

Message from the President

Joanne DiFrancesco | Riley Riper Hollin and Colagreco



Dear Independence Chapter Members,

As the year came to a close, I am always reminded of the need to feel and express gratitude to those in my life who give so much for others, who always have a kind or encouraging word when I need it most, and who love unconditionally, even when all I can think of as we sit down for a family dinner is that big partner meeting tomorrow or the open enrollment deadline that is looming large.

Let's face it, our jobs are important, and the work we do matters not only to the partners, but to every person in the firm whose daily bread relies on the firm's ultimate success. I know you all feel that responsibility every day, and your colleagues in the ALA know it too. Never forget that we are here for you. **I am so very grateful for all of you!**

This year, we lost our dear friend, Joan Wean, who is irreplaceable, and we are deeply saddened by her loss. Please remember her and her family and send them thoughts of peace as they move through this holiday season.

2023 brought us all just a little further into the light after a pandemic, and our firms are very different than they were just 3 short years ago. ALA has changed too, and your board is working tirelessly to provide meaningful education and networking events. Never hesitate to send your ideas and suggestions- we are here for YOU.

2024 brings a new year, with new possibilities. Some of you will retire, others will change firms, but all will remain our valued colleagues.

May God bless you all and give you a joyful holiday and a peaceful New Year!



Holiday Dinner

by Darlene Sellers | Office Manager | High Swartz LLP

On Thursday, December 7, 2023, the ALA Independence Chapter held their holiday party at the historic General Warren located in Malvern, PA.

The venue was beautiful and full of old-world charm and hospitality. The evening began with appetizers and cocktails which provided the perfect opportunity to meet new members and catch up with old friends. We then sat down to a fantastic meal, followed by a gift exchange. Attendees were asked to bring donations for Toys for Tots, and they did not disappoint. The collection table was overflowing with toys which will go a long way to make the holidays brighter for those in need.

February Educational Event!

Mental Health Matters - Self Care and Self Compassion

by Kate MacArdle | Practice Support Manager | Ballard Spahr

Thursday, February 15, 2024 | Radnor Financial Center | 8:30 AM

Most folks know the phrase, "you can't pour from an empty cup," but what happens when your cup isn't full, half-full, or even half-empty? What happens when it's bone dry? Everywhere we look there are ads, articles, and social media posts featuring candles and bubble baths and stock images of people meditating in nature, with titles like,

"To avoid burnout, try these 847 easy tricks!" or, "7 simple self-care hacks for busy professionals!" and, this one makes me laugh every time, "Experts now believe that getting enough sleep can lead to better mental health." (Isn't that a given?)

Don't get me wrong, I love a good bubble bath, but I've found that when it comes things like self-care or self-compassion, very rarely does one-size fit all, regardless of what the tag says.

Join the Independence Chapter for breakfast on Thursday, February 15 to learn about and discuss how we, in our varying positions in legal management and law firm administration, who are often over-worked, occasionally sleep-deprived, frequently teetering on the edge of burnout, and always thinking of others before ourselves, can fill our cups by practicing tangible, meaningful self-care and self-compassion.



Brain On!

by Emily Bushnell | Executive Director | High Swartz LLP

On Tuesday, October 24, members gathered for the first time at the beautiful Radnor Financial Center, conveniently located and easily accessible from all points off Route 476. Although it was Game 7 of the National League Championship, we had several Philly Fans in attendance, including our sponsors, Mark Evangelista and Kathryn Covolus of Lexis Nexis and speaker, Deb Smolensky.

In support of her book, Brain On!, Deb shared techniques for maximizing productivity and staying mentally fit. Her presentation was full of energy and kept us engaged and wanting to learn more. Not only did she provide us with practical strategies and techniques for improving our own brain health, she also share ideas for integrating into the workplace, all which can be found in her book, Brain On! To all leaders out there, pick up a copy of Deb's book. You may just find that it provides you with the uplifting boost you need to improve your productivity in 2024!

