

# The Malibu Times

## Working and raising a family

A symposium at Pepperdine University Saturday addressed the issues of working parents, and the legal and social challenges they face. Actress Calista Flockhart talks about her desire to work and be a good mother at the same time.

By Vive Decou / Special to The Malibu Times  
In today's world, women are a major part of the work force as they start their own businesses and climb corporate ladders right alongside men. Yet women's roles in the home have for the most part remained the same. They are still expected to be the caretakers of the household and watch over young children and even aging parents. Men are also redefining their role, as many become more active fathers or even full-time househusbands. This societal shift raises many issues about how working people can better balance their many responsibilities and how laws can be created to better reflect the times and alleviate the pressures of this new way of life.

To facilitate solutions to these problems "Balancing Career and Family: A Work/Life Symposium" was presented by the Beverly Hills Bar Association in conjunction with the Pepperdine University School of Law on Saturday at Pepperdine's Malibu campus. The daylong symposium addressed legal and social issues that working parents face and featured 20 nationally recognized professionals speaking on such topics such as law, medicine and aging. The impetus for the symposium came from the Working Parents Project, a yearlong initiative spearheaded by BHBA President Cynthia Pasternak to help educate people on the issues and facilitate positive change. As a professional and mother of three, Pasternak knows first-hand the challenges working parents face.

"Little has changed in the past 30 years to help working parents cope with the challenges of managing two full-time jobs-working and raising a family," Pasternak said.

Pasternak worked closely with members on the Pepperdine Law Review, a scholarly legal journal written and edited by an elite group of Pepperdine's law students.

The keynote address was given by star of the stage and screen Calista Flockhart. Flockhart is best known for her starring role in the television show "Ally McBeal" and for her many on and off-Broadway roles. She currently works full time while raising her son, Liam. Her speech was a deeply personal look on the conflicts women face while trying to balance a career and simultaneously raise children. Flockhart stressed that even though she is successful and doesn't have to worry about money, the conflict is still one that she struggles with.

"I have a really big problem. I am passionate about raising my child and I am passionate about working," Flockhart said. "[Balancing the two] is the biggest issue that I deal with in my life."



Dean Kenneth Starr, Pepperdine University School of Law, actress and mom Calista Flockhart, Cynthia Pasternak, president of the Beverly Hills Bar Association, and Marc Staenberg of the Beverly Hills Bar Association at the "Balancing Career and Family: A work Life Symposium" Saturday. Photo courtesy of Lee Salem Photography, Inc.

Flockhart said that she experienced guilt when she left her child, and boredom when she didn't work. She also spoke of the resistance she met when trying to combine the two.

"Nobody seemed to care that I had a baby at home; the executives had a show to do," Flockhart said. "I had to get my lawyer to fight to get my hours down to 12 a day. That pisses me off, that needs to change."

State Sen. Joe Dunn spoke immediately after Flockhart. Dunn was elected to the Senate in 1998 and has been known as a strong consumer advocate.

Dunn opened by saying that people need to use the system for their benefit.

"I want to take us from the problem to how we can potentially solve that problem," Dunn said.

"We need to make sure that the law represents real-life situations of today and not yesterday, but the law doesn't change itself."

Dunn said the struggles that people face are many but now is not the time to complain, it is the time to act, and he had a great deal of good advice on how to do so.

"For you to get an issue critical to you on [a policy maker's] radar screen, we have to know who you are," Dunn said. "Plant a seed, seize the time when representatives get elected to let them know who you are."

Dunn suggested a phone call of congratulations after a victory, a birthday card and even an invite to a holiday party. He said not to worry, he won't show up at your party, but it is important none-the-less.

"It tells me you care about the relationship," Dunn said. "You are fostering a professional relationship and lets me know you are watching me. Don't call for the first time when you need attention immediately."

The senator stressed how little things can make the difference and get you that all-important meeting with your representative when your issue comes before the Legislature.

Some presenters at seminars scheduled throughout the day, like Sonya Rosen M.D., from the Department of Geriatric Medicine at UCLA, spoke on issues regarding the caretaking of elders and how families can better cope. Rosen said more geriatricians are needed to help coordinate the care of older Americans. She said the elderly often suffer from polypharmacy—a situation in which they have multiple specialists who don't communicate, which increases the chance of bad drug interactions. More geriatric specialists would alleviate this problem as well as ease the burden on caretakers who may be struggling to keep up with all the details.

Other experts spoke about childcare and explored the alternatives that new parents have. Robyn Crowther, of the firm Caldwell Leslie, said family friendly policies implemented in her firm allowed her to achieve success while raising a family. Among these policies are 100 percent paid health care, flexible work schedules and encouraging maternity and paternity leave.

"I realize that most families do not have these resources," Crowther said. "I hope that our success serves as an example for other employers."

Crowther's employer was one of two companies to receive the first Employer of the Year Award presented at the symposium. The award was designed to recognize employers in the law field who have achieved excellence in the area of creating a family-friendly work environment. The firms Caldwell Leslie, and Kirkland and Ellis were chosen for distinguishing themselves from the rest of the field. Both firms were honored for their pioneering policies that allow families to flourish while maintaining successful practices.

Pasternak took a moment after the presentation to underscore how important their work is.

"It is inspiring to everyone," she said. "It gives us hope for the future."

The BHBA is creating a resource guide that will cover topics discussed at the symposium that

will be available to the general public. Law Review Journal will also be dedicating an entire issue of the journal to the subject with articles written by the panelists.