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ATTORNEY AT LAW

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MAGAZINE®

Features:

Julie Braman Kane

— **Attorney of the Month**

The Haggard Law Firm, P.A.

— **Law Firm of the Month**





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES:

- 8 Julie Braman Kane**
Attorney of the Month
By Lesley Boyd
- 15 The Haggard Law Firm, P.A.**
Law Firm of the Month
By Lalaena Gonzales-Figueroa
- 21 Women in Law**

EDITORIAL:

- 4 The Most Influential Women In My Career**
By Sara Walters
- 5 Wise Ways to Transfer Wealth**
By Adam E. Carlin
- 6 Champion Legal Graphics and Video Modernizing Courtroom Presentations**
By Lesley Boyd
- 7 Writing an Engagement Letter: Starting on The Right Foot**
By Eric Neuman
- 11 Set Aside Your Fear Of Public Speaking – Embrace It**
By Dave Bloom
- 14 Add Value To Your Services So Prospects And Clients Choose You—And Would Not Even Think About Hiring Another Lawyer**
By Trey Ryder
- 19 What Is Enabling The Cybercrime Explosion To Continue?**
By Victor Nappe
- 20 The History of Women in Law**
By Michelle A. Delancey

SPECIAL SECTIONS:

- 12 Association of Legal Administrators South Florida Chapter Retrospective 40th Anniversary**

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We Goofed!

In last month's issue we neglected to include the following at the end of Adam Carlin's article "Rebalancing Your Portfolio."

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Our apologies to Mr. Carlin and Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC.

FROM THE PUBLISHER



Rhenne Leon
Publisher

We hope you enjoy this special issue featuring Julie Braman Kane as our Attorney of the Month, and all of the other women attorneys that grace our pages in this issue. A special thanks to Michael Haggard and Stacy Laffere of The Haggard Law Firm.

We are excited to announce our new edition of *Attorney At Law Magazine*: Fort Lauderdale and the Palm Beaches. Our first issue will be distributed in September 2012.

We welcome nominations for our Attorney of the Month Covers and Law Firm Feature Stories for the Miami edition and the Fort Lauderdale and the Palm Beaches edition. *Attorney At Law Magazine's* Educational Marketing is for attorneys and professionals that want to write their own columns in their own area of expertise. Please inquire to see if your specialty area is still available.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Our goal is to be part of your success in the legal community and in your private practice.

All the best,

Rhenne

The Most Influential Women In My Career

By Sara Walters

It is impossible to pinpoint just one woman who has influenced my career. In the nine years since I was admitted as a member to the Florida Bar, I have had the privilege to not only work with some amazing women but also call them each a friend. These women have not only taught me about the law but also about life. Most of all, they have taught me how to be a better lawyer, mother, wife and friend. Two in particular, however, have stood out.

Shortly after passing the Florida bar in 2003, I was working as an attorney at a large Fort Lauderdale law firm. In 2004, I was assigned to work with a new partner at the firm. This woman was smart, aggressive, direct, honest and most of all passionate. As a young lawyer, I was absolutely terrified and intimidated by her. I spent hours deliberating over the minutiae of any assignment from her. I constantly sought her approval and validation. I watched her every move in an attempt to soak in as much of her experience and knowledge as I could. As a result, this incredible woman taught me how to critically think as a lawyer and helped me find my courage and voice in a courtroom. She provided me a role model of a strong and independent woman. Even though we haven't worked together in six years, I still consider her a mentor. But above all, I call her a friend.

In 2007, my career took me to a small boutique insurance defense practice in Davie, Florida. It was here that I met Barbra Wohrle. At the time I met Barbra, her sons were 3 years old and 14 months old, and she had lost her husband the year prior to his 8 year battle with brain cancer. Yet, I cannot recall a time when Barbra came to the office without a smile and a positive attitude. I have never heard her complain that she is tired, stressed or overwhelmed. She is not only a bright and talented trial attorney, but an amazing mother (and father) to her two boys. In her "spare" time, Barbra runs marathons and the Greg Wohrle Foundation, a charity she founded in 2006 which raises money for brain tumor research. She is a single mom literally doing it all and she is one of the strongest and most fearless women I know. In 2011,

I became a mother. One of the greatest challenges I have faced as a working mother is trying to do both of my "jobs" as well as the other. I have struggled with finding the time to excel at my legal practice and finding the time to spend with my son. However, watching Barbra single-handedly juggle every element of her life, I have learned that it is possible to strike the balance required to excel in all facets of my life. Her strength and perseverance throughout the obstacles she's faced have taught me it is not only possible to simultaneously be a great lawyer and mother, but to do so with a smile and a positive attitude.

These are just a couple of the incredible women I have come across in my 9 years of legal practice. I look forward to who the next 9 years of my practice will bring me.



Sara Walters is an associate in the litigation department at Miami-based Pathman Lewis, LLP. Ms. Walters' practice areas include commercial litigation, commercial foreclosures and general business litigation. She can be reached at swalters@pathmanlewis.com.

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Wise Ways to Transfer Wealth

By Adam E. Carlin

"He who gives while he lives also knows where it goes" -Percy Ross

Americans are among the most generous individuals in the world. In fact in 2010, according to the Giving USA Foundation, total charitable giving grew to \$291 billion. While philanthropy is as American as apple pie, many high net worth individuals want to ensure that they are optimizing the most efficient tools available for giving away their assets.

With that in mind, I have created an informative review of ways individuals can familiarize themselves with practices for a lifetime of giving that not only benefits heirs, charities and alma-maters, but also enables donors to ensure their money is allocated appropriately.

Outright Gifts to Charity

This is often considered one of the easiest forms of charitable giving. Generally, these types of gifts offer a charitable income tax deduction of up to 50 percent of adjusted gross income, and any unused portion of the deduction can be carried forward for five years. But there are potential disadvantages to consider when making an outright gift. For example, unless otherwise specified, there is the potential for loss of control over the charity's future use of the gift.

Designating A Charity As Beneficiary of Life Insurance

This strategy incorporates naming a particular charity or group of charities as the beneficiaries of a donor's life insurance. This strategy is easy to execute and can also allow for more control as the donor often continues to retain the right to revoke the gift by changing the named beneficiary of the insurance.

A Charitable Remainder Trust

This trust distributes a payout from the trust to its beneficiaries for a period of time after which the remaining assets are distributed to your charities of choice. You can determine the time frame of the trust— it can last a lifetime or for a fixed term of up to 20 years— as well as the amount of annual payouts.

Charitable Lead Trusts

Ideally, these trusts are funded with assets that are expected to appreciate over time. The charity of your choice receives a fixed annual payout from the trust, and the remainder goes to your family members or other beneficiaries of the trust at the end of the charity's payout term. Unlike charitable remainder trusts, generally speaking, charitable lead trusts do not provide for an income tax deduction.

Charitable Gift Annuity

This annuity is among the oldest and most simple methods of making a charitable gift, which also provides for a cash flow to the donor or another party designated by the donor. The Charitable Gift Annuity is a method of making a charitable gift while retaining a cash flow for yourself or others. It's an agreement between a donor and a charity, whereby the charity, in return for a gift, agrees to pay a fixed sum of money for a period of time that is typically measured by the donor's age.

Donor Advised Fund

This fund is another simple technique for making a charitable contribution while continuing to make grant or spending recommendations for these funds in the future. Typically, these funds are considered easy to establish, low cost and flexible methods for charitable giving. These funds are often used instead of a private foundation because they are simpler and offer potential tax advantages.

Private Foundation

A private foundation is a legal entity set up by an individual, family or group of individuals for the purpose of philanthropy; management and grant-making are supervised by its own trustees or directors.

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Champion Legal Graphics and Video

Modernizing Courtroom Presentations

By Lesley Boyd

If “a picture is worth a thousand words” then demonstrative exhibits, animated sequences and synchronized video deposition testimony created by Champion Legal Graphics and Video in conjunction with sound legal counsel provide a winning combination of words and audiovisual cues. Accustomed to multimedia presentations in every facet of life, many of today’s jurists require persuasive visuals that provide a gripping platform to translate case facts into an understandable, memorable and educational format. Brian Cummins and Fabio Cicogna, founders of Champion Legal, have honed their combined 30 years of audiovisual and graphic presentations experience to fill this necessary niche in the legal arena.

“Lawyers are beginning to realize the value of utilizing slick presentations rather than static PowerPoints in the courtroom,” noted Cummins. “Just as their legal argument must be polished, the graphics presentation must also be up to par.”

Adding their professional flair to presentations ranging from poster boards to helping condense complex, document-driven cases for juries and mediators to creating documentary-style, mini-legal dramas, Champion Legal takes pride in their contributions in securing winning verdicts. Working closely with their attorney partners, Champion Legal creates tailored graphic solutions that complement their unique case trying style.

Notable Partners

A preferred vendor for The Haggard Law Firm, Champion Legal has contributed to several of their landmark personal injury trials including a \$102 million verdict on behalf of Sami Barrak, who was left a quadriplegic due to a gunshot wound. The Haggard Law Firm has relied on Champion Legal from its inception for all of their legal presentation needs including mediations and trials.

“Champion Legal has always exceeded our expectations when it comes to the firm’s legal graphics needs,” said Michael Haggard, Esq. “They have contributed to each of the firm’s \$100 million+ verdicts after which opposing counsel commented on the creative and effective presentations we utilized.”

