

ALA in New Orleans – A New Member’s Perspective

by Candyce Steward

THE envelope came across my desk labeled “Association of Legal Administrators - New Orleans Get Jazzed!” and it contained information about the 38th Annual Educational Conference. I was quickly impressed with the obvious sophistication of the event. There were a large variety of educational sessions, interesting keynote speakers, an impressive exhibit hall with numerous industry vendors, and social functions that looked enjoyable. To top it off, the conference was being held in the wonderful city of New Orleans. It was clear this would be a valuable opportunity for me, but I set the materials aside pondering how to approach my firm shareholders about the logistics of sending me to such an event.

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The answer arrived soon after when I received an email asking if I would like to have my name entered into a drawing for a scholarship. “Yes, please!” I said. My name went in and it was drawn as the winner of the Region 5 scholarship! I approached my managing partners and they promptly encouraged me to make my travel plans.

My biggest challenge then became the selection of sessions to attend at the conference. It was like having an empty plate in front of a large food buffet where everything looked delicious! How could I possibly pick one session at a time? As the conference date approached, information started coming in from the vendors - more than 200 of them! I became increasingly excited about the knowledge, resources, and networking about to come my way.

I ultimately attended sessions on a variety of subjects ranging from law firm retreats to associate mentoring, from strategic planning to electronic marketing. In between sessions, I spoke with other administrators about sessions they had found of value. I quickly learned that even though I couldn’t attend every session, I was able to obtain copies of the handouts and

order audio recordings of any session. It was like being able to take home all of the food from the buffet that I was unable to eat in one sitting!

Speaking of food, the cuisine of New Orleans deserves an entire story of its own – muffulettas, beignets, jambalaya and more! In addition to the fantastic food, the city’s hospitality, music, heritage, weather, and atmosphere all helped create a very pleasant experience in a city that I hope to return to some day.

I have returned to the office with an abundance of energy and excitement about my role in the future of Luvaas Cobb. I will be meeting with my attorneys and staff to go over the conference highlights and to share with them the information and ideas I gleaned from this experience. I have no doubt that my firm will recognize the tremendous value of my attendance at the annual conference and that they will continue to enthusiastically support my involvement in

ALA. Clearly, the return on investment for my firm, and to me personally and professionally, was bountiful.

If you have never attended an ALA conference, please have your managing partner contact me, and I will provide a list of reasons why you need to be at the next one! For those who have attended before and will be there again, I look forward to seeing you next time. Until then, I am excited about connecting with my new friends and colleagues in Anchorage, Dallas, Alberta, New York, Sacramento, and everywhere in between!

To ALA, and specifically to my Oregon Chapter and Region 5, I say thank you! I applaud the tremendous effort involved in putting together the educational and networking resources you all of us. Thank you for helping me become more confident and competent as a law office administrator. I am jazzed to be a part of this outstanding organization!

Candyce Steward serves as the office Administrator for Luvaas Cobb. Candyce can be reached at 541-484-9292 or csteward@luvaascobb.com.