

District 9

I.O.W.A. Celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment ratification with Annual Awards event on August 18th, 2020

The Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys presents an annual award in honor of Arabella Mansfield, the first woman attorney admitted to practice law in the United States, in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, on June 15, 1869. The award is presented to a woman lawyer who exemplifies her spirit in efforts to promote and nurture women in the legal profession. Many women judges, most of them NAWJ members, received this award over the years, including Celeste Bremer, Emily Gould Chafa, Miki McGovern, Ruth Klotz, Rosemary Shaw Sackett, Donna Paulsen, Linda Neuman, Eliza Ovrom, and Anuradha Vaitheswaran.

The Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys and the Iowa Chapter of the National Bar Association present an annual award in honor of Gertrude Rush, the first African American woman lawyer admitted to practice law in Iowa, in Des Moines, Iowa, in August of 1918. Gertrude Rush co-founded the National Bar Association along with four black male Iowa lawyers in 1925, after they were denied membership in the American Bar Association due to their race. This award honors a lawyer who manifests a pioneering spirit, demonstrates leadership in the community and in the legal profession, and demonstrates concern for human and civil rights. A few women judges, some NAWJ members, received this award, including Karen Romano, Artis Reis, and Romonda Belcher.

The Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys (I.O.W.A.) presented its annual awards in person at the historic Thoreau Center in Des Moines, Iowa. A small group gathered to honor the awardees, properly masked and socially distanced. Attendees included NAWJ members Emily Chafa, Miki McGovern, Gail Sheridan-Lucht, and Elisabeth Reynoldson. NAWJ member Celeste Bremer attended in spirit, but not in person. Iowa Supreme Court Justices Edward Mansfield and Thomas Waterman attended, along with Iowa Court of Appeals Judge David May, Iowa State Bar Association leaders, and other I.O.W.A. members.

The 2020 Arabella Mansfield Award was presented to Mary Pat Gunderson, a retired Iowa District Court Judge for Polk County and scholarly writer. We celebrated her courageous call for reform in the way attorney disciplinary decisions were written. Her article made it abundantly clear that gender diversity on the bench really matters. Her article made it clear that language matters. We honored her actions to promote women in the legal profession, specifically the importance of women on the bench. Mary Pat Gunderson expressed her appreciation to I.O.W.A. for the award and stated her willingness to share her findings with a variety of judges, lawyers and other professionals. Judge Gunderson is scheduled to be a presenter for the NAWJ Annual Conference in 2021 in Nashville, Tennessee.



2020 Gertrude Rush Award recipient Helen Miller, with INBA (Iowa Chapter of the National Bar Association) President Paxton Williams, and I.O.W.A. Annual Meeting Co-Chair Emily Chafa. August 18, 2020, at the Thoreau Center in Des Moines, Iowa.



I.O.W.A. Annual Meeting Co-Chairs Emily Chafa and Miki McGovern, with flowers commemorating the woman's suffrage movement colors of white and yellow. August 18, 2020, at the Thoreau Center in Des Moines, Iowa.



2020 Arabella Mansfield Award recipient Mary Pat Gunderson, with I.O.W.A. Annual Meeting Co-Chair Emily Chafa. August 18, 2020, at the Thoreau Center in Des Moines, Iowa.