Leadership in Law

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Profile portraits by Maximilian Franz.

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Maryland is home to some of the top attorneys, judges and legal minds in the country. When The Daily Record was founded in 1888, its mission was to serve the law community, and today our mission remains exactly the same but with the addition of business news as well. And, with the Leadership in Law awards program, which began in 2001, The Daily Record seeks to spotlight the achievements of Marylanders who have — and continue to — contribute significantly and consistently to the legal profession.

This year, on the 15th anniversary of Leadership in Law, The Daily Record is proud to announce some changes to the 2016 program. Next year, Leadership in Law will be held in May to coincide with Law Day. We will uphold the tradition of honoring dozens of the state’s top lawyers and judges, as well as a Top Winner from the 2016 honorees. We also will honor one distinguished attorney or judge who is worthy of a Lifetime Achievement Award and include a new category recognizing up-and-coming attorneys.

The criteria for Leadership in Law, however, will not change. Winners must have devoted time and energy to bettering the legal profession, as well as the communities in which they live and work. They also must have mentored future professional and community leaders.

Not only are this year’s winners among the most high-profile legal professionals in the state, but they also work tirelessly to uphold high legal standards and improve communities throughout Maryland — through notable pro bono work and other means. They have demonstrated excellence and achievement in the legal community and are truly worthy of this recognition.

These leaders also are working to educate the next generation of young legal professionals to ensure that the integrity of the profession remains intact.

The Daily Record congratulates this year’s Leadership in Law award winners and looks forward to many more years of excellence within the profession.

Start nominating today for the 2016 awards program. The new nomination deadline will be February 2016.

Representatives from Maryland’s legal community and The Daily Record reviewed the nominees for the 2015 Leadership in Law awards.

This year’s awards, continuing the program begun in 2001, honor the achievements of 27 Marylanders who contribute significantly and consistently to the legal profession.

The judges examined the recommendations that were solicited statewide to determine the nominees’ contributions to improving the legal profession as well as the communities in which they live and work. The judges also considered how each nominee strives, by mentoring, to foster strong future generations of professional and community leaders.

JUDGING PROCESS
“Most of the violent crime is committed by a relatively small number of people. So, to the extent that you can use your resources in a strategic way to focus on these violent, repeat offenders, you can have a measurable impact.”
Gregg L. Bernstein created a new paradigm in the way the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office investigates repeat violent offenders.

Bernstein led the office of more than 400 city prosecutors and support staff from 2011 to 2015 as Baltimore City State’s Attorney. A keystone of his tenure was creating the new Major Investigations Unit to pursue repeat, violent offenders.

“Most of the violent crime is committed by a relatively small number of people,” he said. “So, to the extent that you can use your resources in a strategic way to focus on these violent, repeat offenders, you can have a measurable impact.”

Working with the police, the office helped solve the murder of 12-year-old Sean Johnson who had been randomly targeted by members of the Black Guerilla Family to send a message after a rival group shot one of their leaders. Three other victims also were shot but survived the attack. Two men were convicted and sentenced to life plus 115 and 120 years, respectively.

“The case represented MIU’s relentless efforts to dismantle this gang, which is responsible for much of the violence our city has experienced in recent years,” Bernstein said.

He also established community prosecution teams and launched a Special Victim’s Unit to more effectively prosecute sexual assault and domestic violence offenses. His ability to collaborate and let all voices be heard and attract top talent served him well as state’s attorney.

“It was an opportunity to really enhance the professionalism of the office, which is something that we did, and as a result we made a major impact on public safety,” he said. “Which of course impacts all the citizens of the city and improves the quality of their lives, so that was very rewarding.”

Even though few big-city, elected state’s attorneys try cases, Bernstein took some on, including the prosecution of three city police officers accused of kidnapping and abandoning two young teenagers in West Baltimore in 2010 and leaving them miles from home to find their way back. Two were convicted by a jury for misconduct in office and a third was acquitted by a judge. He also prosecuted the murder of a delivery driver during a botched robbery in 2011.

After losing his reelection bid last year, he returned as a partner at Zuckerman Spaeder LLP and is enjoying practicing white collar criminal defense and commercial litigation. Before joining Zuckerman Spaeder, Bernstein worked as an assistant U.S. Attorney, where his cases included prosecuting a Conrail train engineer for a 1987 head-on collision with a passenger train that left 16 dead. He was a partner at Martin, Junghans, Snyder & Bernstein and an attorney at Miles & Stockbridge P.C.

Bernstein also was the first recipient of the John Adams award for a commitment to indigent defense and equal justice for all. It was given by the Federal Defender’s Office and U.S. District Court of Maryland.
“Most of my clients are good people who have made bad choices.”

ANDREW I. ALPERSTEIN
PARTNER • ALPERSTEIN & DIENER P.A.

Criminal defense attorney Andrew I. Alperstein strives to help his clients in a holistic way, using careful planning to manage crises.

“Most of my clients are good people who have made bad choices,” Alperstein said.

