

Honoring & Celebrating a Great Leader

True leaders bring a vision for moving the mission and purpose of an organization forward, inspiring others to work together toward a set of goals. Michelle Behnke is just such a leader. Join us at receptions in May as we honor Michelle as the new president of the American Bar Association before she assumes that office in August.

BY LARRY J. MARTIN

Two things I have learned along the way.

The first – great leaders lead. That may sound like a given, but it is not. Many people, when they move into a leadership role, believe their job is to manage. Whether it is a board or an organization, they see their job as focusing on managing efforts, workflow, and process. Others come in with projects that are personally important to them or that they believe an organization needs. They spend their time working to achieve them before their term ends.

But true leaders are those who bring a vision for moving the mission and purpose of an organization forward, inspiring others along the way to work together toward a set of goals.

Leadership is about taking risks and challenging the status quo. It is about motivating others to achieve something greater and better.

Michelle Behnke, former State Bar of Wisconsin President (2004-05), is that type of leader. That's why she was selected to become the president of the American Bar Association, starting in August.

The second thing I have learned is that you can go into any area here in Wisconsin and find lawyers stepping up, rolling up their sleeves, and engaging in the social, political, and civic life of their community. Whether it is serving on local nonprofit boards or religious councils, organizing community fund drives, or running for local office, lawyers are a vital part of the civic fabric of communities.

Again, there is not a better role model of a civically engaged lawyer than Michelle.

While stepping up in leadership and service to the legal profession throughout her career, she has simultaneously volunteered and given back, through a variety of roles, with her community.

Michelle represents the very best of the legal profession. The American Bar Association is the nation's largest voluntary legal association, and it is with no small amount of pride that

the State Bar of Wisconsin claims her as one of our own. Michelle will become only the second Wisconsin attorney to serve as ABA president. Milwaukee attorney Carl Rix served as ABA president in 1946-47.

In honor of Michelle becoming ABA president, the State Bar of Wisconsin will host two receptions this May to celebrate this remarkable leader and her achievements. The events will also benefit the Wisconsin Law Foundation, the charitable arm of the State Bar.

Thanks to the generosity of State Bar leader Kathryn Bullon, every donation given in Michelle's honor will be matched, up to a cumulative total of \$50,000.

All members will be invited to join us. Further information, including the opportunity for both firms and members to be sponsors for the gatherings, will soon be shared, via email.

Michelle will bring a strong commitment to furthering justice in our country and safeguarding our democratic principles, as she continues to serve as a role model and catalyst for others to make a difference. I hope you will join us in honoring her this May. **WL**



Larry J. Martin is the executive director for the State Bar of Wisconsin. Tweet him @LarryJMartinED. View the digital article at www.wisbar.org/wl. lmartin@wisbar.org

Join Us!

Please join us at receptions honoring incoming ABA president Michelle Behnke and benefiting the Wisconsin Law Foundation:



Madison: Wednesday, May 7, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Boardman & Clark LLP, 1 S. Pinckney St., Suite 410, Madison (US Bank Building on the Capitol Square).

Milwaukee: Tuesday, May 13, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wisconsin Club, 900 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee. **WL**