

COLUMBUS CHAPTER NEWS

JULY 2026



*Columbus Chapter President
Julie Bryan*

President's Message

The Work Noone Sees

There are no standing ovations for the work most of us do.

No one gathers around to applaud because you found coverage for three people who called off at the same time. Nobody posts on LinkedIn because you convinced the caterer to deliver anyway after a power outage, tracked down the missing office

supplies, handled the partner emergency, and somehow still made the day feel seamless for everyone else.

In fact, the better you are at your job, the less anyone notices it. That's because the real work of office administration isn't about the rare, headline-worthy projects. It's about solving dozens of problems before anyone else even realizes they existed. It's the quiet, steady work that keeps a firm moving every single day.

And while those moments rarely get celebrated, they deserve to be. Because that isn't just part of the job... it is the job.

Summer is a good season to remember that. The pace softens a little, the calendar opens up, and there is real value in letting a quieter stretch simply be a quieter stretch. You do not have to earn your rest with a big accomplishment first. The ordinary days are not the filler between the important ones... they are the important ones.

Of course, knowing all of that and actually giving yourself permission to ease up are two very different things. If protecting your own time is the part you find hardest, our next meeting was made for you. On July 21 at 12:00 p.m., we are going virtual with Paul Artale, PhD, for Defining Boundaries and Beating Burnout: The 2-Year Old's Guide to Work-Life Balance. It is a fresh and surprisingly fun look at setting healthy boundaries and tackling burnout. I hope you'll take an hour over lunch to join us.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

21—July—11:45am

Monthly Chapter Meeting

Topic—Defining Boundaries and Beating Burnout

Paul Artale, PhD, Accredited Speaker

Location—Virtual

19-August—4:00pm

Ronald McDonald House
Volunteer

Continued on page 7

Firms can take seven actionable steps to ensure that working moms leave with a sense of security and return with the resources to maintain a work-life balance.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Columbus Chapter News* is published monthly for the education and benefit of legal administrators. It is not published for the purpose of rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services or advice. Nothing contained in this newsletter should be construed as legal, accounting, or other professional services or advice. Reprint of articles contained in this newsletter requires the written permission of the Editor of the *Columbus Chapter News*.

ALA MISSION STATEMENT

ALA is the premier professional association connecting leaders and managers within the legal industry. We provide extensive professional development, collaborative peer communities, strategic operational solutions, and business partner connections empowering our members to lead the business of law.

COLUMBUS CHAPTER, ALA MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Columbus Chapter Association of Legal Administrators is to provide a local forum of professional and educational enrichment to improve the quality of management in law firms and other legal services organizations. Our chapter is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive professional environment where we value and strive to develop our members of all backgrounds and experiences. We firmly believe that having varied perspectives and collaboration among members generates more incisive and deeper insights that better serve our chapter and our increasingly diverse world. We are also committed to giving our time and talent to the community in order to achieve a prosperous society.



The Parent Gap: Building a Supportive Workplace for Working Moms



Kelly F. Zimmerman

*Former Managing Editor
of Legal Management*

When corporate attorney Brittany Buxton took parental leave with her first child, she felt completely disconnected from her clients and work, but not in a way that left her feeling confident about her time away.

“When I became a mother, I realized how deeply the legal profession lacked infrastructure to support parental transitions,” Buxton says. “The relationships I had spent years building were handed off, often without my input, and I returned to a professional landscape that felt unfamiliar.”

This experience is what led Buxton to launch [**Ardent Impact Collective**](#), formerly Ardent Life Design, a consultancy dedicated to supporting ambitious women — primarily lawyer moms — and their families. Through Ardent Impact Collective, Buxton has also launched The Lawyer Mom Society, an initiative designed to support lawyer moms navigating the transitions of pregnancy, maternity leave and reintegration into the workplace. Buxton’s experience with return-to-work challenges isn’t unique. In fact, she views what she calls “practice continuity anxiety,” the fear that taking leave will derail career momentum, as a top concern for working mothers in the legal industry.