Recently, Champion Legal’s contributions were instrumental

in the award of a \$67 million verdict against TD Bank brought by Coquina Investments. In a \$1.2 billion Ponzi scheme devised by disbarred Florida attorney Scott Rothstein of Rothstein Rosenfeldt Adler PA, victims were told that they were buying stakes in settlements of cases for which his Fort Lauderdale, Florida, law firm had amassed evidence and confronted potential defendants in sexual and employment discrimination cases. Not only were the cases fictional, but the settlements were as well. Coquina Investment’s attorneys, David and Nina Mandel, in conjunction with Champion Legal’s team, proved TD Bank was intricately involved in Rothstein’s criminal activity.

“Throughout the three month trial, Champion Legal’s work was consistently outstanding, in terms of creativity, quick turnaround, and ease of presentation in court,” noted Nina Stillman Mandel. “We wouldn’t want to try a case without them.”

“This was a rare circumstance in which the victims were able to recover some of their initial investment,” said Cummins. “Working directly with the experts on the case, we created editorial artwork, a compilation of video testimonials from across the nation, graphs and charts to prove to the jury that not only was TD Bank aware of Rothstein’s scheme to defraud its victims, but also helped legitimize his scheme, which resulted in an unprecedented jury award for Coquina Investments.”

The Total Package

In addition to its unparalleled graphics presentations, Champion Legal also provides all of the courtroom presentation materials needed at trial including projectors and screens as well as ensuring there are no last-minute glitches to derail the trial.

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Writing an Engagement Letter:

Starting on The Right Foot

By Eric Neuman

The old expression “the cobbler’s children have no shoes” still rings true today for most attorneys when it comes to ensuring that they obtain signed engagement letters from all clients. This old expression refers to the fact that a busy cobbler will be so busy making shoes for his customers that he has no time to make some for his own children. Hence the state of most lawyers’ practices. We would never dare advise a client to enter into a deal as significant as hiring an attorney without a signed agreement memorializing the material terms of the engagement. Yet, many attorneys, wrapped up in the excitement of landing that next big client, plow forward based on only a handshake.

Often, we are ethically bound to send the client a written engagement agreement (like in contingency fee matters), but even where such letters are not mandated by the bar, they are required by the laws of prudent business practice. Sending a well drafted engagement letter gets both lawyer and client started on the right foot and ensures that their expectations are aligned. Follow these tips to avoid dissatisfied clients, unpaid bills and professional liability claims:

1. Keep it simple. Well-written engagement letters should be easily understood by any lay person. Remember that in addition to your client, your engagement letter may end up being read by a judge, juror, opposing counsel or bar counsel.

2. Don’t get burned by the boilerplate. Create a form engagement letter to be used firm-wide, including the usual trimmings to protect yourself if things go badly. Provide for recovery of fees and costs if you are forced to collect unpaid invoices, choice of law and venue, pre-suit mediation, arbitration (if permissible) and accrual of interest on late payments.

3. One size does not fit all. Boilerplate terms and form engagement letters are helpful to get you started, but every client and matter have their own nuances. Tweak each engagement letter to ensure that it covers any issues particular to the client and matter at hand.

4. Old clients and old habits. New matters call for new engagement letters, even with established clients. Even if your billable rate has not changed and you are not requiring payment of additional retainer, a new engagement letter will outline your new scope of services and confirm your authority to represent the client. Also send a revised engagement letter if the nature of the representation or the parties later change.

5. Avoid the mystery retainer. Even sophisticated clients can

be confused by how retainers operate. Be clear about how you intend to hold and apply retainer monies. If you plan to hold an “evergreen” retainer, then explain that the retainer will be held as a form of security deposit until the conclusion of the matter. Similarly, if the retainer is simply an advance to be applied to invoices, say so. If you are not requiring an initial retainer, you should still reserve the right to require a retainer later into the engagement, in case things take an unexpected turn.

6. Describe the scope. Be sure to define the scope of your engagement. Are you simply reviewing documents and giving advice or will you also be preparing a contract? Are you sending a demand letter or will you also file suit? What about appeals, tax issues, judgment collection and other ancillary matters? Expressly carve out any agreed-upon limitations of your engagement.

7. It takes two to tango. To allow you to provide effective representation, clients should agree to cooperate with counsel and to fully and accurately disclose all facts and documents that may be relative to the matter. Clients should also agree to make themselves reasonably available to attend meetings, mediation, court, etc.

8. Who’s on first. What’s on second. Correctly identify your client and the opposing parties. Often, a prospective client will speak casually about corporate entities and individuals, without properly identifying their formal names. Clarity here will also help you avoid conflicts of interest when taking on new clients and matters in the future. Consider requiring individuals to guarantee payment of fees on behalf of their entities, especially where it is clear from the start that the entity may be insolvent. On the attorney side, the engagement letter should identify the specific attorneys in your firm who will be handling the matter.

9. Sign on the dotted line. An unsigned engagement letter may do more harm than good, if the client later argues that he or she did not agree to the stated terms. A client’s refusal to discuss or agree on the fundamental aspects of engagement, sign an agreement, or pay a retainer is a red-flag.



Attorney Eric J. Neuman specializes in construction and real estate litigation. He is a partner in the law firm of Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP in Boca Raton, Florida and can be reached at 561.241.0414 and eneuman@bdblwl.com.



Julie Braman Kane

Colson Hicks Eidson

By Lesley Boyd

Julie Braman Kane exemplifies the ideals of ethical practices, professionalism, compassion for her clients and protection of her clients' rights. Throughout her 21-year career, Kane has earned a myriad of accolades from professional organizations, represented clients in cases that have resulted in multi-million dollar verdicts and settlements, chaired numerous professional committees and donated time to serve her surrounding community. Today, as a partner at Colson Hicks Eidson, she is recognized as a steadfast litigator and champion and mentor for female attorneys nationwide.

Originally determined to become a doctor, Kane excelled at academics and was accepted to medical school. However, she quickly discovered her passion for the law and applied for law school at the University of Miami, where she shined as a Dean's Merit Scholar and graduated cum laude. As an attorney representing injured plaintiffs in high-level litigation, Kane finds her scientific background helpful, especially in personal injury cases and automotive products liability.

The hand of fate took hold when, as a first year law student in 1991, Kane landed a job as a law clerk at Colson Hicks Eidson, one of South Florida's oldest and most recognized litigation firms. Although she understood the position was specifically a summer-only internship, Kane proved herself a valuable asset and was hired as an associate when she graduated in 1993. She was promoted to partner in 1999 while pregnant with her first child.

"I have had the privilege of working at the same firm for my entire career and learning from some of the best legal minds in the country," said Kane. "My partners have always pushed and



inspired me to reach higher. From the beginning, I was given an opportunity to become more involved in cases than most young lawyers have the chance to. They taught me to work closely with my clients and to always strive to provide the highest quality representation possible. They also encouraged me to get involved in community and professional organizations, and have helped ignite a passion in me about legal work that echoes their own."

At this point in her career, Kane chooses to accept only a small number of significant cases, averaging 12-15 at a time, and

focuses on developing a solid rapport with her clients and devoting personal attention to their legal needs. In addition to her ongoing client roster, Kane coordinates the firm's pro bono work and frequently acts as guardian ad litem for children in contested custody cases.

Lauded for her professional accomplishments both inside and out of the courtroom, Kane has received several notable awards. In 2010, she was recognized as a "Most Effective Lawyer" by the *Daily Business Review* for her work as part of the receivership team on the Mutual Benefits case, formerly the nation's leading viatical settlement company. As the largest Securities Exchange Commission enforcement action

ever in South Florida, the SEC shut down Mutual Benefits in 2004 for selling unlicensed securities and appointed Colson Hicks Eidson partner Roberto Martinez as receiver. As part of the receivership team, Kane was instrumental in recovering in excess of \$120 million for more than 30,000 defrauded investors worldwide.

A testament to Kane's dedication to her clients and stellar work ethic, she worked closely with Martinez in the early stages of the receivership case while home on doctor-prescribed, maternity bed rest. During a period of time when Kane otherwise would have been unable to contribute to her clients' cases, she made it a point to stay involved and completed a tremendous amount of work from home. Her contributions were instrumental in gaining critical information for her co-counsel.

Over the course of her career, Kane has secured multi-million dollar verdicts and settlements for clients, including a \$38.3 million verdict in a medical malpractice and pharmaceutical negligence case in which her client suffered a debilitating condition while undergoing spinal surgery. The jury recognized the tremendous harm that negligence in a medical setting can cause, resulting in not only a significant jury award, but hopefully also effecting future changes in the way and level of care with which medical care is provided in operating rooms. The significant outcome in this case resulted from years of advocacy by Kane and her co-counsel, Colson Hicks Eidson Partner Joe Kalbac.



Left to Right: Colson Hicks Eidson partners Lewis S. "Mike" Eidson, Julie Braman Kane, Ervin A. Gonzalez, & Patrick S. Montoya

Photo by Harvey Bitt

Professional Affiliations

In addition to being an exemplary litigator, Kane is passionate about serving the legal profession, motivating female trial attorneys and serving the community.