He represented Eli Werdesheim pro bono in the Shomrim case, which involved a northwest Baltimore community watch member charged with assault. Alperstein ultimately was able to get probation before judgment and no conviction for his client and met his goal to keep everyone focused on the facts of the case even as thousands of protesters gathered.

Werdesheim is now studying at a top law school.

“It was a case that caused a great deal of attention and concern in some parts of the Baltimore community,” Alperstein said.

He has been on both sides of the courtroom, working for the first part of his career in the Baltimore County State's Attorney's Office. Then, he joined the firm his father started and now works with his father and brother.

This summer, he completed seven years on the board of directors of the Baltimore Child Abuse Center.

“[The role of attorney in abuse cases] just felt very reactionary to me; you’re cleaning up the pieces after something horrific has happened,” Alperstein said. “I thought it was a nice way to give back to be a part of an organization that is focused on prevention, education and treatment after.”

Alperstein is a contributor at CNN and has given on-air analysis of the Freddie Gray case. He is the chairperson of the Baltimore County Circuit Court Judges Campaign Committee and is a member of the Maryland Criminal Defense Attorneys’ Association and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.
Sara H. Arthur started her own firm in 2007, just as the Great Recession hit and impacted many of her homeowners association clients.

Specializing in administrative and real property law, she is solutions-oriented, and that challenge helped her find practical ways to address new needs. The recession changed the types of issues her clients were dealing with and the amount of assets they had. Before the recession, she only had about 40 collections cases for 60 associations; and in 2010 she had about 300.

“The impact of that allowed me to use my skills, particularly common sense and practical solutions in advising my boards as to how to weather the storm,” Arthur said.

She first came to Annapolis to clerk at the Maryland Court of Appeals and ended up loving the area. She has lived there for 32 years, and watched as the female presence on the Anne Arundel Bar has grown.

“There’s a camaraderie, a lot of support,” Arthur said. “It’s been incredibly helpful to me and then [I am] paying it forward to other women who are coming to town, to support them.”

She also served as the first woman commissioner of the Anne Arundel County Liquor Board, and now represents the board as a client.

She is the treasurer of the Maryland State Bar Association and is active with the Mock Trial Competition through the association. She enjoys watching high school students from across the state learn how to use their strengths to advocate.

“They bring such incredible enthusiasm to it, and I really like to support and encourage what they are doing,” Arthur said.
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GOODELL DeVRIES

We are honored to celebrate Richard M. Barnes’ Leadership in Law Award. Mr. Barnes has extensive experience in complex tort, commercial and product liability litigation. He is a founding member of the firm and has contributed greatly to the firm’s continued success.

Congratulations to Mr. Barnes and all of 2015’s Leadership in Law recipients.

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OUR FRIEND & PARTNER
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PH (410)823-1800  FX (410)828-7859  www.rmmr.com
Richard M. Barnes delves into technical and regulatory issues to work with experts on complex cases.

As a general business and products liability litigator, he has taken on several major cases with medical device failures and recalls. His most significant case came in 1995, when he was already a partner at Goodell DeVries.

The firm was coordinating counsel for a pacemaker medical device with a potentially fatal failure mechanism. They needed to determine why the device was failing, undertake a worldwide recall and then turn to liability concerns.

“I have been fortunate to participate in real-world problem solving that goes beyond the traditional practice of law,” Barnes said.

He worked with regulators in the U.S., Australia, Canada and in some countries in the European Union. The measures his client adopted were effective in reducing patient injuries from the device and have been employed by other medical device companies to manage patient risks in product recalls.

This year, Barnes helped defeat a multimillion dollar claim against Dentsply International for patent royalties and future royalties on various endodontic patents and inventions.

“It was a great success and win for not only the client but also my firm,” he said. “It was an extensive and grueling case, and all of our hard work paid off in the end.”

Barnes is an active member of the Maryland State Bar Association. He was a volunteer mentor at the Central Presbyterian Church in Towson for a group of young men transitioning from school into adulthood for many years, and he also teaches confirmation classes to high school students at the church. He is on the board of directors for the more than 2,000-resident Charlestown Retirement Community.

“I have been fortunate to participate in real-world problem solving that goes beyond the traditional practice of law.”
Denise M. Bowman matches her clients with a team of lawyers and lobbyists that use all the tools of the law in order to achieve great results.

At Alexander & Cleaver P.A., the firm specializes in civil litigation, administrative law, campaign finance compliance, licensing, regulation, economic development opportunities and government relations. They are able to approach problems with solutions that include policy, enforcement and even challenging the law in court.

“I couldn’t ask for a better career, a better opportunity,” Bowman said. “I get to participate in all facets of the law because of the nature of my business.”

She is excited by the solutions that they can find when she matches clients, like a former speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, with attorneys who have been honored as Super Lawyers or lobbyists that are highly effective.

“The firm brings together talented attorneys and government relations consultants as one team to achieve winning solutions for a client,” Bowman said.

She started at the firm as an intern and joined as an attorney in 1990. She was selected in 2011 to become managing partner, where she oversees 13 attorneys and eight government relations consultants.

Bowman serves on the Board of Governors for the Maryland State Bar Association and is the immediate past president of the Prince George’s County Bar Association, where she also served as board liaison to mentoring programs like the brown bag lunch series for new professionals, bench to bar series and the mock trial program for high school students.