1st Annual Member November Celebration: A Night of Inspiration and Contribution

by Marina Bradley | Executive Director | Ostroff Godshall

On Tuesday, November 14th, the Independence Chapter marked its inaugural Member November event at La Cabra Brewing in Berwyn, a night brimming with camaraderie, inspiration, and generosity. Designed to honor the spirit of Joan Wean, this event promised an evening of fellowship, captivating presentations, and a chance to contribute to a noble cause. The holiday décor and delicious food and beverages added an element of festivity, setting the stage for a memorable evening.

A key highlight of the event was the opportunity to support the newly established Joan Wean Scholarship Fund. With an array of tempting raffle prizes—from Amazon and VISA gift cards to tickets for sports enthusiasts to witness the Lehigh Valley Phantoms or attend a 2024 Phillies game—the event was not only an opportunity for connection but also a chance to give back to the community.

The generosity of attendees was palpable as they eagerly participated in the raffles and giveaways, knowing that every contribution would directly benefit the scholarship fund. The scholarship will pay all expenses for a chapter member to attend the ALA National Conference next year. The creation of this fund underscores the commitment of the Independence Chapter to empower its members by providing access to the ALA National Conference—a platform that promises invaluable learning and networking opportunities. It also honors the memory of Joan, who was a beloved and dedicated ALA member and more importantly a close friend to many of us. We were thrilled to have Joan's husband Jeff wean in attendance as well.

The evening also featured a captivating presentation by Dale Power, titled "Share Your Courage - Tiny Steps/Big Impact." Power's thought-provoking insights challenged the conventional perception of courage, highlighting its relevance in everyday scenarios. By shedding light on how courage manifests in workplace dynamics, Power emphasized its pivotal role in fostering engagement, collaboration, and a positive workplace culture.

Artificial intelligence is significantly changing the legal landscape, and it's essential to stay informed as it evolves.

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INDEPENDENCE CHAPTER FIRST ANNUAL MEMBER NOVEMBER!

TUESDAY NOV 14 5:30PM

SHARE YOUR COURAGE

LACABRA BREWING

"Most people think of courage as a virtue that you need for going into battle, climbing a mountain, or embarking on a dangerous journey," Power asserted. "But courage is something we need every single day." Her discourse resonated deeply with the audience, emphasizing the transformative potential of cultivating courage within professional spheres. Attendees left the presentation inspired, equipped with fresh perspectives on attitude and its profound impact on workplace dynamics.

The Independence Chapter's first annual Member November was more than a gathering; it was a testament to the community's commitment to growth, support, and empowerment. It demonstrated the power of collective contribution towards a noble cause while fostering an environment of learning and camaraderie.

As the night concluded, attendees departed with hearts full of inspiration, prizes in hand, and a profound sense of having contributed to a meaningful initiative. The legacy of Joan Wean was honored through this event, setting a precedent for future endeavors aimed at supporting and nurturing the chapter's members.

In a world where courage is often associated with grand gestures, this event served as a reminder that sometimes, the smallest acts of courage can pave the way for the most significant impacts—both in our professional and personal lives.

Law Firms in the Cloud: Navigating the Future of Your Legal Practice

Tommy Rotunno | Client Executive | Afinity

Cloud solutions have revolutionized the way businesses operate, offering enhanced efficiency, flexibility, and security. For law firms, embracing the cloud can be a game-changer, enabling attorneys to access critical resources from anywhere on any device. However, making the move to the cloud is not a decision to be taken lightly.

To assist law firms on the journey to the cloud, below we'll explore some considerations when evaluating a cloud provider.

1. Are Your Legal-specific Applications Supported in the Cloud?

It's not news that law firms rely on a range of specialized software to manage cases, contracts, and client data. However, these applications must seamlessly integrate with the cloud to ensure business continuity. When assessing cloud compatibility, firms must consider:

- **Integration:** Ensure that your legal software can integrate with the cloud provider's solution, allowing for easy data access and collaboration.
- **Updates & Scalability:** Confirm your cloud-hosted applications will receive timely updates and scale according to your firm's needs.

Our 35+ years of expertise exclusively serving law firms ensures that your critical applications are optimally configured for performance and securely accessible wherever you work. Learn more about how Afinity can support the applications your firm is specifically using here.