Following in the footsteps of several Colson Hicks Eidson partners before her – including the firm's Co-founder Bill Colson and Partner Lewis S. "Mike" Eidson – Kane has been an active member of the American Association for Justice (AAJ), the world's largest trial bar, for more than 15 years. Recently elected Parliamentarian of the AAJ, she has served on the Board of Governors, the Justice PAC Board of Trustees, and the National College of Advocates Board of Trustees. She also previously served on the AAJ's Executive Committee and Budget Committee, and chaired both its Products Liability Section and Women's Caucus.

"In a nutshell, the purpose of AAJ is to protect the right to trial by jury," said Kane. "Through my involvement in this organization, I believe we are truly making a difference in maintaining all Americans' rights to access the court system when harmed by someone's negligence."

Consistently recognized for her leadership in the legal profession and her dedication to community members, consumers and the trial bar, Kane has been a recipient of the Association's Marie Lambert Award, Joe Tonahill Award, Distinguished Service Award, and Weideman Wysocki Award.

In addition to her vast involvement with the AAJ, Kane also serves on the Board of Directors for the Florida Justice



Association and has chaired the Women's Caucus and the New Lawyers Division. A past president of the Miami-Dade Chapter of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers, Kane also recently served as a Commissioner for the Florida Elections Commission for which she was appointed by then - Governor Charlie Crist in 2008.

In 2010, the University of Miami School of Law honored Kane with the Alumni Leadership Award, which is given annually to attorneys who have distinguished themselves in their careers and serve as role models for the next generation.

Advice to Future Generations

As the saying goes, "it takes a village to raise a child." Kane believes the same idea can be applied to attorneys, suggesting experienced lawyers can play an important role as new lawyers develop their skills. The success and failures of a young attorney are directly correlated with the support system they have from day one.

Crediting her success to a long list of mentors, Kane has been paying it forward for years. She truly enjoys inciting a love of practicing and of the law itself to future generations.

"Today, there is an equal number, if not more, of women

graduating from law school every year," said Kane. "As such, attorneys are being judged more on their merit in the workplace rather than the formerly accepted practice of assuming that men would make better attorneys simply because of their gender."

"I would encourage young attorneys to go out and network in order to meet people who can help you in the future," explained Kane. "You never know when you will need to reach out to a peer or potential mentor."

According to Kane, while there is no "magic" place to look for advice and guidance, there are many organizations designed for just this purpose. Kane recommends the Florida Association for Women Lawyers, the Cuban American Bar Association (CABA), the Dade County Bar and AAJ for reference and networking opportunities, although there are many other fine organizations available.

"Although it is wonderful to identify a single mentor to help define your career and goals, today's new graduates need to understand that they are one of 1,000 trying to do the same thing," mentioned Kane. "You will find that most attorneys who have been practicing as long as I have are more than willing to help."

Secret to Success

With an active legal practice, a husband, three kids – ages 7, 7 and 12 – and two dogs, Kane somehow manages to keep a healthy work/life balance.

"I love to practice law and the only way I can remain successful for my clients and for my family is by having the support of my husband as well as the backing of a law firm that understands the importance of balance," said Kane.

"There has not been one singularly defining moment in my life that has brought me to where I am today, but rather a series of auspicious moments," explained Kane. "I am grateful for the combination of incredibly good fortune in finding a perfect fit the first time out in the job market from my law firm, an insatiable thirst for knowledge about my field of expertise, incredible mentors and peers, rewarding appointments in professional organizations that support my ideals and a strong partner at home who has supported me every step of the way."

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Set Aside Your Fear Of Public Speaking – Embrace It

By Dave Bloom

Remember: It's all in your mind.

Sure, there's the old idea that public speaking is everyone's number-one fear. But who's in control of your own mind? You are, of course. Once you know that, you'll find that there are many ways to put yourself in a position to nail that presentation.

Here are some valuable tips to help prepare yourself:

1. Preparation. It tops our list for good reason. Preparation is the key. Ask yourself:

What are the main points that I want to get across? Create an outline. Write and rewrite your speech. Don't expect to memorize every word. But when you know the material inside and out – and know your audience – then your thoughts will easily flow.

2. Learn from the experts. Watch some of the best speakers perform their magic. Notice the different styles, their expressions, an occasional smile when appropriate, the serious look (also when appropriate). Notice how they seem to be enjoying their presentation. It really *should* be enjoyable. Remember, don't fight it, embrace it.

3. Practice. And practice. And practice again. The more you practice your presentation, the more confident you will be, and the more comfortable you'll feel.

4. Videotape your practice sessions. It's one of the most valuable tools you can use to learn from your presentations. You'll quickly pick up pointers from watching yourself on tape. It's really an amazing tool to improve your public speaking.

5. Try to relax. If you miss a line, no one will know. Nobody will have your notes, and quite frankly, nobody will really care that you missed a line or a thought. So be kind to yourself. Mistakes happen. Just move on with your presentation as if nothing went wrong.

6. Slow down. It's rather typical of presenters to speak at the speed of lightning. That's because they're often thinking: *The faster I speak, the faster I will sit down.* But slowing down has lots of advantages. It gives your audience every chance to understand your every word. Pacing is important.

7. The eye factor. It's important to keep your eyes steadily moving across the room. Take them from the left side of the room to the middle of the room, then to the right side, then back the other way. Also, move them from the front of the audience to the back. Be aware of your notes, but don't fix your eyes on them. If you do that, the audience will feel that you're not prepared. Again, *preparation* is the key.

8. Go ahead, tickle my funny bone. Yes, it's great to work a funny line into your presentation. Just remember you're not a comedian on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno." Be lighthearted and your audience will love it. Remember: They're really on your side. They want to enjoy what you have to say.

9. Be yourself. It's who you are. We're all human. We've all had a little hesitation about getting up in front of a crowd and speaking at a podium with a microphone. Being yourself will go a long way toward building your enthusiasm to deliver your presentation.

10. Uh, say *what*? Yes, it's perfectly fine to utter an occasional "uh." It's conversational. Television reporters, news anchors, weathercasters and all performers say "uh" from time to time. It's perfectly normal. Anything else might seem stilted.

Public speaking really comes down to preparation. The more you prepare, the more comfortable you will feel. It's a great feeling when you know your material well. Remember what it felt like when you aced a test in school? You can feel just as good when it's time to speak in public – if you know your material backward and forward.

It's often said that the best writing is writing that's edited again and again. Well, that goes for public speaking, too. The best presentation is one that is practiced again, and again and again ... and again.



Dave Bloom is a veteran former television news anchor/reporter with more than 20 years' experience in the South Florida media market. Dave is the president of Fort Lauderdale-based Bloom PR, which is celebrating its 10th year. It's located on the Internet at www.ournewsroom.com. Dave can be reached at dave.bloom@ournewsroom.com or (954) 332-2375.



Association of Legal Administrators South Florida Chapter Retrospective 40th Anniversary



Photo by Harvey Blit Photography

Current Officers of ALASOFLA as of April 11th, 2012 (from left to right)

Director Marlon Mendez - Holland & Knight LLP

Director Victoria L. Allen, CLM – Rogers Morris & Ziegler LLP

Secretary Edna Rosen, CLM – Rice Pugatch Robinson & Schiller, P.A.

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Treasurer Mario Rumasuglia – Berger Singerman LLP

South Florida Chapter was formed on June 1, 1972

June 1, 2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the South Florida Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators (ALASOFLA). The ALA was formed in 1971 to provide support to professionals involved in the management of law firms, corporate legal departments and government legal agencies. It was incorporated in Pennsylvania and was founded by Bradford W. Hildebrandt, Robert I. Weil, and Mary Ann Altman. By June 1971, 100 legal administrators had joined the National Association.

South Florida played a prominent role in the history of the ALA. In 1972, ALA's first National Annual Educational Conference and Exposition was held at Pier 66 in Fort Lauderdale, drawing 151 administrators nationwide and 10 exhibitors. In March 1972, ALA's first chapter was formed in Richmond, Virginia, and was followed in June by the South Florida chapter which had 10 members.

Carole Hrebik, an early member of ALASOFLA who has been with Podhurst Orseck, P.A. for 47 years fondly remembers being able to call on any member for advice. "Legal administration was a new field back then. Many of us moved up through the ranks into management positions, having first started out as legal secretaries. Our knowledge with respect to human resources, employment law, budgets, cost control, finance, emerging technologies and general management of a law firm was limited to our own experiences and therefore challenging. The creation of ALA was huge and exciting for us. It was immensely helpful in providing educational opportunities and networking support at a local and national level." Carole is a past president of ALASOFLA.

What started in 1971 as a fledgling educational and mentoring program has evolved over the years into a highly respected professional organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing the competence and professionalism of all members of the legal management team.

ALASOFLA members, known as legal administrators (LA) have faithfully served the South Florida legal community for over 40 years. The ALA is an integral part of the success of any law firm.

ALASOFLA holds monthly networking or educational events and publishes a legal management newsletter quarterly, "The Network." It hosts free of charge monthly webinars for its members. Since 2005, the

chapter has held an annual event as part of the ALA's "Community Challenge" to benefit Susan G. Komen For The Cure®/Miami/Ft. Lauderdale and has donated in excess of \$125,000.00 to that cause. The chapter has supported a scholarship program for the past 35 years that benefits graduating high school or college students who are dependents or spouses of local chapter members. Its annual "Legal Expo" has evolved to become South Florida's premier signature legal event.