She participated in the University of Baltimore School of Law Summer Explore Program from 1995 to 2014 and personally mentored 12 first-year law students.
Tax attorney Caroline D. Ciraolo has taken on a large-scale management experience as the acting assistant attorney general at the U.S. Department of Justice, Tax Division, and she loves every minute of it.

“The men and women of the Tax Division are bright, hardworking and deeply committed to tax enforcement,” Ciraolo said. “I’m truly honored to be a member of this team.”

She oversees 370 attorneys and 120 employees to enforce federal tax laws through civil litigation and criminal prosecutions.

The tax division is undergoing a robust hiring effort, bringing on 76 attorneys in the last year. As a result, Ciraolo has had the opportunity to help establish several mentoring programs and a new, innovative training curricula for the division’s attorneys.

Prior to joining the Tax Division, Ciraolo formed and grew the Tax Controversy and Litigation practice group at Rosenberg Martin Greenberg LLP, where she was a partner.

Taking pro bono cases has always been important to Ciraolo, who served on the board of directors of the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service from 2009 to 2014.

She was selected for the ABA Section of Taxation’s Janet Spragens Pro Bono Award in 2010. She was awarded Educator of the Year in 2008 for her work training volunteers for the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service low income taxpayer clinic.

In 2011, Ciraolo and Rosenberg Martin’s Tax Controversy group began serving as instructors at Fort Meade in the Military Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program.

“I know my family is protected because they are out there in uniform,” she said. “It’s a small way to give back. We felt very privileged to be able to do that.”
Suzanne W. Decker became a principal at Miles & Stockbridge P.C. when her oldest daughter was only 2 years old. Although her career was taking off at the same time as her personal life, she felt confident she could succeed because she had a mentor in her practice group who was guiding her.

She realized many women at the firm did not have that, and so she helped create the Miles & Stockbridge Women's Network to promote leadership development and mentoring among the firm’s women lawyers.

That was 12 years ago, and since then the number of female principals has grown and women all over the practice are able to access mentoring opportunities.

“[Women at the firm] have so much to give, and we wanted to make sure that they were staying,” Decker said.

She likens the career of a female lawyer to a marathon, and said career success and goals are different throughout women's lives.

Decker also helped launch the Women's Symposium at the firm, which brings together female professionals throughout the community. This November marks the symposium's 13th year.

In January, Decker was named co-chair of the Labor & Employment group, which allows her to make decisions both within the group and as part of the leadership team for the firm as a whole.

She has chaired the firm's annual Labor & Employment Hot Topics Symposium for the last decade. The event has grown from 50 clients to more than 300 clients and business people from the community.

Decker also is the corporate secretary on the board of directors of the B&O Railroad Museum, volunteers with the Manna House through her church and is a member of the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.
One of John E. Griffith, Jr.'s greatest accomplishments is helping a young firm that would develop into one of his long-term clients.

The start-up technology firm Quantum Engineering needed help fending off three separate lawsuits by the former employer of the partners. After a two-week jury trial against the competitor, Griffith won the case that had claimed misappropriation of trade secrets. Cases relating to patents and a non-compete violation were eventually dropped, and with the support of DLA Piper, Griffith was able to work out a payment schedule that worked for the clients. He later represented them on business issues from patents to labor to environmental compliance and ultimately represented them successfully selling the company.

“What was gratifying about it is that we were able to take this young company that didn’t have a lot of money at the time. We were able to fight off the first big crisis they had as a young company,” Griffith said. “It led to a 20-year client relationship.”

Griffith, whose practice includes environmental law and commercial litigation, values those relationships with both clients and colleagues.

“In the best client relationships you become good friends with your clients and it’s fun to be with them and work with them on common problems,” Griffith said.

Since 2006, Griffith has been working in different capacities on cases related to the Exxon Mobil gas leak in Jacksonville.

In 2005, he won the Outstanding Partner Pro Bono Award from his firm.

He has been doing pro bono work recently through the National Veterans Legal Services Program, helping veterans complete applications and serving as their advocate to receive enhanced compensation for disabilities that are combat-related.
As a circuit court judge, the Hon. John O. Hennegan hears many kinds of cases, but it is the ones relating to children that have defined his career.

Although he retired in 2009, he still hears cases and runs the non-support docket for child support cases in Baltimore County Circuit Court. He leads the Family Employee and Support Program to help non-custodial parents overcome obstacles and obtain jobs to help them meet their child support obligations. In 2009, he was given the Judicial Excellence Award from the National Child Support Enforcement Association for his work in that area.

He also established National Adoption Day in Baltimore County, which focuses on finding adoptive parents for children in need, such as those who have been neglected, abused or face medical problems.

Hennegan’s interest in adoption started when he adopted his own son as a baby. Judges love to get adoption cases, he said, because it is a happy proceeding.

During one adoption case he presided over, he had the family back in his chambers, and a little boy got out of his chair, got on his hands and knees and kissed the ground.

On the adoption day, they hold a ceremony with families adopting children with special needs and then hold a party with toys, food, face painting and music.