Fear over career progression is a universal problem in professional spaces, not just for moms working in the legal industry. According to a report by [**Parentaly**](#), a company that provides resources for organizations navigating parental leave and beyond, this fear is actually the top concern for working moms.

Parentaly’s study showed that more than two-thirds of working moms worried about the impact of their parental leave on their career progression — and the higher the pay, the more likely working mothers felt this way. That number jumped to 84% for working moms earning more than \$250,000 in a year, a number that’s worth paying attention to in an industry where starting salaries for lawyers can easily [**approach that amount**](#).

Continued on page 14

Build a Law Firm That Runs Smarter.



Leading a law firm shouldn't feel like constant triage.

If you're buried in manual processes, chasing down details, or relying on outdated systems that slow your team down, it's time to rethink how your firm runs.



**Better systems. Better habits.
Better results.**

Let's talk about what's next.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

21—July—11:45am

Monthly Chapter Meeting

Topic—Defining Boundaries and Beating Burnout

Paul Artale, PhD, Accredited Speaker

Location—Virtual

28—Tuesday—12:00pm

Board Meeting

Location—TBD

ALA Events:

07—Tuesday—Law Firm Accounting (every Tuesday until August 11th)

09—Thursday—Human Resources (Every Thursday until August 13th)

14—Tuesday

Member Idea Exchange

16-18—Thursday—Saturday Chapter Leadership Institute

August 2026

Sun	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

18—August—11:45am

Monthly Chapter Meeting

Topic—TBD

Location—TBD

19-August—4:00pm

Ronald McDonald House

Volunteer

25—Tuesday—12:00pm

Board Meeting

Location—TBD

ALA Events:

04—Tuesday—Law Firm Accounting (every Tuesday until August 11th)

05-Wednesday—ALA's Legal Operations Bootcamp for Administrative Professionals (every Wednesday until August 26th)

09—Thursday—Human Resources

(Every Thursday until August 13th)

27—Thursday—HR2: Human Resources: You've Really Got this (every Thursday until Oct 1st)

September 2026

Sun	Mo	Tue	We	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

22—Tuesday—11:45am

Monthly Chapter Meeting

Topic—TBD

Location—TBD

29—Tuesday—12:00pm

Board Meeting

Location—TBD

ALA Events:

03—Thursday—HR2: Human Resources: You've Really Got this (every Thursday until Oct 1st)

04-Friday—Fall CLM Application Deadline

08-Tuesday—FM2: Law Firm Accounting

(every Tuesday until October 13th)

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DEI CORNER

July 2026 is anchored by Disability Pride Month, which celebrates the achievement and diversity of the disability community. Workplaces and organizations also focus on key global and cultural days of observance, with several key conferences taking place globally. Below are Key DEI Observances for July:

July 1: Canada Day

July 4: Independence Day (USA)

July 14: International Nonbinary People's Day

July 18: International Nelson Mandela Day

July 26: National Disability Independence Day (marking the signing of the ADA in 1990)

Notable Conferences:

July 2-3: The 20th International Conference on Disability and Diversity (Singapore & Online)

July 2-4: The 19th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International Conference (Marrakech, Morocco & Virtual), focusing on inclusion in a transforming world

President's message, continued from page 1

Before I wrap up, I also want to extend a very warm welcome to the newest members of our ALA Columbus Chapter. Our Membership Committee has been hard at work, and we are thrilled to have so many new faces joining our community. Please help me welcome **Laura Albert (Tyack Law Firm)**, **Kristen Bitonte (FBT Gibbons)**, **Ryan Daniels (Steptoe & Johnson)**, **Cathy Davis (Steptoe & Johnson)**, **Andrew Gross (Critchfield Law)**, **Cassidy Lott (Porter Wright)**, and **Leann Miljus (Roetzel)**.

Whether you've been a member for years or you're just getting started, we're glad you're here. I hope you'll jump into meetings, ask questions, share ideas, and take advantage of the incredible network of professionals that makes this chapter so special.

"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."
— Annie Dillard

-Julie Bryan

The background of the entire advertisement is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in shades of blue, white, and red. The stars are prominent in the upper left and lower right areas.