Since 1997 ALA has offered members an opportunity to enhance their credentials by becoming a Certified Legal Manager (CLM). The CLM certification program allows a qualified legal administrator to demonstrate, through an examination process, a mastery of the core areas of knowledge identified as essential to the effective performance of a principal administrator. Claudia Hoffman and Vicki Smith-Bilt were the chapter's first Certified Legal Managers. The chapter has 10 CLMs with plans to significantly increase that number in the next two years.

Today ALA serves over 10,000 members and has 114 chapters located in more than 30 countries worldwide. The South Florida Chapter has almost 170 members.



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Add Value To Your Services So Prospects And Clients Choose You —And Would Not Even Think About Hiring Another Lawyer

By Trey Ryder

You differ from other lawyers in many positive ways. These we call your competitive advantages. Now let's add to that list by seeing what else you can do that will make you so unusual that prospects would not even think about hiring a competing attorney.

Adding value can relate to many different things: how fast you respond to clients, how accessible you are, the services you offer, and your staffing and client resources.

You can do many things to add value to your services. Make sure that what you do adds value from your prospect's and client's point of view.

Here's an example: For three years I leased a vehicle. During the lease I took the vehicle to the dealer for service. Then I bought the vehicle. Since the lease had ended, I was thinking about having the

vehicle serviced by someone other than the dealer.

But since Payson is a small mountain town, I don't have many choices for good, reliable mechanics. So I continued to go to the dealer.

Still, it was getting to be a hassle. I had to take the car in the morning — talk with the service writers — and then get a ride back to my office. That would consume an hour. At the end of the day, I would again shut down my office. Then the shuttle would take me to the dealership to get my car. That took another hour. So on any day that my car went in for a \$19.95 oil change, I would lose two billable hours.

Over the three years I went there for service, the service manager and I had become friends. One day I said, "I like coming here for service. But I have a problem: I can't afford to give up two billable hours every time I get the oil changed."

He calmly turned to me and said, "No problem. I'll send somebody to pick up the car." It never occurred to me how easy it would be for him to solve my problem. This problem — which was costing me hundreds of dollars of billable time — he solved in seconds. What's more, it cost him almost nothing because the person who shuttled my car was working at the dealership anyway.

The pick-up and delivery service he provides has a very high perceived value to me. Yet it costs him next to nothing.

I encourage you to look for something similar. What can you do that might take a heavy burden off your clients and shift that burden to you? Hopefully, you could do things with your existing capacity and staff.

Ask yourself, "What can I do that will be so attractive to my clients that they will hire me every time and not even think about hiring another lawyer?"

These new ways you add value to your services become additional competitive advantages, which you can emphasize in your marketing message.



The Sundari Foundation, Inc. operates the Lotus House Women's Shelter as a free, holistic shelter and resource center for homeless women and children in the heart of one of the poorest neighborhoods in Miami, itself one of the poorest large cities in the United States. With programming ranging from counseling and job training to art, creative writing and yoga, Lotus House is not a typical shelter, but a sanctuary where the minds, bodies, hearts and spirits of women and children in need are supported, nurtured, uplifted and afforded an opportunity to learn and grow on every level. Women and children are offered free housing for up to a year, with wrap-around support services and access to a wide range of resources that educate, empower and uplift.



For more information on the Lotus House and other initiatives of the Sundari Foundation, please visit our website www.lotushouseshelter.org or call 305.438.0556.



Trey Ryder specializes in education-based marketing for lawyers. He designs dignified marketing programs for lawyers and law firms in the United States, Canada and other English-speaking countries. Trey works from his offices in Payson, Arizona and Juneau, Alaska. To read more of Trey's articles, visit the Lawyer Marketing Advisor at www.treyryder.com and add your name to Trey's e-mail distribution list.



The Haggard Law Firm, P.A.: Advocating for Victims Beyond the Courtroom

By Lalaena Gonzales-Figueroa

A firm noted for achieving unprecedented awards on behalf of its clientele, The Haggard Law Firm has proven that its attorneys excel beyond any single trial. Leaders among their professional colleagues and incredibly well-versed in their respective areas of expertise, the firm's accomplished lawyers are not only advocates for their clientele; they are fervent activists who have successfully lobbied for widespread change. "We want to impact the way things work, to impact the actions of companies and corporations," remarks Michael A. Haggard. "Ultimately, we are looking to amend behaviors through local, statewide and federal legislation."

Founded by Michael's father, Miami native and Senior Partner William Andrew "Andy" Haggard, the firm upholds a legacy of success established through years of innovative and caring practice. A personal injury practice, notes Michael Haggard, is one "that is in a constant battle with the world around us." He acknowledges, "Personal injury lawsuits are often viewed as problematic or even frivolous. But the bottom line is that when it happens to your family, you see things differently." Haggard continues, "When it's *your* child who has been entrapped at the bottom of a Jacuzzi or pool and eight people can't pull him out, it becomes intensely apparent why the civil justice system is so



Bottom row from left to right: Jeannete C. Lewis, Wm. Andrew Haggard, Michael A. Haggard and Douglas J. McCarron
Top row from left to right: James C. Blecke, Christopher L. Marlowe, Todd J. Michaels and Jason R. Brenner

Photo by Robert Klemm Photography



Bottom row from left to right: Wm. Andrew Haggard, Michael A. Haggard, Jeannete C. Lewis and Douglas J. McCarron
Top row from left to right: James C. Blecke, Christopher L. Marlowe, Todd J. Michaels and Jason R. Brenner

important. The fundamental truth is that corporate America is concerned with the bottom line, but the problem is when the bottom line takes precedence over safety and the preservation of life. This corporate philosophy forces civil litigation to become the catalyst for safety-related changes on a state and federal level.”

He is succinct, unapologetic. Haggard’s candor reveals a deep-seated belief in his professional purpose, which extends well beyond a given judgment. Haggard and his colleagues truly aspire to make this world a safer place, and they’re taking measures to accomplish those goals. Speaking regularly at industry summits across the country and around the world, the attorneys with The Haggard Law Firm are recognized as experts in their respective practice areas. Achievements aside, practice partners and associates are a tight-knit group. The firm is family-oriented: joining two generations of Haggards is Michael’s brother-in-law, Douglas J. McCarron. While the remaining team of attorneys and support personnel aren’t related, they are, notes Haggard, “like family.”

Andy Haggard served as a judge advocate (JAG) in the United States Air Force. After earning distinction as the youngest ever military judge selected in the field of trial litigation, he embarked upon an accomplished career as a civilian attorney. Among his notable successes is the 1976 \$5.3 million verdict in *Stead v. Riddell*, in which a permanently and severely disabled high school football player pursued damages from the manufacturer

of his inadequate helmet. For his family, the victory signified far more than a substantial payout; the settlement monies allowed the family to provide long-term care for the young quadriplegic.

Haggard and his firm were also instrumental in the passing of the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act of 2007. Proof that hope triumphs over tragedy, the legislation provides incentives for states to adopt comprehensive pool safety laws to protect individuals from life-threatening injuries and untimely deaths caused by dangerous pool and spa drains and pumps.

After joining the firm as a professional partner in 2001, Michael Haggard has diligently

upheld the tradition of excellence established by his father. A specialist in pool drowning accidents, negligent security, wrongful death, unsafe premises insurance coverage matters and products liability, he won national recognition in 2003 after achieving back-to-back \$100 million verdicts in cases pertaining to children involved in pool accidents. A third \$100 million verdict was awarded by a jury in 2007 in a negligent security case, deemed to be the largest of its kind for that genre of case law.

Partner Jeannete Lewis clerked with Michael Haggard after graduating cum laude with a juris doctorate from St. Thomas University School of Law in 1993. A specialization in general aviation, international personal injury and federal practice divisions has led to successful cases worldwide. Her accomplished career has been best defined, she says, by the relationships that have been cultivated and nurtured throughout the course of her cases. “We don’t work with cases or clients,” she states. “These are people and families with immediate and long-term needs, and I appreciate the opportunity to work with them.” Empathetic and incredibly proficient, Jeannete is a standout within her area of expertise.

For over 10 years, Douglas McCarron has focused on representing victims of serious and catastrophic injury including individuals suffering from construction or auto accidents, negligent security, pool drowning and wrongful death. McCarron became a firm partner in 2007, joining his father-in-law and



William A. Haggard



Michael A. Haggard



Jeannete C. Lewis



Douglas J. McCarron



Christopher L. Marlowe



Todd J. Michaels



Jason R. Brenner



James C. Blecke

brother-in-law in a shared professional and philosophical vision of the firm's purpose. "We are here for our clients," he asserts. "Their best interests are at the heart of our actions. Our firm doesn't just state that. We live it."

Within his first four years with The Haggard Law Firm, attorney Christopher Marlowe secured nearly \$15 million in settlements and trial verdicts on behalf of his clients. He is recognized as a well-rounded professional with knowledge of a range of personal injury cases including negligent security, pool drowning, auto accident, and wrongful death.

