## **2018 IDEA Awards: Summaries of Entries**

These entries received the 2018 IDEA Awards:

**Minnesota Chapter**

“ALAMN Challenge Coin”

Contact: Sarah Evenson, [*sarah.evenson@btlaw.com*](mailto:sarah.evenson@btlaw.com)

ALAMN found that many of its members could not articulate the chapter’s mission. To improve awareness of the mission and boost recognition of those who help fulfill it, the chapter created a simple, meaningful and tangible item: the ALAMN Challenge Coin. Challenge coins are commonly used in military and law-enforcement communities to identify membership and recognize achievements. Once the coins were manufactured, chapter board members were entitled to hand them (and accompanying thank-you notes) out to members and business partners who the board determined have helped improve, promote or represent ALAMN. After 10 months of this initiative, the chapter has found that members are better able to verbalize the mission, that engagement in membership and leadership has improved, and that recipients displaying the coins has made more attorneys and staff aware of ALA.

[View this submission’s video](https://youtu.be/16skLhY-VgI).  
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**Northern Virginia Chapter**

“Friday Fast Five”

Contact: Megan Pfeiffe, [*mpfeiffe@sherandcummings.com*](mailto:mpfeiffe@sherandcummings.com)

Inspired by ALA headquarters’ *BOLD Bites* newsletter, the Northern Virginia Chapter created a customizable weekly educational platform. Known as the [*Friday Fast Five*](http://www.alanova.org/friday-fast-five/), it delivers chapter-relevant industry news and professional tips in a quickly digestible format. Accrisoft, a business partner of the Northern Virginia Chapter, developed the online platform. Every week, chapter volunteers source the newsletter content from fellow members, ALA business partners and other industry vendors and service providers, providing resources to members and boosting exposure for business partners.

[View this submission’s video](https://youtu.be/jOxGO3n3joU).  
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**Wisconsin Chapter**

“WALA East vs. West Big Hearts Campaign”

Contact: Mark Bridgeman, [*mark.bridgeman@usdoj.gov*](mailto:mark.bridgeman@usdoj.gov)

The Big Hearts Campaign was born out of a need to make over the Wisconsin Chapter’s annual main event, for which attendance was dwindling. An organizing committee composed of chapter members and business partners conceived the competition, which pitted the East (Milwaukee) against the West (Madison). Each team was headed by a premier-level WALA business partner and raised money for its respective honor-flight charity, which sends veterans to Washington, D.C., to visit memorials. After a kick-off event featuring networking and a business-partner expo, the teams started their fundraising initiatives. The Big Hearts Campaign wrapped up at the November Fall Social, where chapter members and business partners interacted with American Legion members. The campaign had raised $13,314.44 total — enough to sponsor 14 veterans and their helpers — and inspired 42 percent of the WALA’s members to attend the final event.

[View this submission’s video](https://youtu.be/Be4TuzLVhmM).

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**Greater Chicago Chapter**

“#GetCLM: We Support Your Success”

Contact: Laura Sears, [*lsears@gouldratner.com*](mailto:lsears@gouldratner.com)

The Greater Chicago Chapter has gradually implemented a more formalized CLM study program. Recently, though, the program kicked into high gear, growing participation beyond the chapter’s members and boosting passage rates. The program — which charges no fee and is funded in the regular budget — lasts 16 weeks. It includes a substantial Google Drive–hosted library of resources, weekly educational sessions (available in person and via webcast), and an extensive review session on the Saturday prior to exam day. The chapter’s CLM Committee developed the overall syllabus and, alongside subject matter guest speakers, presents the curriculum. The program was presented as a model of success at the 2017 Chapter Leadership Institute, which prompted the sharing of the syllabus and led many chapters’ members to join the study group. As of 2017, the Greater Chicago Chapter boasted 34 CLMs (12 percent of its membership); five CLMs from around the country participated in the study group. The study group pass rate has risen from 75 percent to 90 percent over last seven years.  
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**Boston Chapter**

“ALA: Stronger Together”

Contact: Amy Cook, [*aec@dcglaw.com*](mailto:aec@dcglaw.com)

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused devastation and loss of life throughout the Houston area — more than 30,000 people were displaced from their homes and thousands were left without power. The members of the Boston Chapter wanted to do more than watch, so they issued a challenge to themselves and the rest of the Association to assist the Houston Chapter. The Boston Chapter donated $5 for every member to the Red Cross's hurricane relief efforts — immediately authorizing a $1,005 contribution — then requested that other chapters do the same. Ultimately, chapter after chapter either donated on behalf of its members or matched their members' donations, resulting in more than $40,000 raised Association-wide. In addition, ALA-related fundraising pages inspired by this effort were also set up. This initiative not only offered much-needed help to the Houston area but also reminded Association members that we are stronger together.  
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**Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP**