“The joy and the happiness that you see, it’s just unbelievable,” Hennegan said. “… We use that day as a special format to not only do the adoption and culminate the process, but to honor them for doing a difficult thing.”

He served on the bench in Baltimore County from 1992 to 2009, and was the presiding judge of the Juvenile Drug Court Program. Prior to becoming a judge, he served as the chair of the Judicial Nominating Commission.

Hennegan taught constitutional law at Stevenson University and civil procedure at the University of Baltimore School of Law. He was a volunteer instructor at the Baltimore County police academy.
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BRAVO

DLA Piper joins the Daily Record in saluting all of those named in this year’s Leadership in Law program – especially our colleague John Griffith.

Congratulations to all of the Leaders being honored.
Congratulations

Rick Jaklitsch

On Your Leadership in the Law Award

Rick, a passionate advocate for his injured clients, is known for his outstanding knowledge of the law and is pretty tough when it comes to cross examinations. He loves his Terps and his alma mater, the University of Maryland. Congratulations!

— The Jaklitsch Law Group, BigDogsSmallFirm.com

Please join our entire firm in
Congratulating
ANDREW I. ALPERSTEIN
in being named one of the Daily Record’s Leadership in Law 2015 Winners

Gallagher congratulates our colleague
Mark S. Saudek
and all of the recipients of
The Daily Record’s Leadership in Law Award
Rick Jaklitsch is a trial attorney first, so he is never afraid to tell insurance companies that he’d rather go to trial.

As a personal injury attorney, he built a four-person office into a firm that has been nationally recognized for the quality of its services.

This year, he was selected for the Trial Lawyers Board of Regents Litigator Award for Personal Injury, a professional association award for which less than 1 percent of lawyers qualify.

He consistently brings in jury awards that are three or even 10 times the amount of the last offer, he said. He also was selected by the National Academy of Personal Injury Attorneys for the Nationally Ranked Top 10 Lawyer Award.

Jaklitsch has given full-time jobs to 18 different families, and six of his employees have been with him for more than 20 years.

“We try to run the law firm like a family. We treat our clients like family, and I think the clients feel that approach as well. I think the clients respond to that approach,” Jaklitsch said.

About three-fourths of his clients come from referrals. One client that gave him many referrals had been hit by a police car. The officer claimed he had been responding to an emergency with lights and sirens on, but Jaklitsch was able to prove that wasn’t true. It was appealed several times but after eight years, he was finally able to get full recovery for his client.

Jaklitsch attended University of Maryland as an undergraduate and for law school and is “a Terp through and through.”

He was the long-time president of the Maryland Gridiron Network, the fundraising arm of the Terps football team, and is a former president of the University of Maryland Terrapin Club.
“I have seen firsthand that support beyond the family unit can make such a positive difference in the life of a child, even if you are only spending three or four hours a week with the child.”

HON. KAREN MURPHY JENSEN
JUDGE • CAROLINE COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

P residing in a one-judge circuit court jurisdiction has given the Hon. Karen Murphy Jensen a unique view of the issues affecting her community and the vision to make a difference.

Jensen is the judge in Caroline County Circuit Court. Since 2005, Jensen has operated a problem-solving court that is now focused on helping adult defendants who have addiction issues, she said.

“The creation and sustaining of this specialized court docket has demanded the highest level of collaboration with various justice and community partners, and it has been professionally and personally rewarding to witness the community commitment to the program in the midst of an addiction epidemic that has affected all case types in this court,” she said.

Jensen takes the most pride in founding Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc., a legal services provider to low-income litigants. She has also been chair of the Judiciary’s Standing Committee on Pro Bono since 2012.

Off the bench, she has worked through the YMCA to mentor a young girl, and serves as a Character Counts coach at Lockerman Middle School in Denton.

“I have seen firsthand that support beyond the family unit can make such a positive difference in the life of a child, even if you are only spending three or four hours a week with the child,” she said.

She has also mentored 16 law clerks since her appointment to the bench. When she looks for wisdom, she looks to the example set by her late father, former Maryland Court of Appeals Chief Judge Robert C. Murphy, who taught her to be true to herself and do what she loves.

“He is my hero and my mentor and who I aspire to be in every regard,” she said. “If I can be like him … I consider myself lucky.”
When Bowie & Jensen LLC partner Mark T. Jensen isn’t managing his Towson-based business law firm, he’s serving on the boards of the region’s biggest health care nonprofits and rolling up his sleeves at home, fostering at-risk infants.

Jensen said that he had visions of changing the world when he went to law school, and after graduating, he served on a Baltimore hospital board and became interested in health care governance. He’s now chairman of the board for the Maryland Hospital Association and on the board for MedStar Health System.

For the past five years, Jensen and his wife, Maria Pefinis, have opened their home as foster parents to about eight “medically-complex” infants, one of whom stayed with the couple for about 30 months and remains in contact with them.

“I’m never going to change the world, but if I’m lucky I can have some impact on some small corner of it,” he said.

Jensen said that his most significant accomplishment was starting a firm catering to small, privately held companies.