Todd Michaels, who joined The Haggard Law Firm in 2009, utilizes the significant trial and courtroom experience he gained as a criminal defense attorney. His high-profile cases include the representation of the family of Juan Carlos Rivera, a Coral Gables Senior High School student who was murdered on campus by a classmate. Todd has also served as first chair on a number of matters, with a specialty in premises liability and negligent security cases.

Jason Brenner joined The Haggard Law Firm as a law clerk in June 2009. He has since worked his way up the ranks, first as a research attorney and most recently as an associate attorney with the firm. Brenner handles an array of cases for the firm including

negligent security, auto accident, wrongful death and other personal injury cases involving catastrophic injuries. He was an integral team member of the *Amanda Slone v. Cornerstone* case, which was awarded \$1.6 million via jury verdict in June 2011.

The Haggard Law Firm is a unique entity. Despite its status as a boutique office, the firm is known for its willingness to engage in high-profile cases bearing significant financial risk. "For over forty five years we have represented victims and their families without reservations," remarks Michael Haggard. "We understand that a case or trial may be the only shot a family has to achieve resolution following a devastating incident. We care, and we take it to heart knowing that we have the opportunity to make the ultimate difference in our clients' lives."

The Haggard Law Firm has earned a reputation for precedent-setting cases. In December 2001 the firm obtained the first verdict in the nation dealing with the issue of cell phone distraction in automobile accidents. The firm's client, 70 year-old Alicia Bustos, was a seat-belted passenger in a car that was violently struck at a Hialeah intersection by a driver talking on his cell phone. Left with catastrophic injuries requiring permanent bedside care, the woman eventually passed away. The defendant, who was conducting a business call while driving in his capacity as

a salesman for a lumber wholesale company, stated to attorneys that he was not using his cell phone just before the impact. The diligent efforts of Andy Haggard and Michael Haggard proved otherwise; after subpoenaing cell phone records they revealed that the driver's call coincided with the fatal crash. This influenced the jury's decision, and the result was a \$21 million verdict, the largest personal injury verdict in Miami-Dade County's history at that time.

Dealing with catastrophe on a daily basis can be emotionally burdening, but the attorneys and staff at The Haggard Law Firm maintain empathetic perspectives in their professional endeavors. "We connect with our clients," asserts Lewis. "The cases may resolve, but our relationships do not." That the relationships established during active cases remain beyond resolution is a testament to the firm's commitment to the well-being of its clientele.

When a case may mean the difference between life and death for a client in need, the resources and expertise of the professionals at The Haggard Law Firm are invaluable elements to success. The firm has embraced technology, utilizing it to better relay its clients' stories in trials. Their preparation is inimitable, says McCarron. "We address every detail in a case," he asserts. "Defense lawyers know that. There are no surprises with us." Unparalleled knowledge, too, distinguishes the firm. Notes McCarron, "Our lawyers are seasoned, comfortable in front of juries. There's no substitute for experience."

Its boutique size allows the partners, associates and personnel of The Haggard Law Firm to maintain a distinct level of congruency and cohesiveness. "We have purposely designed our practice to maintain the integrity of the process," states Andy Haggard. "I wholeheartedly believe that the smaller you are, the better your firm will be. We work incredibly well together, and that resonates in our relationships with our clients and in our history of success."

The Haggard Law Firm and its attorneys have earned professional accolades including the title of "Best Law Firm" by *U.S. News & World Report*, in recognition of the firm's successful verdicts and lobbying efforts. The firm prides itself on membership in the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, an elite group of accomplished attorneys.

Accomplished, innovative and empathetic, the attorneys and personnel at The Haggard Law Firm remain focused on their roles as advocates and representatives of individuals in need. They look forward to continued success, and to contributing to initiatives designed to improve the safety and quality of life for all.

At a Glance

The Haggard Law Firm, P.A.

<http://www.haggardlawfirm.com/>

330 Alhambra Circle, Coral Gables, Florida 33134
(305) 446-5700

Founded in 1972, by Partner, Wm. Andrew "Andy" Haggard

Firm Composition

Partners:

Michael A. Haggard

Jeannete C. Lewis

Douglas J. McCarron

Associates:

Christopher L. Marlowe

Todd J. Michaels

Jason R. Brenner

Of Counsel

James C. Blecke

Practice Areas

Personal Injury

including but not limited to:

- Aviation Law
- Pool Drownings and Entrapment
- Premises Liability
- Product Liability
- Negligent Security
- Wrongful Death

Awards/Honors

- AV Peer-review rating by Martindale-Hubbell
- Florida *Super Lawyers*

Community/Civic Involvement

- Community Partnership for the Homeless
- National Drowning Prevention Alliance
- PKD Foundation

What Is Enabling The Cybercrime Explosion To Continue?

By Victor Nappe

[Second in a series of articles on cybercrime and its significant effects on your law practice and your clients' businesses.]

The United States is the headquarters for more computer security giants than any country, and yet our government agencies and businesses continue to be hacked, our intellectual property stolen, our personal information exploited. Our digital assets are sold on the black market in cyberspace, where the highest bidder could be working for your competitor. Imagine the advantage, especially in high-stakes litigation, patent prosecution or major M&A negotiations if the opposition had access to your strategic or tactical information. Would the deck be unfairly stacked? You bet it would — and you would never know it had occurred.

In the last issue we reviewed some of the most highly publicized breaches of recent years. Since that article, a spectacular hack of the credit card data processing system at Global Payments Inc. was reported in *Forbes*. GPI seemed relieved that “the breach allowed hackers to gain less than 1.5 million credit card numbers.” So, it now appears our country’s computer security experts consider the loss of personal financial information for 1.5 million customers as a minor incident!

Cybercrime Continues Unchecked

Among other incidents in April, hackers breached an unprotected computer server at the Utah Department of Health, compromising the Social Security numbers of 280,000 Medicaid patients and the personal information of 500,000 others. The cost of working with credit reporting firm Experian to contain the breach is estimated at \$460,000. Two weeks later, an employee at the South Carolina Health Department siphoned off more than 228,000 patients’ private data to his home computer, probably to be sold for personal gain.

Ten other computer security breaches were reported in April in U.S. organizations ranging from education and healthcare to government and retail. If you think that being part of a smaller firm makes you safe (because you’re a less likely target), think again – Ruby’s Diner in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, suffered the theft of their debit and credit card information when a hacker installed malware on the diner’s computer system. The data was then used by the hacker to make fraudulent purchases domestically and internationally. Who’d have thought a little diner in a small town would be hacked for illegal profit?

Hacking is ongoing and hackers are aggressive, clever and relentless in pursuing their crimes against organizations of all sizes and types. Why hasn’t it been stopped? What enables hackers’ continued success?

The Answer is Widely Known

The answer, unfortunately, is pretty simple. Computer breaches continue because, over the past decade, the major vendors of computer security have reinvested their profits in doing what they have always

done – adding features and functions to their existing security products, and occasionally adding a product to their solutions by acquiring a smaller company with “new” technology. Unfortunately, these “new” technologies have relied on the same overall traditional security architecture that the major security vendors had been using for the past decade.

From a 50,000 foot viewpoint, traditional security architecture relies significantly on *detecting known threats at the perimeter of a computer network*. This is sometimes referred to as “protecting the castle.” This type of defense consists of erecting walls (firewalls) that limit the openings (ports) into the network, and then screening the network traffic that goes through these ports (these screens consist of technologies such as antivirus, anti-malware, authentication, intrusion detection and intrusion prevention software and appliances).

Here’s the problem with this security architecture – *if a hacker is able to mimic legitimate traffic and surreptitiously gain entry into the network, the hacker has free reign in the network.*

Even more unfortunately, today’s sophisticated hackers are fully versed in the security products offered by the major security vendors. These sophisticated hackers create new threats daily that covertly mimic normal Internet traffic and clandestinely enter and exploit the networks of business and government. We call these “Next-Generation Threats” because they truly represent new technology, while traditional computer network security represents technology that has not yet taken this unfortunate set of circumstances into account.

Does this indicate shortsightedness on the part of the major security vendors? I don’t know the answer, but I do know whatever it is, it took several years for the results of this possible short-sightedness to manifest. Today, however, the results are clearly evident as big-brand security solutions display increasing inadequacy in preventing cybercrime. After all, the hacked organizations whose names have prominently appeared in the press installed plenty of security products in attempts to protect their networks and information.



Victor Nappe is a recognized leader in Internet technologies with two decades of high-tech entrepreneurial experience. He has served as e-commerce chief for Apple’s enterprise software and professional services division, as CEO for Luke Entertainment Group, and as CEO and founder of DuoCash. Nappe is currently CEO of Boca Raton-based SECNAP, makers of CloudJacket, which is devoted to addressing and solving the issues raised in this series of articles. SECNAP is located on the Internet at www.secnap.com. Nappe can be reached at victor.nappe@secnap.com or (561) 999-5000.

The History of Women in Law

By Michelle A. Delancey

The history of women in the law predates the women's suffrage movement. This history of women lawyers is replete with women fighting for the right to freely practice law. Every state has its own set of women legal pioneers and trailblazers. These women laid the foundation for all female lawyers to become members of their state bars and practice law with and against their male counterpart.