2. What Cloud Features Are Available Today?

The cloud landscape is continually evolving, with providers striving to offer more features and improved security. Legal practices should look for the following essential features when evaluating cloud providers:

- **Flexible Provisioning:** Choose a cloud provider that allows for on-demand provisioning, enabling you to scale up (or down) resources when needed.
- **Security Measures:** Ensure the cloud service includes security features like login portals, multi-factor authentication, and regular updates to protect sensitive legal data.
- **Productivity Enhancements:** Cloud platforms should streamline operations, facilitate collaboration, and boost productivity among your legal team.

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We built our Afinity Cloud Platform for law firms that seek a robust, flexible technology that can support the needs of today, plans for tomorrow, and the uncertainties of the future. Learn more about the Afinity Cloud Platform here.

3. Does the Cloud Solution Meet Ethics and Security Requirements?

Confidentiality is vital for law firms, with strict obligations regarding client information. When considering a cloud provider, it's essential to address ethical and security requirements. Look for the following characteristics in your cloud service provider:

- **Access Control:** The cloud solution must offer robust access control measures to protect confidential information.
- **Encryption:** Ensure that data is encrypted during transmission and storage.
- **Data Backup & Storage:** The cloud provider should offer reliable data backup and storage options to safeguard critical legal data.

Securing your firm's data from cyber security threats is an absolute must considering the sensitivity of your work and law firms being increasingly targeted by bad actors. Our managed security services help protect your mission-critical assets, applications, data, infrastructure, and network regardless of whether your infrastructure is hosted in public or private cloud environments. Learn more about our enterprise-class integrated security solutions here.

As the cloud becomes increasingly reliable and secure for business use, law firms should carefully assess their options before making the transition. By verifying that a cloud solution and the partner offers the security, features, and support required, administrators, attorneys, or IT leaders can streamline the migration process and position their firms for success. Embrace the future of your law practice in the cloud and empower your firm for a more efficient and secure future. To understand seven key benefits of embracing the cloud, [check out this recent blog](#).

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New Member Spotlight!

Melissa Cannon
Accounting Manager/Controller
Lamb McErlane P.C. | West Chester, PA

Melissa (Missy) Cannon has been with Lamb McErlane PC in West Chester, PA. She has worked for one year and is the firms Accounting Manager/ Controller. Missy got the accounting bug in High School.

She found it fascinating how the numbers all worked together to give you a financial analysis. While Missy has years of accounting experience, none were with a law firm or within the legal field prior to joining Lamb McErlane.

Missy joined the ALA because she wanted to learn more about the financial management side of the law firm. She has taken FM1 and FM2 and is preparing to take the certificate test. She is looking forward to getting more involved with ALA this year and moving forward. Many of us have the pleasure of meeting Missy for the first time at the Business Partner bowling event and the Holiday Party.

Missy is married to her wonderful husband Jack. They have 8 children between them, stepmother to five. They love to travel to warm places with beaches and have traveled to Italy and most of the Caribbean. Their favorite place is an island called Caye Caulker in Belize and they hope to retire there. When Missy is not busy with numbers or travel, she loves to do scrapbooking and make greeting cards.

Farewell Amy!

By Cristin Buccaglia | Regional Office Manager at Saul Ewing LLP



After many years of dedication to Troutman Pepper (formerly Pepper Hamilton) and the ALA Independence Chapter, Amy Corral has decided to retire at the end of 2023. Amy has been a long-time member of the Independence Chapter and has been a board member for many years including being President from 2008-2010. Amy has been an integral part of the team and her leadership and dedication will be greatly missed.

Her commitment to the chapter and her willingness to serve in various capacities have been invaluable. Since 2011, she has also served as the chair of Community Relations, further demonstrating her dedication to fostering positive relationships within the community.

I met Amy in 2002 when I first joined the firm. She took me under her wing as help guide me into the Office Manager I am today. Her friendship over the years has been invaluable and she will be greatly missed. But luckily, I know how to get in touch with her and our friendship will continue long after her retirement.

The ALA Independence Chapter extends its heartfelt appreciation to Amy for her years of service and leadership. Her passion and dedication have been instrumental in shaping the chapter and making it the successful organization it is today. We wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Happy Retirement Amy!

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