“Blanketing Those in Need”

Contact: Ruth Fry, [*ruth.fry@saul.com*](mailto:ruth.fry@saul.com)

When Saul Ewing LLP merged with Arnstein & Lehr LLP, they were asked to find a new home for all the Saul Ewing logoed materials. This inventory included mugs, jackets, hats and golf balls — but the most notable items were pink and blue baby blankets. The firm donated these blankets to Sarah's House, an organization offering emergency shelter, supportive housing and other services to families experiencing homelessness in Maryland. Later, thanks to this welcomed donation, the Maryland Chapter adopted Sarah's House as the beneficiary of its holiday-season community service in a unanimous decision. The chapter, along with Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP and other local firms, supported Sarah's House with a nonperishable food drive. Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP's personnel went above and beyond, requesting a list of items needed by the Sarah's House families. Ultimately, the staff opened their own wallets to gift winter outfits to more than 25 children.  
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**Katie Bryant, Alan Wilson and Rich Wilson**

“Business Partner and Member Engagement Dos and Don’ts”

Contact: Katie Bryant, [*kjb@udallshumway.com*](mailto:kjb@udallshumway.com)

A group of ALA members and VIP business partners — Katie Bryant, CLM; Alan Wilson of GLJ Benefit Consultants; and Rich Wilson of VIBE — recognized that the ways attendees and exhibitors interact often aren't productive. Previous attempts to solve this problem have been text-based and, frankly, boring. They figured a new, innovative approach was required and decided to produce a humorous, scenario-based video to impart memorable information about improving engagement. VIBE contributed the videography and editing for free, the actors were volunteers, and the venue was secured at no cost. The video debuted to acclaim at the Chapter Leadership Institute (CLI) in July 2017. Many chapters — perhaps as many as 30-50 percent — have shown the video to their membership and business partners. (At least one business partner told the Arizona Chapter that it was the best tool to advance engagement that he had ever seen an association produce.) It has also been uploaded to the ALA website and [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/assnlegaladmin/videos), where the accessibility should boost viewership numbers.  
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**Boston Chapter**

“Chapter Restructuring — A LEGO-Like IDEA”

Contact: Amy Cook, [*aec@dcglaw.com*](mailto:aec@dcglaw.com)

To deal with issues of flagging engagement and enthusiasm and friction over the time commitment being asked of members, the Boston Chapter’s Board of Directors decided to reevaluate their strategy. Following comments from members and business partners, they found that they needed to start from scratch, building up to the grand idea — elevating ALA and the chapter — piece by piece, brick by brick. First, they refocused on the quality, not quantity, of programming, including holding more events during business hours. The result was the 2017 One Day Leadership Conference, which contracted nationally recognized speakers rather than relying on breakout sessions and invited management professionals from nearby chapters and other organizations. Then, the chapter restructured educational and social programming to a quarterly luncheon format with dynamic content relevant to all members and business partners. Additional efforts included redesigning the CLM study group, monthly member roundtables, email communications and leadership structure. Despite the ongoing process, the chapter has witnessed increased attendance and enthusiasm.  
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**Calgary Chapter**

“IDEA Awards”

Contact: Jerry-Lynn Fossenier, [*jfossenier@tinglemerrett.com*](mailto:jfossenier@tinglemerrett.com)

The Calgary Chapter has undertaken a variety of initiatives intended to improve member and business partner engagement and to boost ALA’s visibility in the area’s legal environment. Toward the first goal, the chapter hosted a 40th Anniversary Gala, in part to identify Past Presidents and extend them Lifetime Memberships. It also kick-started a Know Your Members Lunch, where board members conversed with members on a one-on-one basis, and a well-attended golf tournament that increased interaction between members and business partners. Toward the second goal, the chapter reached out to the Law Society for an informative presentation and sent membership invitations to law firms and in-house legal departments to coincide with ALA’s reduced-fee membership drive.  
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**Reed Smith University: School of Professional Support and Staff CareeRS Team**

“Innovation & Engagement Shine with the Staff CareeRS Staff Advisory Board”

Contact: Nita Gordon, [*ngordon@reedsmith.com*](mailto:ngordon@reedsmith.com)

The global law firm Reed Smith LLP has developed a thriving educational arm — the “University” — to support lawyers, clients and staff. Within it is the Staff CareeRS program, a competency-based career development track specifically for staff members. The program is designed to ensure the firm is providing the best legal representation possible while also providing staff with the transparency, development opportunities and feedback they need to achieve their career goals. Until 2014, the professional support education was designed exclusively by HR professionals with feedback from staff members. At that point, however, a group of high-performing staff members was selected to become more directly involved in the programming via the Staff Advisory Board. The board allows staff members from different departments to collaborate on initiatives that help fellow personnel, and to identify promising candidates for board service — itself an important career development tool. Some of the board’s work has included revamping “Know Your Practice” e-learning courses, developing programming to improve proficiency at using the firm’s extranet site for clients, creating an information security blog, and improving outreach to new hires and existing employees.  
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**Ari Kaplan**