The first woman to be admitted to any law school and to become a lawyer in the United States was Iowa's Arabella Mansfield in 1869. Mansfield was admitted, in spite of a state law that allowed only white males to take the bar. Later that year, the law in Iowa was changed to allow women admittance. Closer to home, in 1898, Louise Rebecca Pinnell became the first woman admitted to the Florida Bar.

In 1981, Leah Simms became the first African American woman to become a judge in the State of Florida. Judge Simms was of particular significance to me, since in the Spring of 1982, my 6th grade class went on a field trip to Miami-Dade County Courthouse. We visited Judge Simms' courtroom, where she was introduced to us as the first Black female County Court judge in Florida. Prior to that visit, I was certain I wanted to be a lawyer. I had been told that I could be a lawyer if I worked hard but, as a first generation African American girl, whose parents were Jamaican immigrants who had not completed high school and whose four (4) older brothers had, at best, obtained a GED, I had not believed it until that moment. I had never met, or known of, a Black female lawyer, much less a Black female judge. She became my inspiration. Her very existence made me believe I could really be a lawyer and maybe even a judge.

In 1995, I was admitted to the Florida Bar and have just recently submitted my application to the Judicial Nominating Commission to be considered for an appointment to the Bench. My legal career and recent submission to the Commission was, in no small part, directly attributable to Judge Simms. She was a breathing example of what I could become.

Those of us who are brave enough or courageous enough or inspired enough or simply driven enough to be the first to do anything positive in our society must be honored and must never be forgotten. The first women in the law deserve a special place in our history books. It is unquestionable that they have inspired a multitude of women to pursue a legal career in the same way that Judge Simms inspired me.



Michelle A. Delancey is a founding partner with the law firm of delancyhill, P.A., Miami, Florida. Mrs. Delancey focuses her practice on commercial and criminal litigation matters with extensive experience in commercial, construction, family, criminal defense and administrative litigation. She represents a client base of small businesses/entrepreneurs, medium-sized corporations, and municipal bodies.

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Aura Brooks

Florida Insurance Advocates



Although she didn't realize it at the time, growing up on three separate continents, North America, South America and Africa, with her 10 brothers and sisters, Aura Brooks was destined to become a savvy negotiator and businesswoman. An informative business law class taken during her undergrad work at Kennesaw State for an international affairs degree sparked an interest in her current profession that has intensified over the years.

"My undergrad business law class was enlightening," said Brooks. "People enter into contracts every day, whether or not they are aware of it. I knew that a law degree would be a useful tool whether I later decided to pursue employment through judicial opportunities, litigation, commercial businesses or public sector work."

During her pursuit of a J.D. at St. Thomas University College of Law, Brooks was awarded the American Bankruptcy Medal of Excellence and was a Dean's Fellow in the area of civil procedure.

Beginning her career as a law clerk with Florida Insurance Associates eight years ago, Brooks has helped grow the company from 10 to nearly 50 employees utilizing industry-forward ideas.

Florida Insurance Advocates is a firm dedicated to helping consumers and medical providers get insurance claims paid. The firm operates using a "factory system" where each attorney has an area of specialization helping process over \$6 million per year in unpaid/underpaid insurance claims. Brooks, as managing attorney, oversees the litigation pipeline by assigning cases to the appropriate team and heading up all general office tasks such as hiring, scheduling hearings and depositions and ensuring the firm's day to day operations run smoothly.

"Through my current position as the managing attorney, I have devised a system to allocate specific tasks to qualified people," said Brooks. "Through the years, I have advocated for our company to go digital to allow many of our attorneys to telecommute, creating virtual offices all over the state, which is a rarity in our industry. I ensure that this system runs smoothly and devise solutions to any problems that arise in regard to our

business operating procedures."

Because the firm is staffed with positive, laid back attorneys and support staff, the environment is conducive to changing with the times and allowing for the bulk of the employees to work virtually anywhere. Regardless of their physical location, however, Brooks ensures that there is constant communication between all staff, clients and opposing counsel.

"Without open communication and easily accessible attorneys and support staff, it is impossible for any cases to move forward," said Brooks. "I ensure that every member of our firm is available to discuss cases and tasks at hand when needed."

With a concentration in insurance collection, Brooks reviews cases, assigns tasks, negotiates with the opposition and creates a legal pathway to determine what needs to be done and how to accomplish each task.

"I especially find working in the area of P.I.P. to be an interesting focus," said Brooks. "Because the law is constantly evolving in Tallahassee, being keyed-in to the political process gives us an edge in advising our clients. Additionally, my boss, Russel Lazega, is a frontrunner in developing laws surrounding P.I.P. and encourages feedback and healthy debate within our office and between government officials."

On a personal level, Brooks not only enjoys traveling and is an avid runner, but also has been a member of the Executive Committee for the Miami - Friends of St. Jude Chapter since 2008. Friends of St. Jude is a group of young professionals networking for a cause and dedicated to the mission of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the fight against childhood cancer.

Florida Insurance Advocates

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Christine S. Egner

Thornton, Davis, & Fein, P.A.

Not everybody has a defining moment in their lives where they experience an epiphany about what they should do with their lives, but Christine Egner recalls that exact moment like it was yesterday. Egner started her college years at Florida State University as a civil engineering major, but an elective class on criminal profiling forever changed the course of her life. After hearing a lecture by Dayle Hinman, renowned criminal profiler from the FBI, she knew she had incorrectly chosen her career path.

"After Dayle Hinman's lecture, I knew I wanted to work in the legal field one way or another," said Egner. "I switched my major to criminology and never looked back."

Post Florida State, Egner attended Nova Law School and earned her J.D. in 2004. While earning her degree, she pursued government legal internships, allowing her a glimpse into the world of criminal law. Upon graduation, however, she decided she was better suited for civil litigation.

Egner started her career at Feldman & Getz, LLP, a boutique plaintiff's firm, and later joined Thornton, Davis & Fein, P.A. in 2007 as a litigation attorney. Her practice today focuses on civil litigation defense matters including complex products liability and general liability cases including pharmaceutical and tire litigation, allowing her to travel across the United States.

"The greatest reward I have experienced during my years as an attorney is seeing the end product," said Egner. "Getting great results for our clients makes the 16-hour days worthwhile."

Although she frequently burns the candle at both ends in seeking the best results for her clients, she acknowledges that everyone has a limit as to what they can accomplish on a daily basis. Egner believes that knowing her own limits and having a supportive partner is the key to maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

"I am grateful and so fortunate to have such a supportive husband," acknowledged Egner. "Because he is also an attorney,

we are able to relate to each other and bounce ideas off one another, while maintaining a healthy mutual respect for one another. It is a true partnership that is the foundation for both of our careers and family life."

In addition to her fierce commitment to her clients, Egner has always believed in the importance of giving back to her community. In fact, her efforts earned her a Bronze Level Pro Bono Honor Achiever recognition upon graduating law school. As an experienced lawyer, she is now focusing her community efforts on creating a new opportunity for advancement for poverty-stricken local women. Egner, in cooperation with one of her closest friends, is developing a program called "WE" for Women's Empowerment for the Lotus House Shelter in Overtown, Miami. The Lotus Shelter is a center dedicated to serving displaced women due to violence, medical, mental and economic distress. Through this program, the founders intend to provide women at the shelter with an opportunity to overcome obstacles by helping them with things such as reentering the workforce, parenting skills, continuing education, and focusing on improving overall motivation and inspiration.

"We have such an incredible community here in Miami," remarked Egner. "There is a myriad of local professionals and businesses who are willing to sponsor and contribute their time for our program."

Egner enjoys spending weekends with her husband and young son JR, traveling and exploring local venues for concerts and partaking in the wealth of dining choices in the Miami area.

Thornton, Davis, & Fein, P.A.

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Dori Foster-Morales

Foster-Morales Sockel-Stone, LLC

Many girls dream about becoming an attorney, but in law school, few set their sights on divorce law. Dori Foster-Morales did not realize her potential to become a leading family law attorney until well after she completed law school and spent many years in government service.

Armed with a J.D. from the University of Florida, Foster-Morales laid out a career path to fast-track becoming a judge. She entered the workforce as assistant counsel for the United States Environmental Protection Agency first in Washington, D.C., and then New York City. In 1993, Foster-Morales relocated back to her hometown, Miami, and accepted a position as assistant state attorney for Miami-Dade County, where she spent five years honing her litigation skills.

When her daughter was diagnosed with autism, however, she realized that she needed to try her hand in the private sector. Foster-Morales ultimately began working with Marsha Elser, a leading family lawyer, and joined Elser's firm as an associate. Although she had absolutely no experience in family law, Elser saw her potential. Over the past fourteen years, Foster-Morales has become board certified in marital & family law and is currently a member of the prestigious American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. The original firm has evolved and is now known as Foster-Morales Sockel-Stone, LLC, though it still retains the distinction of being a preeminent family law firm.

Representing clients in marital and family law was clearly a departure from the type of law Foster-Morales was used to, but litigation skills honed from many years in government service, love of the practice area and her tenacity in representing her clients expedited her move up the ranks. As a partner at Foster-Morales Sockel-Stone, LLC, she represents clients in a variety of complex family law matters, including dissolution of marriage, paternity, domestic violence, and all child-related issues, involving both domestic and international clients.

"I enjoy working with our clients to devise equitable solutions

to real-world problems," noted Foster-Morales. "Every decision we make intrinsically impacts every facet of our clients' lives. We work together to determine the best course of action on a case-by-case basis."