“Small, privately held companies make up the majority of economic activity in the U.S., but are largely ignored by top-level firms,” he said. “In fact, most law firms either pursue Fortune 500 companies or do a mixture of personal injury, criminal, family law and business work.”

He said that he tells the young lawyers he mentors to enter law “because you love it and want to help people and want to work with them.”

Jensen added, “When I told my grandmother I was going to be a lawyer, she asked if I could be an honest one. The [Leadership in Law] award is some evidence to my grandmother that I have sought to meet her goal.”
Drawn to “whodunits” since she was a teenager, Anne Colt Leitess remains fascinated with piecing together evidence in complex cases and maintaining focus on getting justice for the victims of the city’s worst crimes.

She now serves as chief of the Special Victims Unit for the Office of the State’s Attorney for Baltimore City.

“I could think of nothing worse than someone being murdered and someone not being held accountable,” said Leitess, a career prosecutor whose current work focuses on justice for child victims of violent or sexual crimes.

“You cannot prosecute on a popularity contest,” she added. “The law is what you have to serve. Being a good leader is being confident and sure of your decisions and not being swayed or influenced.”

Leitess was previously Anne Arundel County’s first female state’s attorney after working for years leading the office’s Violent Crimes Trial Team. With roots in Baltimore, as a former law clerk and prosecutor of juvenile crimes, Leitess returned to the city in January after losing the election in Anne Arundel.

“I enjoy finding bits of evidence in a case whose significance has been overlooked and realizing that it will help prove another part of my case,” she said.

A partial fingerprint on a toothbrush, cell tower evidence and E-ZPass video surveillance have helped crack some of her most puzzling cases, she said.

Leitess has mentored many young attorneys over the years, especially women, and tells them that preparation and commitment are key to success.

“I believe that the No. 1 resource for attorneys is watching their colleagues in court,” she said. “If I can have that same impact and help others succeed in the court room, then I have been a leader in the best possible way.”
Advocating on behalf of people with disabilities through pro bono work and his six-year stint as a Maryland Disability Law Center board member brings great satisfaction to Raymond L. Marshall, a member at Chason, Rosner, Leary and Marshall LLC in Towson.

As a young lawyer, Marshall’s eyes were opened to the plight of the disabled while working on a pro bono case on behalf of Rosewood Center residents, investigating abuses and horrible living conditions at the nursing home. Later, his son was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, deepening his personal interest in justice for people who can’t speak up for themselves.

“People understand the feeling they have when they donate to a charity or help another person in need. I get that feeling when I do what I have been trained to do — advocate on behalf of people who need legal help,” he said.

He recently finished writing an amicus brief in the Maryland Court of Appeals on behalf of several disability advocates working to get a 21-year-old disabled and sick man the same level of care from the state that he received when he was younger.

The civil attorney received the 2012 Award for Advocacy Leadership in memory of Stanley S. Herr from the Arc Baltimore and was recognized the same year with The Maryland Disability Law Center’s Legal Advocacy Service Award.

Marshall stressed that it’s important to remain civil when arguing cases; he counsels young lawyers to remain calm and courteous and think through their responses, especially in an age when lawyers are more accessible via text messaging and emails.

“You can be an opponent in a case, but you don’t have to be an enemy,” he said.
Gerard Patrick Martin considers himself lucky to remain practicing law at a high level after more than 40 years trying white-collar crime and complex civil cases.

“I kind of have been lucky to have had the kind of brain to see what is important and what isn’t and the personality to not worry about the other stuff,” said Martin, partner at Rosenberg Martin Greenberg LLP in Baltimore.

The former federal prosecutor has been honored and recognized by numerous groups since 2006.

He said that his work as a federal prosecutor enabled him to work with top-level attorneys and members of the FBI and CIA, who taught him a lot; the job also opened a lot of doors, he said.

Throughout his career, he has also dedicated a lot of time to the community, including work with the Homeless Persons Representations Project and Our Daily Bread.

He was proud to have received The John Adams Award from the federal court for his pro bono efforts representing indigent individuals in serious criminal matters.

Martin sits on the board of directors for Saint Ignatius Loyola Academy and the Maryland Criminal Defense Attorneys’ Association. He is a member and past chair of the Maryland State Bar Association’s Ethics Committee and continues to participate in the MSBA ethics hotline for two months every year, handling about 25 calls per week from lawyers seeking advice on ethics issues.

His advice to other attorneys almost always circles back to “be yourself and be honest,” he said.

“Hard work always pays off, and jurors always smell a phony,” Martin said.
As the fifth-generation lawyer in his family, the Hon. Erik H. Nyce said he works hard to uphold the core legal values he learned through years practicing as a trial attorney — preparation, grace and patience.

“It’s a people-driven process, and ultimately I get the most satisfaction at the end of the day knowing that the decision I make is the best decision I can make, or I don’t make it and wait until I can give it the best decision,” said Nyce, who is a judge in the District Court of Maryland for Prince George’s County.

His work as a trial lawyer in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., was invaluable in preparing him for his role as a judge, he said.

