned and orchestrated by the ABA LJAP chair and volunteers from the host state, with strong support from COLAP and its designated conference planning committee. The conference is structured as a healthy mix of networking, educational opportunities, and a dash of recreational activity. During unstructured time, participants are encouraged to venture out into the host community and experience the indigent natural beauty, culture, and recreational activities. The meeting is attended by international LJAP leaders, numerous professional colleagues, LJAP program volunteers, and interested members of the legal and clinical communities. The conference's speakers and facilitators are often national experts who cover an array of timely and relevant topics pertaining to attorney wellness.

This year's COLAP meeting was held in Tampa, Florida. I especially enjoyed the feeling of extended summer that the sunny skies and warm temperatures provided. As rewarding as my work can be, it is, by nature, both challenging and isolative; as always, I deeply appreciated the chance to share fellowship, gain support, commiserate about bar politics and funding (or lack thereof), and learn with and from my cohorts in this venue. One of this year's educational high-

lights was a presentation called "Mitigating Compassion Fatigue" by the very engaging and knowledgeable Linda Albert, director of the Wisconsin Lawyer Assistance Program.

Each year that I attend the COLAP conference, I come away feeling renewed and recharged, buoyed by new information and ideas that leave me better prepared as a leader. My replenishment this year included visits to the Salvador Dali Museum and a magnificent Chihuly exhibit in nearby St. Petersburg. One evening, I relished walking on Clearwater Beach as the golden autumn sun slid out of view against a marbled pink, blue, and red sky...but I digress!

Next year, the State Bar of Michigan has the honor of hosting the ABA COLAP conference October 9–12 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids. We will lure prospective attendees to the Great Lakes State with an outstanding conference schedule and hopes of Indian summer days that segue into crisp fall evenings punctuated with clear, starry nights. If the stars align in our favor, this event will coincide with the magnificent spectacle ArtPrize, an international art competition that turns the entire city of Grand Rapids into an "art gallery."

This is an opportunity for LJAP and the SBM Lawyers and Judges Assistance Committee to showcase our own stellar program

and the unsurpassed talent and expertise of some of Michigan's experts on substance use, addiction, mental health, and general wellness. Perhaps attendees at the 2012 meeting can enjoy ArtPrize or the Grand Rapids Museum of Contemporary Art followed by dinner at one of the city's many excellent eateries. Perhaps they can enjoy a fall color tour and be dazzled by the kaleidoscopic foliage that decorates our county roads or stroll along the beautiful Lake Michigan shore as the autumn sun slides out of view against the vast blue-gray horizon. ■



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counseling education and is both a licensed professional counselor and a nationally certified counselor. She has completed graduate certification in holistic health and has achieved level II certification in addictions counseling. She is certified as an advanced-level board-certified interventionist and as an approved clinical supervisor.

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