“Lawcountability: ALA Edition”

Contact: Ari Kaplan, [*alkaps@yahoo.com*](mailto:alkaps@yahoo.com)

In 2016, when ALA leaders expressed an interest in incorporating technology that enhances member experience, Ari Kaplan offered to adapt his business and career development platform, Lawcountability, for ALA members. The overall goal of Lawcountability is to provide a user-friendly way for legal management leaders to build accountability into their professional development and networking with firm management. The ALA program was piloted in 2017 at the Regional Legal Management Conferences. Members who registered Lawcountability accounts received access on a weekly basis to 12 specially created educational videos from the conferences’ most popular speakers. Each week’s program also included three tasks to help the viewer implement the particular techniques presented. Completing tasks would accrue points on the member’s dashboard. Twenty-two members created Lawcountability accounts; more than a third watched a least one video.  
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**Gateway Chapter**

“Make a Difference Video”

Contact: Brenda Deertz, [*bdeertz@polsinelli.com*](mailto:bdeertz@polsinelli.com)

The Gateway Chapter, always looking for ways to promote the visibility and credibility of ALA to prospective members, decided to go a different direction from easy-to-skip-over newsletters and email blasts. Instead, chapter members teamed up to produce a video that creatively described the benefits of ALA membership. With $2,000 in discretionary funds and volunteer actors, writers and producers, the chapter produced their “Make a Difference” video in time for the annual New Member Welcome Reception. Screening the video in person has reached hundreds of people and caused business partners to express appreciation for the visibility of their sponsorship. Incorporating the video into chapter social media has led to activity spikes.  
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**Maryland Chapter**

“Marylanders Go Year-Round to Support the Homeless, the Hungry and to Educate”

Contact: Ruth Fry, [*ruth.fry@saul.com*](mailto:ruth.fry@saul.com)

The Maryland Chapter made a concerted year-round effort in support of its community service goals: 1) to provide support to ending homelessness, 2) to provide support in ending hunger, and 3) to provide education where needed in the Baltimore area. They began in August at the Maryland Food Bank, sorting and boxing food for the food-insecure individuals and families the organization serves. The chapter also collected backpacks and school supplies for elementary-aged children heading back to school. Chapter members and business partners collaborated in September on a Habitat for Humanity project and raised money through the Annual Business Partner Exhibition to supplement the chapter’s annual holiday giving. Ultimately, they gave $450 — as well as food and winter accessories — to Sarah’s House, a supportive housing program for families experiencing homelessness. The chapter also donated $250 to the Lawyers’ Campaign Against Hunger and $250 to the Citizenship Law Related Education Program (CLREP)’s Law Links internship, which places high schoolers in a paid summer internship at a law-related organization.  
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**Catherine MacDonagh**

“The Legal WorkOut: A Collaborative Approach to Process Improvement for Law Firms and Legal Departments”

Contact: Catherine MacDonagh, [*catherine@legalleansigma.com*](mailto:catherine@legalleansigma.com)

While process improvement (PI) initiatives have been adopted in many industries, law firms and legal departments remain skeptical and slow to innovate. The Legal Lean Sigma Institute developed the Legal WorkOut® approach, which combines PI methodologies, to change the way legal professionals, businesspeople and clients collaborate to improve legal services processes in terms of efficiency, value and satisfaction. The plan was implemented at Aon’s Global Law Department and two of its preferred law firms. Despite logistical and motivational challenges, the institute was able to walk diverse project teams through the 30- to 90-day Legal WorkOut program. Aon saw many positive results in terms of streamlining and reducing friction, such as 43 percent fewer rejected invoices, the development of a new subpoena dashboard that decreased the average cycle time by 44 percent, and collaboration across teams that broke out of their silos.  
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**Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor LLP**

“YCST Technology Certification Advancement Program (TAC)”

Contact: Polina F. Snitkovsky, [*psnitkovsky@ycst.com*](mailto:psnitkovsky@ycst.com)

Leaders at the Delaware law firm Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor LLP recognized the need for advanced technology training for its document-producing staff. The IT and HR teams collaborated with a third-party technology vendor to create the Technology Advancement Certification (TAC) Program, which has improved technology skills throughout the organization and helped the firm adapt to growing technology needs of practicing law in an ever-changing global environment. After incorporating feedback from pilot learners and establishing each staff member’s baseline, the program created customized learning plans that incorporated online videos, classroom instruction, small-group sessions and one-on-one learning with the firm’s technology training specialists. With a successful return on investment — namely, improved scores and reduced help-desk calls — it has become the cornerstone training program and is used to teach new hires the firm’s best practices.

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