“It taught me how to reduce complex matters to the simplest issues and facts,” he said. “Since I was a perpetual outsider, I approached each case with kindness and grace.”

The work also made him adaptable in the most stressful situations, a trait that is important on the bench, he said.

“As a lawyer or judge you never know what may confront you in terms of legal or factual issues, and there is always the possibility of unexpected conflict,” he said.

As chair of the Law 101/Bench to Bar series, Nyce moderates a panel of speakers on many legal issues; through the court’s internship program, he has also guided law school, undergraduate school and high school students.

He has an open-door policy and said his best piece of advice to lawyers always hinges on preparation.

“Every young lawyer must be prepared before entering the courtroom. This means understanding the case, reviewing the evidence, researching the issues and having a thorough understanding of the applicable law,” Nyce said.
Community service is a tradition at Kramon & Graham P.A., according to principal Lee H. Ogburn.

“The firm has a tradition of its lawyers being involved outside the law firm — we put a premium on that. We actively, directly encourage it,” he said. “It’s good for people to be involved in more things than being in your office.”

He said that the national insurance coverage firm also prides itself in working hard to help create opportunities for junior lawyers to become experts and build their own practices.

Outside of the office, Ogburn serves as co-chair of the Equal Justice Council, helping to raise money for Maryland Legal Aid’s work to provide pro bono services to people in need.

“This is a cause every private lawyer should support,” he said.

Ogburn believes that a successful lawyer is a prudent customer servant.

“Practicing law is a five-lane highway, and there is a spot for people with all kinds of interests and all kinds of priorities, as long as one priority is excellent service to clients.”

Outside the office, he manages to find at least four hours a week to work as Board of Overseers chair for the Baltimore School for the Arts.

One of his daughters graduated from the school, and Ogburn said he remains involved because he wants to be a part of its work to help talented teens excel.

“These kids work really hard at something they have a talent for, and it works — they improve, and they apply it outside the arts,” he said. “It really does change kids’ lives, and that’s why it’s so interesting and important to me.”
After witnessing the long hours his stevedore father clocked unloading cargo at the Baltimore harbor, Workers’ Comp Law Firm LLC, and White Marsh Law Firm, LLC, managing partner Matt M. Paavola said he takes pride in working hard for the blue-collar clientele he now serves.

Paavola served as lead counsel on the landmark decision of Swedo v. W.R. Grace Company before the Maryland Court of Appeals, which streamlined and clarified the appeals process for injured workers, a feat he calls his crowning achievement. His proudest accomplishment was winning the prestigious 2015 Maryland Association of Justice Trial Lawyer of the Year Award, he said.

“Good trial lawyering is all about energy, enthusiasm and preparation. I have always had the enthusiasm and energy necessary for thorough preparation,” Paavola said. “There are a lot of brilliant lawyers considerably smarter than me in transactional matters. And there are a bunch of lawyers who are faster than me in trial advocacy. But there are few trial lawyers that prepare more than I do.”

Paavola, who credits faith and strong family and coworkers to his success, mentors law students through the Maryland Christian Legal Society, and reiterates to them that preparation is the key to successful lawyering.

Since co-founding the Legal Aid Ministry of Baltimore, Inc., Paavola has helped men arriving at Helping Up Mission, a Baltimore shelter for homeless veterans and men, with about 100 cases—earning him a pro bono award five years ago from the Maryland State Bar Association. Paavola said that the men go to the shelter needing help resolving everything from family to criminal law, and the work forces him to recall his first 10 years practicing law.

“My day-to-day grind is I just enjoy so much of what I do, and the other stuff just follows,” he said.
Abba David Poliakoff’s career as an attorney has taken him from Washington, D.C., to Wall Street, but Baltimore is where his heart is and where the fruits of his business law practice and community service continue to grow.

“My greatest accomplishment is helping to plant the seeds of an idea, grow it into a viable company, produce a product or technology, develop into a business, and burst into a wild and phenomenal success for the entrepreneurs and for the investors,” said Poliakoff, who is chairman of the Securities Practice Group and Israel Practice Group for Gordon Feinblatt LLC.

When he’s not advising clients at his Baltimore office, Poliakoff serves in a governor-appointed role as co-chair of the Regulatory Reform Commission of Maryland, and sits on the boards of more than 10 organizations, including the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Levindale Hebrew Geriatric Center and Hospital Inc., Champions Oncology Inc., and the Baltimore Jewish Council, where he is first vice president.

During his tenure as board chairman of The Maryland/Israel Development Center, Poliakoff proudly worked to establish Maryland as a principal destination for Israeli companies, and to provide Maryland businesses with opportunities in Israel, he said. He received the Hanan Sibel Maryland/Israel Business Leadership Award in 2014.

Poliakoff’s family has lived in Baltimore for six generations—“four generations before, and two forward,” he said.

“I feel like I have an obligation to my community and my city,” Poliakoff added. “I need to pay back the benefits I receive and make sure this is a place where my children and grandchildren want to continue to live in.”
Family influences the way Dennis M. Robinson Jr. practices law and how he empathizes with his clients and the community, he said.

Robinson is a partner at Whiteford Taylor & Preston LLP.