Although she is in court frequently with a high success rate, Foster-Morales endeavors to settle matters outside of court, to avoid the negative effects of litigation on the families she represents.

"Sometimes, it is necessary to take that step and resolve issues in the presence of a judge, especially when one side is simply not being reasonable," mentioned Foster-Morales. "While we like to avoid litigation, we are not afraid to take that step. The best settlements are achieved when the parties are prepared to proceed to litigation in the event that a complete breakdown of communication occurs."

Foster-Morales currently serves as a member of the Florida Bar's Board of Governors and devotes some of her personal time to other state, national and professional organizations. Closest to Foster-Morales's heart, however, are her pro bono services as guardian ad litem and advising the court in cases involving autistic children.

Often requested, Foster-Morales speaks on a variety of issues surrounding marital law around the nation and has appeared on both the "TODAY" show and the "O'Reilly Factor."

While Foster-Morales works long hours during the week, she tries to get away from work and the hustle and bustle of her active practice on the weekends. She enjoys spending time with her husband, 18-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son on the water, boating, and relaxing.

Foster-Morales Sockel-Stone, LLC

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Araly Herrera-Borgen

Gamba & Lombana

Miami native Araly Herrera-Borgen, is a multi-dimensional bilingual attorney, educated in both business and law, who has established herself as a respected and powerful force in the South Florida legal community. Ms. Herrera-Borgen has devoted her legal career to representing victims of catastrophic personal injury, medical malpractice, automobile, trucking and wrongful death cases. Today, Ms. Herrera-Borgen is a partner at Gamba & Lombana, P.A., a well-respected firm in the community.

"The most rewarding part of being a lawyer is ensuring justice is served for the injured and bereaved clients," stated Ms. Herrera-Borgen. "Unfortunately, when clients come to me they have suffered a tragedy in their lives. It is my mission to help my clients with the extraordinary challenges that follow when someone else's carelessness or mistakes results in injury or loss to a loved one."

Over the course of her impressive career, Ms. Herrera-Borgen has earned many accolades including a glowing profile in the *South Florida Legal Guide* attesting to her ethical and sound practices. Additionally, that same guide, after gathering input from other top attorneys in the community, listed Ms. Herrera-Borgen under the category of "Top Up and Comers" – the next generation of leaders in the South Florida legal community.

As a testament to her professional prowess, she was once asked by a doctor to represent a family member. In and of itself, that is not an unusual request, but the circumstances under which this occurred were quite incredible.

"A few years ago, I represented a client in a medical malpractice case," explained Ms. Herrera-Borgen. "After lengthy and contentious litigation, I obtained a substantial settlement on behalf of my client and against a doctor. Several months later, I received a call from the defendant doctor in that case. I advised the doctor that she should not be speaking to me directly, but

through her attorney. The doctor then explained that her inquiry had nothing to do with that case. She stated that she was so impressed by my tenacity toward resolving the case and my ability to maintain a professional manner throughout the proceedings that she thought of me when her family needed an advocate. That was one of the biggest compliments of my career thus far."

Working on emotionally-charged cases, as she does on a daily basis, has given Ms. Herrera-Borgen a new perspective on life. "When I am not practicing law, I treasure every moment with my family," said Ms. Herrera-Borgen. "When you work with clients who have lost their health or loved ones, you realize that it can happen to anybody, anytime, and anywhere. I am thankful to my partners, Tomas F. Gamba & Hector J. Lombana, who have mentored me and have been instrumental in my success as a trial attorney."

Ms. Herrera-Borgen is currently serving as the vice president of student affairs at the University of Miami Law Alumni Association and she previously served as a member on the Board of Directors for the Cuban American Bar Association (CABA) and the Florida Association for Women Lawyers. She also served as vice chair of a grievance committee for the Florida Bar.

Ms. Herrera-Borgen concluded her interview by stating the following: "If there was one piece of advice I could impart to future attorneys, it would be that expanding your knowledge of the law and developing relationships within your community is imperative to career advancement. Mix that with a strong work ethic and positive attitude, and you have the recipe for success."

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Emilia A. Quesada

Sanchez-Medina, Gonzalez, Quesada,
Lage, Crespo, Gomez & Machado LLP
SMGQ Law

Upon graduation from law school, Emilia A. Quesada joined the U.S. Department of Justice's Honors Attorney Program, being one of eight attorneys selected from over 2,500 candidates. So, it comes as no surprise that Quesada, after honing her skills at the Department of Justice and some of the country's largest and most prestigious law firms, developed a national complex commercial litigation practice, focusing on insurance coverage and ERISA matters, as well as financial transactions impacting financial institutions. In doing so, Quesada, AV-rated by Martindale Hubbell Peer Review Ratings, has continued to earn numerous accolades for her work, including an appointment by the American Bar Association's President to the Commission on Women in the Profession as the first Hispanic appointed to the Commission from the state of Florida.

Quesada primarily represents Fortune 100 companies throughout Florida in the prosecution and defense of commercial litigation matters including first-party insurance coverage disputes, ERISA, financial regulations, business torts, consumer claims issues, and other complex civil claims in state and federal court. "I find the complexity of matters arising in the financial industries sector, particularly in the insurance and banking areas, to be intellectually challenging," said Quesada. "Courts often have different interpretations of the same laws and regulations, so it is imperative to stay abreast of recent rulings. I also come with a 'no stone left unturned' mentality, which bodes well in litigating matters affecting the highly-regulated insurance and banking industries."

Quesada touts the virtues of her firm, indicating that not only do her clients always have a partner directly involved in each

case, but every case is treated as a priority. No matter the day or time, Quesada makes a point of taking her clients' calls and is responsive to their requests. Each case is evaluated quickly to explore the possibility of early resolution.

An advocate of maintaining work-life balance, Quesada serves on panels and guest lectures on commercial litigation, diversity and work life balance issues throughout the country. Quesada advises, "Many women find it difficult to find a true balance when managing a high profile career and maintaining a healthy and happy home life for their families, yet it is possible to do both. In my case, I was able to find that balance both in my career and personal life, upon founding SMGQ Law. Our firm, essentially starting from the ground up with the benefit of today's existing technology, has made a concerted effort to develop solutions that provide its attorneys the flexibility necessary to maintain a work-life balance, while at the same time allowing them to dedicate a greater percentage of their work time to matters that directly impact the client."

In her free time, Quesada enjoys traveling and spending time with her husband and two daughters, one of whom is an equestrian whose competitions take them all over Florida. She is an avid supporter of His House Children's Ministries, a faith-based organization providing residential care for abused, neglected and drug-exposed children in a home-like setting.

SMGQ Law

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Amanda J. Sharkey Ross

Law Offices of David L. Ross, P.A.

Perry Mason has nothing on Amanda J. Sharkey Ross, although he did serve as an early inspiration, prompting her goal to become a lawyer. Throughout her life, she always intended to get her J.D. and practice, but it took several experiences including studying abroad in Madrid, Spain, and legal internships with The Miami Dolphins and the University of Miami Athletic Department to help her determine which specialty to practice.

After graduating cum laude from Miami University School of Law in 2002, Ross ultimately settled into the areas of insurance defense, admiralty and maritime law. She started her career in insurance litigation in 2003 and joined a boutique maritime and admiralty defense firm in 2006 where she made partner in a little under a year due to her attention to detail, diligence and hard work on behalf of her clients. In 2009, Ross joined the Law Offices of David L. Ross, P.A.

Her firm represents a multitude of corporate insurance carriers, businesses and corporations as well as individuals themselves, but Ross' primary focus is on premises liability and admiralty and maritime law from pre-suit through trial. Ross takes great pride in her firm's effective handling of claims, courtesy throughout the litigation process and stresses the importance of client communication. All calls are returned within a 24 hour period of time which is very important to her firm, to be available and in communication with clients whenever the need arises.

"As a partner, responsiveness to my clients and willingness to fight in court for my clients' rights is paramount," said Ross. "I take my responsibilities to my clients seriously and am willing to back that up, whenever, wherever."

"Being able to assist clients is always rewarding, especially when the litigation has been a long and arduous process," continued Ross. "It is always enjoyable for me to conclude a case and have a client tell me how happy they were regarding the outcome."

Being a female in a high-powered position at a law firm can test the boundaries in a work and life balance. As a mother of two young boys, Ross believes it is important to be able to shift focus and keep perspective.

"As a woman in the practice of law, as soon as I set foot in the office or a courtroom, it is important that I am a lawyer first and a mother second. However, when it's time to shut the lights off, leave the office and go home, it is important to reverse those roles," Ross noted. "Having a balanced work/home life is of the utmost importance to keep your sanity in this profession."

With a desire to give back to the community, Amanda Ross and The Law Offices of David L. Ross, P.A. contribute both time and financial support to Habitat for Humanity, Kristi House, a healing environment for abused children and Camillus House, a non-profit organization providing humanitarian services to men, women and children who are poor and/or homeless.

Outside of work, Ross is not only a philanthropist, but is also an avid traveler and enjoys spending time on the water. In her free time, Ross is an active member of the Coconut Grove Sailing Club and the University of Miami Hurricane Club.