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Columbus
Chapter



JULY 21
AT NOON



VIRTUAL
MEETING

Connect. Learn. Lead.

TOPIC:

Defining Boundaries and Beating Burnout: *The 2-Year Old's Guide to Work-Life Balance*

What can you learn about work-life from a 2-year old? The answer: plenty. Based on his book *The 2-Year Old's Guide to Work-Life Balance* and Paul's published research on setting boundaries, this workshop will share with you three simple but powerful work-life strategies that blend research and lessons Paul learned from his then two-year-old son. At the time Paul was among the 60% of Americans who reported they felt that they were burnt out and stressed.

These simple lessons changed Paul's life, and vastly improved Paul's work-life-balance. In this session you will learn how to:



Tinker with the building blocks that construct your work and professional boundaries.



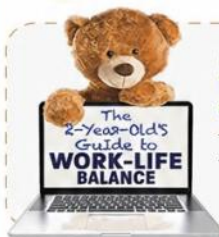
Understand how to prioritize and focus on objectives that matter most.



Play hide and seek with your values system and how it interacts with your work-life situation.



Engage with energy giving life choices.



Based on Paul's book,
*The 2-Year Old's Guide
to Work-Life Balance*

Available on Amazon.com
amazon.com

Because
great balance
starts early.



“ Small lessons.
Big impact.
Better balance.
Stronger you.”

PAUL ARTALE, PhD
Accredited Speaker

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Paul Artale, PhD, Accredited Speaker is a motivational speaker, author, and Leadership Strengths trainer who works with companies who want to supercharge employee performance by understanding employee needs and leveraging their strengths. Paul's research focuses on the positive impact workplace flexibility has on employee engagement, retention, and performance.

Born with a physical disability, most thought Paul was unrealistic for dreaming of playing college football—even after he was cut from his high school team. Paul never gave up hope and six years later found himself playing defensive end for the University of Toronto. From that moment forward Paul promised himself he would always relentlessly pursue his ambitions.

Paul blends his experiences regarding his “disability,” twenty years of leadership and management training, student-athlete development, and fatherhood with his research and expertise in organizational performance to create inspiring messages that challenge participants to break through their barriers and achieve peak performance.

Paul is the epitome of resilience, drive, continuous self-development and success. Paul is committed to helping people living their best lives and which is detailed in his book, *“The 2-Year Old's Guide to Work-Life Balance”* which can be purchased at Amazon.com.



JOIN US VIRTUALLY!
Invest in yourself. Your team.
Your balance.



We look forward
TO SEEING YOU THERE!

Protecting the Soft Surfaces That Represent Your Firm



When clients walk into your office, they notice more than your credentials and professionalism—they notice the environment. Upholstered furniture, area rugs, conference room seating, and decorative fabrics all contribute to the impression your firm makes every day.

At Fiber-Seal of Central Ohio, we've helped businesses throughout Central Ohio protect and maintain their soft surfaces for more than 40 years. While carpet cleaning is often part of a facility maintenance plan, upholstered furniture, fabric panels, conference room chairs, and area rugs are frequently overlooked until stains, wear, or premature replacement become costly concerns.

Our proprietary Fiber-Seal treatment creates an invisible barrier that allows spills to be removed more easily and helps extend the life of fabrics and rugs. Combined with periodic professional maintenance, firms can preserve the appearance of their furnishings while reducing long-term replacement expenses.

Beyond protection, regular cleaning of upholstered furniture and fabric surfaces contributes to a healthier and more professional workplace. Conference room seating, reception area furniture, and fabric-covered panels accumulate dust, allergens, and everyday soil that can impact both appearance and indoor air quality.

Fiber-Seal of Central Ohio provides:

- Fabric and upholstery protection
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- Area rug cleaning and maintenance
- Fabric panel cleaning
- Commercial carpet cleaning
- Ongoing maintenance programs for professional offices

Whether you're managing a single office or multiple locations, our team can help create a customized maintenance plan that fits your facility's needs and budget.

Quality furnishings are a significant investment. Proper protection and maintenance help ensure they continue to perform and present well over time.