“I hear people say it cannot be done, but I consider my most significant accomplishment to be maintaining an appropriate balance between my family, my profession and my community,” he said.

Robinson is a member of many community boards, president of the Perry Hall Improvement Association, chair of Friends of the Northeast Trail and co-owner of Gunpowder Lodge, a Kingsville restaurant, which he views as an extension of his community involvement.

He spends a lot of time with his children, even helping his son draft legislation to increase consumer awareness about the harm caused by invasive species. The proud father said that his son testified before legislative committees, and the law passed. He added that his 3-year-old daughter will probably become equally interested in social issues.

“Yes, I think it is important to do what you can to make where you live a better place. While I do not have any grandiose visions of drastically changing the world, I am convinced it is possible to make substantial progress in your community by being actively involved.”

He said he likes to think that he’s setting a good example for his kids and for the junior attorneys at his firm.

Robinson tells the lawyers he mentors the importance of being themselves, he said.

“I think you are doing a disservice to a client if you try to be something you are not,” Robinson said. “People need to learn to be effective advocating in a way that is comfortable for them.”
Before graduating with a law degree from the University of Maryland School of Law, Mark S. Saudek taught English and economics at a high school in Rhode Island and coached soccer, wrestling and lacrosse. Yet he wanted to pursue a legal career because it would combine his passion to help others with their problems and engage the community in a different way.

Today, Saudek is a partner at Gallagher Evelius & Jones LLP in Baltimore, handling complex commercial and general civil litigation cases.

“I love that each day brings great intellectual challenges and the opportunity to help our clients in practical ways to really help them advance their interests, while at the same time being terrifically challenging and interesting,” he said.

Saudek volunteers his time as the chair of the Open Doors to the Federal Courts program, a yearly event designed to introduce nearly 100 Baltimore city high school students to the judicial system. Students participate in mock trials as jury members who reach verdicts on cases.

“Every year I am amazed at the extent to which the students are engaged and inspired by their participation,” he said.

Saudek also serves as board president for the nonprofit The Loading Dock, president-elect for the Federal Bar Association, Maryland Chapter. He also is a former board member for Teach for America.

“I’m fortunate to be at a firm that really values community involvement and community service,” he said. “For me, it’s a great way to stay involved ... I want to see how I can help other people have some of the opportunities that have been made available to me.”
As an attorney and adviser for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of the General Counsel, Civil Rights Division, Angela J. Scott knows that her work doesn’t just affect one person.

“I approach my work knowing that [many] individuals are going to be positively impacted because of the work that I do,” she said.

From October 2014 to April 2015, she participated as a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section in a case alleging violations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Ensuring that people with disabilities are properly accommodated is one of her passions. The cause is close to her heart because her mother was diagnosed with ALS in 1999.

“I believe that people with disabilities are equal to everybody else, and that means they should be able to live in the most integrated setting, which usually is their home,” Scott said.

She considers her most significant achievement thus far to be creating the initiative 10weeks10deeds, which asks volunteers to undertake a minimum of 10 public service and programmatic activities beginning on the Martin Luther King Jr. National Day of Service in January through March.

Scott is active in many professional organizations, including as a council member for the American Bar Association’s Section of Civil Rights and Social Justice and as a member of the board of directors for the Clarence “Du” Burns Memorial Fund.
Lila Shapiro-Cyr was first drawn to the legal field because of her grandmother, the late Sophie (Litman) Shapiro. “She was one of maybe less than half a dozen women in her law school class,” she said. “She, unfortunately, never got to practice law just because it was so hard for women back then to actually be lawyers.”

Today, Shapiro-Cyr carries on her grandmother’s legacy as a partner at Ballard Spahr LLP handling property transactions. Some of her most memorable work includes representing the Housing Authority of New Orleans for myriad cases pre-and post-Hurricane Katrina.

Some of her local work includes the acquisition of St. Joseph Hospital by the University of Maryland Medical System and the redevelopment of the B&O building.

“(My job is) always different,” Shapiro-Cyr said. “There is always something new and interesting. No day is ever like another. I’m a people person, so I enjoy getting to interact with lots of different types of people.”

Because she initially wanted to be a public interest lawyer, the mother of two boys decided to donate her time to several area organizations, including as a member of the Board of Trustees at the Park School of Baltimore and as a board member for the Kol HaLev Synagogue.

“I really felt like it was important to use my career and my experience as a professional to give back to the community,” she said.

An avid runner, Shapiro-Cyr completed the Baltimore Marathon in 2013 and is training for November’s Philadelphia Marathon. With a deep admiration of sports journalism, she is a frequent guest contributor on a Sunday night radio show on 105.7 The Fan.

“It’s super fun and I kind of get to live my lifelong dream,” she said.

He attributes the firm’s success to his clients. “The best form of advertising you will ever have is word of mouth, and most of my clients came from word of mouth,” he said.

The most memorable case of his 40-year career came in 1983 while serving as a prosecutor in the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office. DeWitt Duckett, 14, was shot and killed in a hallway at Harlem Park Junior High School when three youths tried to steal his Georgetown Hoyas jacket.

