

# CBA-CLE Turns 50

Celebrating the Past, Present, and Future  
of Continuing Legal Education in Colorado

BY JOHN LEE



On November 5, 1965, representatives of the Colorado Bar Association, the Denver Bar Association, and the University of Denver College of Law (now, the Sturm College of Law) met and initiated a Joint Committee for Continuing Legal Education in Colorado. This gathering, spearheaded by Robert Yegge, dean of the College of Law, constituted the first organized effort to establish continuing legal education in the state of Colorado. Six years later, on November 1, 1971, Articles of Incorporation for Continuing Legal Education in Colorado, Inc., a Colorado nonprofit corporation, were filed with the Colorado Secretary of State, and CBA-CLE was born.<sup>1</sup> In 1977, the University of Colorado School of Law joined as a sponsor, but by 1989 the law schools had dropped out of the mix. On August 31, 1989, Restated and Amended Articles of Incorporation were filed with the Secretary of State, establishing CBA-CLE as a tax exempt, 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. CBA-CLE's 501(c)(3) status was obtained by virtue of its stated purpose of providing continuing legal education programs and publications for CBA and DBA.

For its first 25 years, CBA-CLE's operations were handled by a staff of approximately 10 employees as it worked to build education programs and develop publications for the Colorado legal community. Then, and throughout its existence, the mission of CBA-CLE has been to educate, improve, and continually develop the professional competency and capabilities of all members of the Colorado legal profession by providing high-quality continuing legal education in a wide range of substantive areas (and, consistent with its starting purposes, at a reasonable and competitive cost for CBA and DBA members).

Gary Abrams was brought on as CBA-CLE's executive director in 1996 and embarked on a 22-year mission of building its programs and publications to the gold standard that continues to this day. Gary increased CBA-CLE's staff to 20 and dramatically grew the educational offerings and speaking and authorship opportunities for Colorado attorneys. Thousands of prominent speakers and authors were able to bring their expertise to the legal community under Gary's



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watch. Over the last 25 years, CBA-CLE has attracted the best and brightest attorney volunteers to share their experience and wisdom with our Colorado legal community. These amazing speakers and authors have become a community unto themselves—a community that continues to grow and thrive.

In pursuing its goal of educating all Colorado lawyers in new developments and areas of law, CBA-CLE also plays an integral role in the development of young lawyers. Providing young lawyers an opportunity to speak and present helps facilitate their ascension as experts in their respective fields. One of the best lessons CBA-CLE speakers discover is that as we teach one another, we find new ways to improve our own practice. As the world and the law continue to rapidly change, CBA-CLE looks to continue to equip young lawyers with the knowledge and abilities to tackle all future challenges.


CBA-CLE, through its current and recent boards of directors, has strived to take a lead role in embracing diversity and belonging in our CBA/DBA legal community. We recognize that the more diverse the population of attorneys is, the better we are. The next generation of Colorado attorneys expects and demands more. CBA-CLE will remain relentless in its efforts to make sure our speakers and authors are more reflective of our whole community.

Now, as we settle into our post-pandemic world, it has become clear that CBA-CLE's

- 1** Longtime CBA-CLE Director Gary Abrams (ret.) will be honored at the June 15 celebration.  
**2** CBA-CLE Director Dan Sweetser and past CBA-CLE Board President Qusair Mohamedbhai share a laugh while planning for the organization's 50th anniversary celebration.

institutes, symposiums, and retreats are places where the legal community greatly desires to gather in person. Nothing is more necessary or rewarding than these educational and networking opportunities. This education and these gatherings are critical to the profession as we build the lawyers of the future and find ways to stay connected. It is special to see what CBA-CLE and these institutes, symposiums, and retreats

can do for the professional development of young lawyers, and to help them find connection and joy in the profession.

Please join us on June 15 from 5:30 to 7:30 at the Ralph Carr Justice Center to celebrate our 50th anniversary and help us usher in the next 50 years. Register online at <https://cle.cobar.org/Seminars/Event-Info/sessionaltcd/GP061523L>. 

#### NOTE

1. The trade name "CBA/CLE" was actually first established via the filing of a Certificate of Assumed or Trade Name with the Secretary of State on June 3, 1997.

A promotional graphic for the CBA-CLE 50th Anniversary Celebration. The background is a soft-focus field of golden bokeh lights. In the center, the number "50" is written in a large, dark blue font, with the word "YEARS" in a smaller, white font inside the zero. Below this, the "CBA-CLE" logo is displayed in a white box with a blue border. Underneath the logo is the tagline "Building the lawyer of the future" in a blue, sans-serif font, followed by a horizontal line of seven colored dots (blue, green, red, orange, yellow, grey, green). At the bottom, the event details are listed: "Join Us for the CLE 50th Anniversary Celebration", "June 15, 2023, 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM", and "Colorado Supreme Court Atrium, Ralph L. Carr Judicial Center". In the top right corner, there is a QR code and the text "RSVP Now Space is limited!" in a blue, italicized font.