To learn more or request a complimentary assessment, contact Fiber-Seal of Central Ohio at 614-459-3112 or email melissa.goss@fiberseal.com.

Thank you,

Melissa Goss

CHAPTER MEETING RECAP

Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 16th, 2026

Meeting Time: 11:45am-1:00pm

Meeting Location: Squire Patton Boggs, 41 S. High Street, Suite 2000, Columbus, OH 43215

Meeting Title: Tuning the Instrument – Centering the Self to Build Speaking Confidence

Our speaker is Leslie Muhlbach, a nationally recognized award-winning educator and public speaking coach. Her mastery of inspiring storytelling relates to audiences not only looking to be entertained but also equipped with practical skills to improve relationships.

Your voice, body language, and mindset are the anatomy of a complex and unique musical instrument. Without the tools to “tune in,” speaking in public can feel like playing an instrument that is out of pitch – uncomfortable, tense, and hesitant.

This interactive workshop is designed to help you quiet the internal static and step into your natural authority.

Key points will focus on grounding your physical presence, managing anxiety symptoms, and understanding the importance of vocal mechanics and development. Leave our time together with a practical, repeatable, “tuning routine” to center yourself before any meeting, presentation, or high-stakes conversation.

In-Person Attendees: Kayci Zamarelli, LeAnn Miljus, Tracey Hopp, Laura Albert, Debbie Durbin, Angie Vecchio, Janet Fowler, Hannah Bragg, Melissa Goss, Beth Johnson, Katie Gregory, Lindsey Updike, Andrew Gross, Kelly Atkinson, Laura Focht, Kema Ayers Jones, Brandi Hann, Jane Weldy

Date/Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 21st (virtual)

Secretary's Signature:



Meeting Notes:

Reframing Public Speaking Anxiety

Nervousness and excitement produce identical physiological responses

Butterflies, clammy hands, dry mouth, racing heart, mind fixating on a future outcome

Distinction is only in the story we tell about the sensation

Emotions are choices – supported by 45 years of research from Dr. Ellen Langer (Harvard, “mother of mindfulness”)

Example from Leslie: Olympic athletes overwhelmingly describe pre-performance state as excitement, not nervousness – the journalist’s framing reveals their own anxiety, not the athlete’s

You have zero control over how an audience receives you, no matter how well you prepare

Shift focus from centering the audience to centering yourself

Public speaking is just a conversation – reframe it as low-stakes even with 200 people listening

Best outcome: one person’s trajectory changes; worst outcome: honest feedback to improve from.

Continued on page 12

CHAPTER MEETING RECAP—Continued

Stress, Uncertainty & Self-Inquiry

Stress requires two ingredients: (1) belief something will happen and (2) belief it will be awful

Key question to ask: is this outcome a tragedy or an inconvenience?

Most daily stressors are inconveniences, not tragedies

Uncertainty is the only certainty – accepting this is the foundation of mindfulness and adaptability

Self-inquiry practice (more effective than public speaking practice):

Identify the thing causing stress

List 3 reasons why it might not happen

Find at least one advantage if it DOES happen

This carves a mental pathway away from tragedy – the brain has somewhere safe to go

Confidence builds more from reflecting on everyday interpersonal conversations than from formal public speaking practice

Most people speak publicly a handful of times in their life; small-group and 1:1 conversations happen constantly

Practical Centering Techniques

Belly breathing: breathe from the navel point (3 finger-widths below belly button), center of 75,000+ nerve endings

Full exhale first – navel contracts toward spine – then feel belly expand on inhale before chest fills

Breath of Fire: rapid, rhythmic in-out nasal breath pulsing from the navel

Activates the pituitary gland, which regulates dopamine, serotonin, and adrenaline

Restrictions: avoid during first days of menstrual cycle or pregnancy

Can practice in the car to music; use before any high-stakes conversation or presentation

Additional tips for presentations:

Use personal stories to connect – more effective than data-heavy slides

Organization method is personal – bullet points, note cards, manuscript all valid; avoid writing word-for-word scripts (we don't speak the way we write)

Slides are always necessary – Leslie deliberately skipped them today to model conversational delivery



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

PLEASE JOIN THE COLUMBUS CHAPTER OF ALA FOR A FUN NIGHT MAKING AND SERVING DINNER AT THE RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE OF CENTRAL OHIO.