While the three were under the age of 18, they were charged as adults. The defense petitioned to have the cases moved back to juvenile court, but Shoup successfully argued they be tried as adults.

“It was a complicated case,” he said. “[The reverse waiver hearings were] fairly complex before we even got to the trial portion.”

After a two-week trial, the three were convicted.

Shoup also served in the U.S. Army for 30 years. Rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel from a private, known in the Army as a “mustang,” he retired as deputy inspector general in the Maryland National Guard. He completed tours during both Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm.

He also works as an adjunct professor at his alma mater, the University of Baltimore School of Law, where he aims to teach his students to have passion.

“YOU want either the jury or the judge to understand that you believe in what you are doing,” he said.

Shoup also donates his time to several organizations including the Cawood Inn of Court and the Maryland Association for Justice Foundation.

“I have had tremendous mentors over the years, great experiences and some success. I feel that sharing information, knowledge and my time is important so young lawyers, and the public at large, can make their career or life a little bit easier.”
When training the next generation of lawyers and leaders, Donald B. Tobin, dean and law professor at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, hopes to impart two core lessons to his students.

The main part of a lawyer’s job is to help people, he said, noting the law is one of the most effective tools for aiding others. Tobin is also passionate about legal professionalism.

“We don’t have to be aggressive and contrarian to be good lawyers,” he said. “There is a level of civility and passion that can be mixed together to be a great lawyer.”

Teaching was a natural choice for Tobin — his mother was a Johns Hopkins University professor and his father was a research scientist at the National Institutes of Health.

“There was a lot of learning and teaching going on in my house,” the Columbia native said. “I even feel like as a lawyer I was doing a lot of teaching. Your goal is to teach the court that your position was the right one.”

Previously, Tobin worked as a staff member for former U.S. Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.) and as an appellate attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice Tax Division. He also was an associate dean for faculty and a law professor at Ohio State University’s Mortiz College of Law.

He has served as dean of the University of Maryland law school since 2014.

“When the opportunity to come back (to Maryland) occurred, it was really something I couldn’t pass up,” he said. “I have the honor of leading a great institution. You want to keep it great and make it better.”

Tobin says his goal is for the institution to “expand our footprint in both the legal business community and the business community at large to provide more opportunities for our students.”

“I've made employment one of our top priorities here at the law school and working with our career services to create more opportunities for our students,” he said.
Keith R. Truffer, a partner at Towson-based Royston, Mueller, McLean & Reid LLP, has always viewed his job as a way to help those in need.

“Folks come to us with the biggest problems in their lives and they say ‘Please. Help me,’ and I have always felt it is a great privilege to be able serve others in that way,” he said.

Practicing at the same firm for 32 years, his passion lies in trying cases and spending time in the courtroom.

“It is a demanding, exhilarating, exhausting, stimulating, creative experience that, without question, is what I enjoy the most about practicing,” he said.

Truffer’s most memorable case, involving automobile product liability, came in 1992. One day after a young man celebrated his 19th birthday, he was involved in a car crash that left him a quadriplegic.

Settling the case as the jury was being selected, Truffer was able to reach an agreement allowing his client to build a handicap accessible house and hire outside help for him when needed.

“I’ve always thought that if I don’t do anything else in my legal career, there is at least one person whose life is better because I was a lawyer,” he said.

Truffer is involved with several professional organizations, including serving as secretary for the Maryland State Bar Association and as a member of the executive council for the Baltimore County Bar Association.

He also gives his time to area nonprofits. He serves on the board of directors for The Believe in Tomorrow National Children’s Foundation Inc. and The David N. Bates and Richard B. Vincent Foundation Inc. Truffer says he is motivated by the “ability to make differences in people’s lives.”
With a majority of her cases in family law, attorney Donna E. Van Scoy believes it’s best if the cases can be resolved outside of the courtroom.

“My position in cases always is ‘What can we do so that the parties participate in settling their cases?’ because the chances then are much greater that they will stay out of the court system, and if they both participate in the process then they can continue to have working relationships, which often benefits the family,” she said.

The University of Baltimore School of Law graduate opened up her own Rockville-based practice, the Law Office of Donna E. Van Scoy LLC, in 2004.

However, she set her sights on becoming a lawyer at an early age.

“I always found it fascinating to keep discussions going by making different points,” she said.

Van Scoy focuses on family law because she wants to help and guide people through a difficult period.

“You see these people at the worst point in their lives but that doesn’t mean that you can’t help them understand that they need to, as best they can, put aside the emotional part of it so that, in the end, it isn’t the lawyers that benefit. It’s the family that is able to reach an agreement.”

Because she considers law a profession — not a job — Van Scoy is the president of the Montgomery County Women’s Bar Foundation and chair of the Long Range Planning Committee Women’s Bar Association of Maryland Inc.

“I think it is very important to be the best professional you can, to be very active in the profession and with other professionals,” she said.
A Complete Listing 2001-2015

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Kramon & Graham congratulates Lee Ogburn and all Leadership in Law honorees. Thank you for the good work you do.

Your talent and contribution to the legal profession and the broader community inspires us all.