

See You Soon

BY JOI KUSH





This is it—the final days of my CBA presidency.

A year ago, my journey started with a virtual swearing-in ceremony and all the unknowns we had been living

through since spring 2020. It was because of these unknowns, and the continuing uncertainties of how to live in a pandemic world, that I chose to focus on one simple goal: engagement—engagement between our leadership and our members, engagement between our members, and engagement of the association with the community at large.

After over a year of stay-at-home orders, lock downs, and countless zoom meetings, we craved in-person meetings and face-to-face connections. Often it seemed like we were almost there and life was returning to normal. But COVID-19 has proven itself a stubborn and unpredictable adversary. Just when we thought we might be in the clear, variants and cases surged, and official guidance changed. We had no choice but to adapt.

Throughout these past 12 months, I’ve tried to balance our need for engagement with the need to promote the safety and well-being of our members. We hosted in-person get-togethers when it could be done safely and virtual meetups when that wasn’t feasible. But whether in-person or remote, the connections I made were strong, each bringing me a restored sense of energy and reminding me how lucky I am to work in this honorable profession. For me, this year has been, simply stated, incredible.

As my term winds down, I reflect on how the year evolved and am thrilled to report that the CBA is thriving. Despite the pandemic, we continue to “uphold the honor and integrity of the bar, cultivate cordial relations among Colorado lawyers, encourage statewide engagement in CBA programs and leadership,



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and perpetuate the history of the profession and the memory of its members.”¹

My Road Warrior Days

Some of my most memorable moments this past year came while traveling the state to visit the various local bar associations. In Salida, I had the honor of meeting Daniel Thom, president of the Heart of the Rockies Bar Association, and connecting with past CBA President Dick

1 Justice Richard Gabriel speaks at the El Paso County Bar Association visit alongside fellow panelists, from left to right, Judge Rebecca Freyre, Judge Frances Johnson, Judge Monica Gomez, and Judge Samorreyan Burney.

2 Heading to Telluride.



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1 Heart of the Rockies Bar Association visit with Daniel Thom and Dick Gast.
 2 Mesa County Bar Association visit.
 3 Ryann Peyton leads a CLE on inclusivity for Larimer County's Term Day.

Gast. While the gathering was small, its impact on me was great.

In Durango, I saw firsthand the great work of Julianne Begay, president of the Southwest County Bar Association. She led the charge in drafting and adopting the association's bylaws and further rejuvenated the association by targeting the needs of its members after conducting a detailed survey.

In Cortez, I met with Beth Padilla, who leads the Four Corners Bar Association, and helped promote the association's CLE on equity, diversity, and inclusion, "Indian Law in Colorado."

Sumi Lee, head of diversity outreach for the Colorado Judicial Branch, joined me when visiting the Seventh Judicial District Bar Association in both Telluride and Montrose. She provided the Seventh JD Bar with a thought-provoking CLE on diversity in the judiciary and the dire need for additional diversity on the bench. Kudos to President Amy Ondos for organizing these meetups—keep doing great things!

Brian Burns, president of the Mesa County Bar Association, provided his members with a meaningful lunch CLE and an evening of culture. The CLE was led by Jon Olafson, who presented

on the CBA Executive Council's Racial, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (REDI) Committee, which he chairs. Afterward, we all celebrated the in-person get-together over some local wine and entertainment, courtesy of two opera singers and a harpist.

My home visit with the El Paso County Bar Association was a lunch meetup with Justice Richard Gabriel, Court of Appeals Judge Rebecca Freyre, District Court Judge Frances Johnson, County Court Judge Monica Gomez, and County Court Judge Samorreyan Burney. They shared their courageous journeys to the bench and the struggles they've encountered along the way to serve Coloradans as jurists. Mary Linden is the president of El Paso County Bar Association, and we are so grateful for her leadership. Paul Hurcomb, you have big shoes to fill next year.

At the Douglas/Elbert Bar Association (DEBA), we were treated with a family-style farm-to-table dinner and good company at Sierra. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that



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DEBA's executive leadership comprises fellow family law attorneys—cheers to these litigation warriors and problem-solving gurus: Veronica Martinez, Ian Shea, Andrew Birkeland, and Stuart Skok.

I joined the Larimer County Bar Association as it conducted its annual term day, where members spend an entire day celebrating their association and community. CBA President-Elect Ryann Peyton led a CLE on inclusivity and why it's vital to our profession. Rebekah Berry-Chaney and Kara Clark kept the association energized throughout this last year with the assistance of Chief Judge Susan Blanco, Dan St. John, Claire Havelda, Ian McCargar, and so many others.

My most recent visits were with the Arapahoe County Bar Association and the Boulder County Bar Association. Courtney McConomy, president of the Arapahoe County Bar Association, successfully organized the annual judges' dinner, which had been on hold for the past two years. Judges, attorneys, and Colorado Supreme Court Justice Gabriel and Justice Will Hood attended this event. The entire evening was a great success. The Boulder County Bar Association, led by the fantastic Brett Landis, knew the key to my heart and catered an in-person meetup with large charcuterie plates. This visit was in collaboration with the Boulder County chapter of the Women's Bar Association.

My visits with the Aurora Bar Association and First Judicial District Bar Association took place virtually. Sara Carty with the Aurora Bar Association is doing a great job focusing on mentorship and community, and Andrew Hart of the First Judicial District Bar Association has delivered timely and interesting CLEs throughout the pandemic. I also attended a few local bar leader meetings, held bimonthly through Zoom, where I learned about all the amazing work that's happening statewide.

As I write this article, I have remaining visits with the Pueblo, Sixteenth Judicial District/Southeastern Colorado, and Weld County Bar Associations. I look forward to each interaction and listening to all your stories.

