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# *IN SIGHT* for Oregon Lawyers

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

## WOMEN LAWYERS – BUILDING A BALANCED LIFE

On April 17-18, 2009, the OAAP and Oregon Women Lawyers (OWLs) jointly sponsored their second annual Women's Wellness Retreat at the Heathman Lodge in Vancouver, Washington. Once again, the event was restorative and transformational.

The retreat opened Friday afternoon with an informal gathering for tea, sandwiches, and introductions. While many of the women had traveled from the Portland metro area, some came from as far as Southern Oregon. After this delightful afternoon of sharing, the group dispersed for the sanctuary of personal time. Some opted for the fitness center, pool, or spa treatments; others chose shopping, dinner, resting, reading, or a combination.

The group reconvened at 8 p.m. when Zan Tewksbury, lawyer and Nia expert, led participants in a session of gentle stretches and relaxation techniques that left everyone soothed and ready for a restful night's sleep.

The next morning, Zan led the group in a joyful session of Nia, showing participants that true fitness was about pleasure in movement rather than repetition and stress. Afterward, there was time for a leisurely breakfast and more socializing before the rest of the programming resumed.

Carol Munson, JD and Master of Arts in Applied Theology, returned to the retreat this year to lead a discussion of spirituality in everyday life, allowing us to each find comfort within the storm

of daily events and to embrace our challenges with compassion and understanding. Carol encouraged us to find that calm by searching for the courage to let go of our need to have all the answers, and by being willing to surrender to the present moment.

One of the joys of the retreat was how the presenters seemed to build and develop on each other's themes. Licensed clinical psychologist Jillayne Sorenson continued the morning with a discussion of mindfulness – in the context of our lives rather than in isolated meditation – and how to relate that practice to food and stress-related eating. Asking the questions “What are we hungry for?” and “How do we experience being nourished in our lives?” is a start toward a mindful relationship with food, instead of a numbing one. Attendees each examined the complexity of a raisin: holding it, sniffing it, then slowly tasting and savoring it. After that miniature feast, there was a break for lunch – which was enjoyed in a new way!

In the afternoon, Professional Certified Coach Amy Hefren Green, CEC, took a chance of heroic proportions and dimmed the lights to show some film clips leading off her topic, “The Open-Hearted Warrior: the Art of Masterful Living.” The audience was fully engaged by the inspiring examples of Oskar Schindler, Gandhi, and Rosa Parks – individuals who lived their lives from a place of strength, courage, and compassion. Forming groups of two, the retreat participants shared times in their lives when they fol-

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lowed the model of the Open-Hearted Warrior and discussed how to apply that philosophy to challenging situations currently facing them to produce positive change.

After the final break of the afternoon, Virginia Terhaar, LPC (another returning presenter), addressed the elements of having emotionally engaging relationships with others. To achieve the key elements of passion, patience, and balance in our relationships, we first need to learn to identify our feelings. Are we sad, glad, mad, or scared, and what dimensions of those basic feelings are we experiencing? (“Mad,” for instance, could be resentful, angry, frustrated, or furious!) Finally, we need to learn the skill of communicating our feelings and desires to others. Retreat participants got a workout of their communication skills when Virginia directed an exercise in which participants had to arrange themselves in a row across the room by birth date – *without* speaking! Through body language and hand signals, as well as a few shrugs and laughs, the line was arranged, rearranged, and shaped from youngest to most senior.

OAAP Attorney Counselor Meloney Crawford Chadwick facilitated a closing circle where each woman contemplated the energy in her left hand (holding regrets, sadness, and fears) and in her right hand (holding accomplishments, joys, and actions). Then, clasping the left hand of another woman with our right hand, a circle was formed where strengths and weaknesses were shared, enabling us to meet any challenge with the help of others. Joined together, each participant used a single word to describe her experience at the retreat. When the circle opened and the retreat ended, the women in the room lingered, saying goodbye and sharing contact information. New friendships were formed and old ones renewed, allowing all who shared in the Wellness Retreat an opportunity to return home relaxed, renewed, and refreshed.

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**Note:** Plans for the 2010 Women’s Wellness Retreat – again cosponsored by the OAAP and OWLs – are already under way.