

# SPECIALTY BARS MAKE AN IMPACT

BY CHRISTINA ALBERTS, NEVADA LAWYER STAFF

Specialty bar associations are an important part of the Nevada legal network, supporting various facets of our professional and cultural community. These bars do much more than offer CLEs and networking opportunities to their members – they also make a positive impact on the community through special projects and scholarships. Here's an introduction to five of Nevada's specialty bar associations; each has its own mission uniquely designed to help members and the community.

## Latino Bar Association

Contact: [latinobarlv.com](http://latinobarlv.com), [latinobarlv@gmail.com](mailto:latinobarlv@gmail.com)

The Latino Bar Association was formed in 1999 and according to President Jocelyn Cortez, the group is at a very exciting point in its existence due to the great amount of growth in its membership.

This specialty bar association serves as a resource for Latino lawyers and for the Latino community at large. The group works to advance the standing of their members in the community and increase collegiality through informal mentorships.

The Latino bar reaches out to the community by working with Las Vegas' large immigrant population. Cortez says immigrants often have legal questions or concerns, but do not know who to talk to, particularly when it comes to naturalization. Last year, the bar participated in a nationwide citizenship campaign, *Ya Es Hora*, with other legal organizations. During the campaign, attorney volunteers reviewed applications for naturalization and helped more than 50 Las Vegas immigrants complete their applications.

In support of students, the Latino bar offers a special four-tier program in which an attorney, an undergraduate student, a law school student and a high school student meet for a cross-mentorship program. Cortez says thus far the program's greatest impact has been the support of law school students who have graduated, passed the bar and become members of the Latino bar. Cortez says the program allows these attorneys to join an organization where they already have roots and a sense of being welcome, which can be a great comfort to a new lawyer.

The association has recently focused efforts on educating the community to avoid common pitfalls – such as being taken in by notarios. Cortez says the subject came up during a mixer the bar held with other cultural groups in the community. Many attendees said they wished they could better educate the public as to the difference between notarios and actual immigration attorneys.

Notarios often boast about being immigration experts, but may prey on immigrants, taking their money and not doing any legitimate work to help them. In addition, notarios are often



engaging in the unauthorized practice of law and Cortez says the bar hopes it can help provide a solution to this growing problem.

Cortez says she is excited about the Latino Bar Association's growth and believes that with even more members it will continue to make a positive impact on the community through its scholarship, mentorship and pro bono efforts.

## National Bar Association – Las Vegas Chapter

Contact: [lasvegasnba.org](http://lasvegasnba.org), [info@lasvegasnba.org](mailto:info@lasvegasnba.org)

The National Bar Association, which was founded in 1925, is the oldest and largest association of African-American attorneys and its Las Vegas chapter (LVNBA) recently celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Doreen Spears Hartwell, the president of LVNBA, said the group has three different kinds of activities they take on: pipeline work, community service and historical preservation.

The LVNBA works to offer law-related education to students of all ages, and recently joined the State Bar of Nevada's Law Related Education Consortium in order to further that goal. According to Spears Hartwell, the LVNBA is extremely excited about the consortium and its members are looking forward to working with other consortium members to bring law-related education to students and the public at large.

Aside from their work with the LRE Consortium, the LVNBA also offers education and assistance to the community at large via workshops, participation in Ask-a-Lawyer clinics and through a weekly radio show. The Legal Hour, which airs on KLAV-AM 1230 on Fridays from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., is hosted by Malcolm LaVergne. The public is invited to call in during LaVergne's show and ask questions.

The LVNBA also supports students through scholarships. "My focus as current president is scholarships to raise funds to promote or help other members ... further diversity in the legal community," Spears Hartwell says. The LVNBA's Annual Scholarship Gala is the primary source for scholarship funds. In 2011, the organization awarded five Boyd law school students with scholarships that totaled \$10,000.

Spears Hartwell says one of the larger goals of their organization is to promote diversity in Nevada. "Our legal community is not very diverse; it's a small legal community,"



she explains. “Our hope is, as the years go by, our legal community will be more representative of the overall make-up [of the national population].”

### **South Asian Bar Association of Las Vegas**

**Contact:** Paul Padda – [ppadda@caplawyers.com](mailto:ppadda@caplawyers.com)

In 2005, four Las Vegas lawyers of South Asian descent decided to start a local chapter for the North American South Asian Bar Association (SABA).

Paul Padda, the president of the Las Vegas SABA chapter, says the group’s mission is “To educate the community about the types of issues relevant to the South Asian community.” Padda says the group’s community outreach efforts focus on legal issues such as immigration and business law, as many members of Las Vegas’ South Asian community are business owners.

The Las Vegas SABA chapter is looking to increase their membership this year, and any interested parties should contact Padda at [ppadda@caplawyers.com](mailto:ppadda@caplawyers.com). “We’re looking forward to a robust year with regular events,” he says.

### **Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys**

**Contact:** [www.SNAWA.com](http://www.SNAWA.com), [info@snawa.com](mailto:info@snawa.com)

The first meeting of the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys (SNAWA) took place in the children’s playroom in Rep. Shelley Berkley’s house in 1979. More than 30 years later, SNAWA is still going strong and has more than 100 members including Rep. Berkley, State Bar of Nevada President Connie Akridge, Barbara Buckley and Judge Nancy Allf.

SNAWA offers a lunch time CLE to its members once a month; the topic of the CLEs is varied and touches on everything from running a legal practice to what body language says about you. Kristina Holman, a SNAWA officer, says one of

the best-attended CLEs centered on a topic of great importance to all attorneys, but to female attorneys in particular: achieving work-life balance.

“It is a difficult thing to balance work and life,” Holman says. During this particular CLE the group discussed the challenges of caring for a family while keeping up with a busy legal career.

Holman says the goal of the group is to be supportive of women in the law. “We don’t want to be antagonistic,” she explains. SNAWA helps younger female attorneys navigate a male-dominated field by encouraging mentorships with seasoned attorneys.

In addition to CLEs and mentorship, SNAWA provides three \$3,000 scholarships to Boyd law school students each year. SNAWA raises funds for the scholarship by hosting socials (including wine socials) and taking donations during those socials. SNAWA also funds scholarships through its dues, which are \$50 annually, and through the CLE luncheons, which are \$25.

### **Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association**

**Contact:** [www.nnwla.com](http://www.nnwla.com), [membership@nnwla.com](mailto:membership@nnwla.com)

The Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association (NNWLA) was founded in 1978 by three women who felt it was necessary to band together with other female attorneys in the region – of which there were 23 total.

NNWLA holds monthly meetings and the occasional social events, which are a great opportunity for the members to get to know each other and network. NNWLA’s President, Alicia Lerud, says this year the group has looked at the judiciary in Northern Nevada – out of 24 judges in the area, 19 are men. “We’re encouraging our members to take on those roles,” Lerud says. “We’re providing support for women going into public office and getting more involved.” ■