AUGUST 19TH – 3:30PM – 7:00PM

711 E. LIVINGSTON AVE, COLUMBUS, OH 43205

RSVP: ANGIE VECCHIO

AVECCIO@TAFTLAW.COM

The Ronald McDonald House charities (RMHC) support families with children facing serious illnesses by offering free or low-cost housing near hospitals. This allows families to stay close to their child while they receive medical care, providing a supportive environment during difficult times. RMHC also offers various programs and services to ease the challenges families face. This is a great opportunity to get involved and help.



So, what's a working mother to do? Keep reading for seven ways law firms can help to build a supportive workplace for working moms, whether they are just going out on leave, returning to work or already have older kids. And while this article primarily focuses on moms due to the increased prejudice women often face when trying to build a family and a career, the suggestions below are applicable to any working parent.

1. Create Policies to Protect Client Relationships

Forty-five percent of women surveyed by Parentaly said they worried about the impact of their parental leave on active projects and client relationships, a fear Buxton says she has heard echo in the legal industry.

Establishing policies that protect the attorney-client relationship is one way to help create peace of mind during parental leave, Buxton says. Rather than treating parental leave as a workflow disruption that's managed by a pass-off of work, law firms should instead focus on continuity models that help to preserve each attorney's unique professional DNA and client relationships while they are out of office. This can help to provide some peace of mind for parents before they return to work.

"Rather than treating parental leave as a workflow disruption that's managed by a pass-off of work, law firms should instead focus on continuity models."

At the same time, coverage for parents who are out on leave is still necessary to fulfill client expectations, so building a strong coverage plan — and planning early — is a good place to start. According to Allison Whalen, Parentaly's Chief Executive Officer, a good coverage plan should include "defining who owns what while they're out, setting expectations for communication and transitioning key client relationships. That structure gives everyone more confidence, especially in environments like law firms where deliverables are high-stakes and hours are closely tracked."

2. Establish Reintegration Processes

Despite the pressure to hit the ground running, most working moms returning from leave aren't ready to lock and load. They're likely dealing with new schedules, challenges surrounding childcare and changes to the dynamics of their families and daily lives. It's a lot to sort through while maintaining the high-stakes pressure that often accompanies a legal job.

This is where re-onboarding and ramp-back programs can come into play. Aside from having a designated administrator in charge to fully own and manage the return-to-work experience for working parents, having a comprehensive ramp-back program to help new parents reacclimate can be extremely effective. More than just allotting time to dig out of inboxes and catch up with colleagues on important projects, a ramp-up program can also involve allowing new parents to slowly immerse themselves back into full-time work mode and reintegrate into work-life balance.

"We've seen law firms allow reduced billable targets for the first month or two back, or delay high-pressure assignments while the parent readjusts," Whalen says. "This isn't about lowering the bar, it's about creating the conditions for someone to get back to full productivity without burning out on day one."

3. Consider New Billing Methods

Law firms can have billable hour pressures that don't necessarily align with caregiving demands — a challenge that doesn't go away as children get older. However, by prioritizing trust, output and quality rather than individual time sheets, firms can find other ways to ensure employees meet their billing requirements.

Buxton recommends a shift to project-based or team-based billing. By bucketing hours into group categories like this, it can help accommodate the juggle that many working parents face on a daily basis, especially during transitional times of year, such as school breaks. Reframing the approach to billing can also encourage firms to consider other ways to assess an attorney's value outside of billable hours.

Continued on page 15

“By prioritizing trust, output and quality rather than individual time sheets, firms can find other ways to ensure employees meet their billing requirements.”

4. Provide Childcare-Based Resources

As any working parent knows, the typical school calendar does not align with traditional business expectations. School days are short compared to business hours, breaks are often long and fall during end-of-quarter requirements, and no-school days often far exceed the number of vacation days that employees can take. Parents with younger children may also face challenges when caregivers call in sick or when daycares are closed for their own breaks. Some parents may be caring for children who have extra medical needs. And, of course, there are always the unanticipated days when a child falls ill.