Meanwhile, Back in the Capital . . .

In addition to visiting the local bar associations, I've attended several section executive council meetings. Our sections are the heartbeat of our organization, and I'm pleased to report that each section is led by dedicated volunteers who understand lawyers' needs and cater their programming and gatherings around their members' needs. A huge shout out to all the section leaders and to our newest committee formed out of the Modern Law Practice Initiative.

I also had the opportunity to mingle with and celebrate so many of our colleagues at the Colorado Hispanic Bar Association Banquet at the Colorado Botanical Gardens (Annie Martinez and Carlos Romo—you're the best); the Asian Pacific American Bar Association Gala (Clark Yeh and Blake Gansborg—what an incredible evening); the Colorado Judicial Institute Judicial Excellence for Colorado Dinner (congrats to all of the judicial awardees); the Colorado LGBT Bar Association Annual Awards Dinner (great job Ann Stanton for your year of service and huge congrats to CBA members Jon Olafson and Judge Ted Tow for your recognition); the Colorado Women's Bar Foundation "Raising the Bar" Celebration (Gina Glockner, you are truly inspirational and I am so excited for Kathryn Starnella and Emma Garrison's year of service); and the Colorado Women's Bar Association's Annual Judicial Reception (super congrats to Judge Emily Anderson and Judge Mariana Vielma). To all the affinity bar association leaders, I am honored to serve with you on the Presidents' Diversity Council and grateful for our collaboration. We are stronger together.

One of my roles as CBA president has been to serve as an ad hoc member to the Legal Aid Foundation of Colorado. Led by Heather Perkins, this group of attorneys understands the importance of providing legal services to all those in need and works hard to ensure our Colorado Legal Services has the necessary funds to serve our communities. Of course, this group would not be as successful without Diana Poole and Jon Asher's lifetime commitment to access to justice.

I've also chaired the Colorado Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), where we review, analyze, and assess potential laws that will impact

our various practice areas and the practice of law generally. By the time you read this article, we will know the outcome of Senate Bill 22-201, which attempts to resolve concerns that have been expressed by the Judicial Disciplinary Commission and others. Our focus, as with any legislation, is to gather information, provide feedback when appropriate, and ensure the best outcome for our community. The LPC is strategic, and we act with purpose when we vote to either support, oppose, monitor, or amend. This group is a brain trust consisting of members Ellen Giarratana, Ariana Busby, Maha Kamal, Laura Maker, Janet Drake, Judge O'Hara, Chris Little, Andy Toft, Tory Bantz, Jessica Brown, Letty Maxfield, and Ryann Peyton.

Last, but not least, 2022 was the first year for the Colorado Diverse Attorney Community Circle (CODACC). This group seeks to build a community for diverse Colorado attorneys and is the brainchild of past CBA Young Lawyers Division Chair Spencer Rubin who, with the assistance of Jon Olafson, raised approximately \$30,000 to get this program up and running. While they are in the middle of their programming, I've already received great feedback from its participants. We continue to support and promote COBALT, the CBA's leadership training program, but know that CODACC offers something more and different for our members. To increase our outreach, we also created a council on equity and inclusive excellence currently led by Ryann Peyton.

Thanks for Everything


Overall, I'm pleased with how much we've all achieved in support of my goal for this year. Our members are engaged, and they are ready and prepared for the post-pandemic chapter. I could not have accomplished my goals without the support of my best friend and soulmate for life, Corey Wilson. To David Johnson, aka "The Godfather," thank you for your guidance and for giving me 30% (or was it 40%?) of your day to chat. To my staff, Kristie Mumma, Trinity Pope, and Samantha Thoren, I am so fortunate to have your assistance. Thank you for always keeping me centered and making me smile.

I also immensely appreciate the hard work of each member of the CBA's Executive Council:

Jessica Brown, Ryann Peyton, Ellen Ross, Scott Evans, Adam Hepp, Claire Havelda, Kyle Aber, Yolanda Fennick, Leslie German, Melissa Decker, Robin Rossenfeld, Ed Felter, Nicole Black, Mallory Hasbrook, Tyrone Glover, Danaé Woody, Melissa Lou, Jon Olafson, Kevin Cheney, Dalia Labrador, and Jason Kelly. You all rock. We have done so much. We assessed the dearth of attorneys in certain counties throughout the state and the need to promote these "legal opportunities" to young and mid-career attorneys. We endorsed the right for sections to promote judicial candidates. We supported the recommendation to require each attorney to report their pro bono service. We acknowledged the need to celebrate those who serve on a jury. We closely studied and actively discussed the need to change our presidential rotation. We updated the bylaws. We worked to increase our relationships with the affinity bar associations, and we shared information about events occurring not just in Denver but throughout the state. And, despite my bad jokes, we shared some laughs. This group is an active bunch.

Looking Ahead

Beginning next month, you'll get to witness the strong, strategic leadership of Ryann Peyton. Next year, you'll meet Sam Starritt, a fellow "bar-junkie" from Grand Junction—someone with a big smile, a huge heart, and a true supporter of everything CBA. And in two years, you'll get to know Catherine Chan, an ambitious and outstanding leader who will continue to refine our organization. The future of the association is in great hands.

As my year ends, some may ask what's next for me. For the first time in my short career, I'm not sure. But just like these last 12 months, I know it will be grand, because "life will not wait." So, this is the end but not goodbye—see you soon. 

NOTE

1. The Colorado Bar Association Bylaws (rev. July 1, 2021), Sec. 1.2, Objectives, https://www.cobar.org/Portals/COBAR/Repository/CBA/bylaws0701/CBA%20Bylaws%2007_01_2021.pdf?ver=nzFtn6_Lr1lElf-bB6PK9A%3d%3d.