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Robin Taylor Symons

Gordon & Rees LLP



The cornerstones to success in any business are responsiveness, consistent value, and the ability not only to adapt to client needs, but to anticipate them. The ability to occasionally delight a client is an added plus.

Having grown up in a family business, Robin Taylor Symons brings those traits to her practice as co-managing partner of the Miami office of Gordon & Rees LLP and member of the labor and employment, insurance and commercial litigation practice groups. She is a thought leader in her firm and a trusted advisor to her clients.

Ms. Symons' litigation and counseling practice focuses on employment claims, complex insurance coverage litigation, and commercial litigation. She has served as counsel to the local state court, as monitoring counsel/coverage counsel for insurers, and as a go-to lawyer brought in to take over cases which have become mired in costly activity without forward progress.

Ms. Symons also has considerable experience handling commercial litigation and professional liability claims, and has defended numerous complex cases in these areas, including class actions, binding arbitrations, and RICO lawsuits, resolving these matters with little to no fanfare. Because mediation has become such a prominent feature of litigation and settlement strategy, she took both the civil and appellate mediation training courses and approaches mediation as strategically as she does a trial.

Among the highlights of her career are winning a \$120 million coverage/bad faith arbitration in New York; pioneering

an employment law delivery system for small to mid-sized employers; resolving within 30 days a landmark case for a children's hospital that had been stalled for two years; managing sensitive harassment and discrimination claims made against executives, non-profits and law firm leaders; and defeating class action certifications. These cases helped to cement her AV-Preeminent Martindale and Chambers ratings and her credibility with both state and federal judiciary.

Her clients typically include local and family owned businesses; healthcare facilities and related enterprises; law and accounting firms; national companies such as insurers, brokers, staffing and specialty service providers; non-profits, and schools and universities.

Looking toward the future, Ms. Symons is excited about clients' increased expectations for practical legal service, because this new emphasis provides opportunity for nimble, enterprise-style firms and lawyers — like those at Gordon & Rees — to shine. She is also encouraged to see more women in leadership positions and serving on boards. She is a founding member of the Coral Gables Museum, a member of the PLUS Foundation Board and helps lead its new diversity task force.

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Gabrielle D'Alemberte, Esq.

The Law Offices of Robert L. Parks, P.L.



Business/Professional Achievements: A sixth generation Florida attorney and the daughter of Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte, former president of the American Bar Association and Florida State University, Gabrielle Lyn D'Alemberte is one of the most accomplished trial attorneys in Florida having logged more than 40 civil trials. She is dedicated to protecting individual's rights, pursuing the truth and advancing the spirit of justice. Drawing on her decades of experience, she serves as an effective advocate for those who have suffered a serious loss through no fault of their own and focuses her practice on personal injury, product and premise liability, negligence, insurance, and tobacco class action lawsuits.

Support and Encouragement of Women: A member of the Florida Bar, Southern, Northern and Middle Districts of Florida United States District Courts, D'Alemberte trained as a victim-offender mediator by the Restorative Justice Center in Tallahassee and was a Certified County Court Mediator, State of Florida. She received the Florida Supreme Court Pro Bono Award for her work with the Legal Aid Foundation

of Tallahassee and was recognized by the Neighborhood Justice Center for her contributions as a volunteer mediator. In 2010, D'Alemberte designed and implemented a domestic abuse awareness program at youth programs and select schools in the Miami Dade school system.

Community Involvement: For more than two decades, Gabrielle D'Alemberte has been an active volunteer leader in the South Florida community with organizations including the Junior League of Miami, which provides seed funding and volunteer support for community projects; Boys and Girls Clubs of Miami, which promotes the personal development of young people; and the Everglades Foundation, which is dedicated to supporting the greater Everglades ecosystem.

Additional Activities: D'Alemberte was listed as an 'Up and Comer' in the 2010 and 2011 issues of *South Florida Legal Guide*, she was featured in *Business Leader Magazine's* 2010 'Women Extraordinaire' and 'Power' issues, she was a finalist for 2010's 'Business Leader of the Year' in the legal division, and she is a graduate of Leadership Miami's 2010 class. She was a finalist for the 2011 Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce's 'Business Woman of the Year' and she was featured in *Super Lawyers* 2011 issue, *Florida Trend* magazine's 2011 'Legal Elite' issue, and *Miami Magazine's* 2011 July issue. Over the last twelve years, D'Alemberte has served on several Florida Bar committees, most recently having been appointed to the esteemed Civil Rules and Evidence Committee (CREC).

Mary Leslie Smith

Foley & Lardner LLP



A partner in Foley & Lardner LLP's distribution and franchise practice and chair of the Miami office litigation department, Mary Leslie Smith has earned a reputation as a leading attorney in the area of franchise law. Smith was recognized as one of *Franchise Times* Legal Eagles 2012 as well as in the 2011 edition of *The International Who's Who of Franchise Lawyers*. Additionally, she was hailed as one of the top franchise attorneys nationwide by the preeminent legal directory *Chambers USA*. Smith litigates a range of commercial matters at both the trial and appellate levels in federal and state courts, and provides clients with counseling and litigation services — from initial negotiations through resolution, including mediation, arbitration and trial. The University of Florida and London School of Economics graduate has represented franchisors and distributors

in a variety of commercial disputes involving trademarks, trade secrets, covenants not to compete and vicarious liability claims. Smith currently serves as vice president of the Dade County Bar Association and is a member of the Women Presidents' Organization Miami Chapter.

Coralí Lopez Castro

Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton, P.A.



I have practiced law with Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton, P.A., for 22 years and I am currently the managing partner. My finest accomplishments have been my three daughters, Maria, Lucy and Ava and my marriage to my husband, Brad Hornbacher. I start with these accomplishments as an accomplished lawyer needs to be a happy person. I have always concentrated my practice on bankruptcy and commercial litigation matters. I have represented clients in some of the most substantial bankruptcy cases in Florida. Recently, I have been involved in the liquidation of three bank holding companies pending in bankruptcy court and state court. From 1998 through 2002, I served on the panel of Federal Trustees for the Southern District of Florida. I was honored to serve in that capacity until 2002. In 2006, I was elected president of the Cuban American Bar Association. I was the

second woman president of the Cuban American Bar Association. Ensuring that minorities are well represented in the law, including the bench, is the most important role I have had as a lawyer.

Mindy A. Mora

Bilzin Sumberg



Mindy A. Mora is a restructuring & bankruptcy partner at Bilzin Sumberg. Ms. Mora focuses her practice on corporate restructuring, creditor's rights, workouts and bankruptcy, asset protection and commercial finance. She counsels high visibility clients in many major bankruptcy cases and restructuring efforts both nationally and in Florida. Ms. Mora presently serves as chair of the Business Law Section of The Florida Bar, which represents the interests of over 5,000 business lawyers within the State of Florida. She has been active in the development of Florida's commercial laws, having chaired the Florida Bar Task Force that sponsored the 2007 revisions of the Assignment for the Benefit of Creditors Statute (chapter 727, Florida Statutes). She also co-sponsored the 1997 revisions to Article 8 and 1999 revisions to Article 9, Uniform Commercial Code (chapters 678 and

679, Florida Statutes). Ms. Mora frequently lectures and publishes articles about insolvency, restructuring and commercial lending.

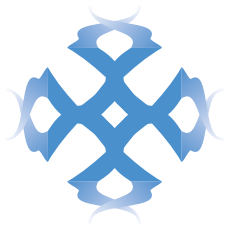
Robin J. Rubens

Levine Kellogg Lehman Schneider + Grossman LLP



A partner at Miami-based Levine Kellogg Lehman Schneider + Grossman LLP, Robin J. Rubens is a veteran litigator with more than 16 years of experience representing corporate debtors, including developers and telecommunication companies, secured and unsecured creditors, and trustees in Chapter 11 and Chapter 7 business bankruptcies. She has worked on various large scale bankruptcies in South Florida, including the Blue and Green Diamond condominium project on Miami Beach, which paid back creditors in full. "AV" rated by Martindale-Hubbe, Rubens focuses her practice on bankruptcy litigation as well as complex commercial litigation cases in state and federal court at the trial and appellate levels. She also handles out-of-court workouts and commercial foreclosures for borrowers

and guarantors. She began her career as a law clerk for U.S. Bankruptcy Court Chief Judge Sidney M. Weaver, the Southern District of Florida's former chief bankruptcy judge, and Judge Paul G. Hyman, Jr., who currently heads the court. A graduate of Nova University, Rubens is a member of the Bankruptcy Bar Association for the Southern District of Florida and the American Bankruptcy Institute.



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When attorney **Luis de Armas** is not assisting his clients with mergers, acquisitions and financing, he enjoys serving as a hands-on volunteer at AMIKids, a non-profit school for youthful offenders in Miami-Dade. Luis, a partner in the Miami law firm of Shutts & Bowen, decided early in his career to contribute to the Miami community through his involvement in organizations like AMIKids. He has served on the Board of AMIKids for more than 20 years.

AMIKids is a nationally-recognized non-profit organization providing disadvantaged kids ages 14-18 an opportunity to transform themselves into responsible young adults. AMIKids operates one of the most effective juvenile justice and alternative education programs across the country, and over 85% of its graduates never have another brush with the law. For additional information please visit the AMIKids website at www.miamidadeevents.amikids.org.



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