Firms, however, may be in a position to help close the childcare gap by offering the following:

- Childcare stipends to help cover daycare, emergency childcare providers, summer camps or day-off camps
- On-site childcare options
- Flexible PTO use to help cover school holidays or child illness
- Support services for families that may have children with special needs
- Fully remote weeks or more flexible hours during school and daycare transitions
- Lighter workloads during weeks where parents may need extra support

An internal parent resource group where employees can share strategies and coordinate support

5. Remember Your Administrative Employees

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to run a law firm or corporate legal department. While it can be easy to focus on benefits and policies for partners and rainmakers, it's important to remember employees who help keep the firm's day-to-day operations moving. “Support staff often face the same gaps with fewer resources,” Buxton

says, which is why it's important to ensure they receive the same types of support as attorneys.

6. Embrace Flexibility — But for Real

Remote work has been a hot topic for some time, and continues to be, especially as organizations grapple with the benefits of in-person versus virtual work. However, Whalen says, having flexibility in terms of where and when the work gets done can make it significantly more manageable for parents to maintain engagement and productivity.

“If a job can be done well remotely, at least some of the time, then building in that flexibility shows trust and helps retain high performers,” Whalen says. “Especially for parents, having even one or two days at home can be the difference between staying in the role or stepping away entirely.”

Tamara Klein, a mom, legal recruiter and former lawyer herself, agrees with this sentiment, and points to the success of virtual law firms as proof that remote policies can benefit both employees and employers. However, at the same time, she stresses the importance of not penalizing working moms — or any employee — for taking advantage of the flexibility they've been offered by their firms.

“There comes a point where you have to recognize that people come from different situations,” Klein says. “It's not just mothers, it's caregivers as well.”

7. Encourage Healthy Families

At the end of the day, it's in a law firm's best interest to help their attorneys and support staff raise happy and healthy families. “We shouldn't be discouraging our employees from having families and having healthy families,” Klein says.

Solid healthcare, childcare support and equitable leave policies are just a few ways to do this, but at the end of the day, flexibility is also key to helping working parents thrive — and ultimately stick around.

“We do want to encourage stickiness,” Klein says, “but nobody is going to be sticky in an office that keeps them from their children.”

Kelly F. Zimmerman is a former Managing Editor of *Legal Management* and has extensive experience covering the legal industry for organizations such as Northwestern's Pritzker School of Law and Axiom Law. She earned a Master of Science in Journalism from Northwestern University. [Email](#) [Website](#) Copyright ©2025 Association of Legal Administrators. All Rights Reserved. alanet.org. July 2025

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Recordings from past ALA conferences are available to view on-demand, many of which are free to members.

alanet.org/recordings

alanet.org/education/online-learning

E-Letters to the Editor

We value your comments/suggestions and even your submissions. After all, this is your Newsletter! If you would like to write a Letter to the Editor, make a suggestion that would enhance the newsletter, or would be willing to write an article for the newsletter (either about a committee event or an educational topic that would be of interest to our members), please e-mail Laura Focht, Newsletter Editor at: lfocht@zhftaxlaw.com . Your input would be greatly appreciated!



JULY

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Debbie Durbin—13 years

Laura Focht—7 years

Kema Ayers Jones—3 years

Committee Members Needed

We are always looking for great people who would like to serve on a committee. If you are interested in learning more about any of these positions, please reach out to any current board member. Joining a committee is often a great first step toward learning more about the chapter and someday joining the board.

Business partners are also eligible to serve on committees. If you are a business partner and would like more information about joining a committee, please contact Laura Focht.

COLUMBUS CHAPTER MEMBER CHANGE FORM

If any of your information changes, please e-mail the following information to:
Laura Focht, Newsletter Editor, Zaino Hall & Farrin LLC, lfocht@zhftaxlaw.com

Name: _____

Firm: _____

Title: _____ **Phone:** _____

Address: _____ **Suite No.:** _____

City, State, Zip: _____