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NSBA Member SPOTLIGHTS

Gwendolyn Olney

Associate Counsel, BH Media Group, Inc., Omaha

Where did you attend law school?

University of Iowa, Class of 2010

What is the best career advice you have ever received?

Always take notes. (Added advice from me: And then make sure you actually save the notes you took!)



What kind of legal matter do you find most rewarding or personally satisfying and why?

I'm a little bit of a deal junkie, and I love drafting contracts. I delight in those late-Friday-afternoon moments when, after arduous contract negotiations and wordsmithing, the parties finally come to an agreement and signatures hit the page. Such a feeling of accomplishment. Additionally, though it's never fun to run into contract disputes, it's always satisfying when one of the paranoid, just-in-case contract provisions I fought to include in an agreement is triggered and my company is advantaged because of it.

What do you do for fun?

I love to read, volunteer (particularly for the arts, civic, and women's rights organizations in Omaha), and travel with my fiancé, Scott.

What do you like best about your practice area and why?

Being an in-house counsel is the way to go. I enjoy the dual role of providing legal advice to my company while also being part of a business team made up of a diverse and enthusiastic group of colleagues. As the Associate Counsel for BH Media Group, I represent our company's newspapers and media outlets around the country (including the Omaha World-Herald) in all necessary legal matters and operations, which means I never know what I'll be doing on any given day. Boredom is never an issue!

What is your favorite quote?

"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." – Plato

What advice would you give a new lawyer?

Never be afraid to ask questions. Not knowing potentially critical information or failing to raise an issue that others might not have considered yet is worse than the (likely unfounded) concern that you could appear unintelligent. And if you find yourself in a work environment where asking questions is discouraged or ridiculed, find another job.

Maurice R. Johnson

Attorney, Goosmann Law Firm, Sioux City, Iowa

Where did you attend law school?

Creighton Law

What is the best career advice you have ever received?

The significant problems your clients face cannot be solved at the level that created them.



What kind of legal matter do you find most rewarding or personally satisfying and why?

Economic development. It's wonderful to create with a community and obtain results that positively affect the quality of life.

If you weren't a lawyer, what would you be and why?

A DJ at a jazz station.

What is your favorite law school memory?

Time spent with my Con Law Professor, Dr. Richard Shugrue.

What is your least favorite law school memory?

Hitting "play" on a tape recorder when I meant to hit "record" in the middle of a lecture.

What do you like best about your practice area and why?

The diversity—it keeps me challenged.

Who is your hero and why?

My wife, because she's the most thoughtful person I've ever known.

What is the most rewarding moment of your practice?

When my work has had a positive effect on the life of an individual or a community.

What is your proudest moment?

At the respective adoptions of my daughters.

What advice would you give a new lawyer?

Develop a meditation practice in addition to your law practice.

What is your favorite NSBA member benefit or program and why?

NSBA's continuing legal education program. Great diversity and they throw in some freebies!

NSBA Member SPOTLIGHTS

Erin Ebeler Rolf

Partner, Woods & Aitken LLP, Lincoln

Where did you attend law school?

Nebraska College of Law, Class of 2008

What kind of legal matter do you find most rewarding or personally satisfying and why?

I've been fortunate to work with great clients who really care about their employees. Most of my employers are genuinely concerned about doing the right thing for their workers and treating folks fairly, which makes me proud to work for them.

What is an unconventional lesson you've learned about the practice of law?

Your computer will slow to a crawl when you're on a teleconference with a court or client.

Who is your hero and why?

My parents. They've raised three daughters who are friends and who genuinely love one another. Our parents have supported us every step along the way. My mom stayed home with us when we were little, and my dad worked two jobs (farming and insurance) to enable her to do so. At the same time, I don't ever remember Dad missing a ball game or band concert. Today, they're the best grandparents that the children in our family could ask for. They're the backbone of a very close family.

What do you like best about your practice area and why?

Labor and employment offers something new and different every day because it inherently involves interactions between people. The stories are always interesting.

What is one thing you know now that you wish you would have known in your first year of practice?

I wish I would have appreciated how difficult it would be to take a vacation that doesn't involve checking emails or responding to a client need. I was married last summer, and I checked emails at least once a day on our honeymoon.

What is your proudest moment?

When I became a partner at Woods & Aitken. I've been with the firm since after my first year of law school, and I have been incredibly blessed to learn from some great attorneys.



Jason Jackson

Governor Pete Ricketts's Chief HR Officer, Lincoln

Where did you attend law school?

Thomas Jefferson School of Law, San Diego, Class of 2014

What is the best career advice you have ever received?

People like to work with people they like, so be likable.

What kind of legal matter do you find most rewarding or personally satisfying and why?

Day to day my field is labor and employment law, but I'm a constitutional theory and natural law hobbyist. I'm fascinated by that earlier period in history when the law was thought to flow less from the legislator's whims and more from the jurist's rigorous application of universal principles of justice to new sets of facts.

What is an unconventional lesson you've learned about the practice of law?

When you do what is just the law will usually be on your side, and when it isn't, it's not you that's wrong.

What do you do for fun?

Hang out with family. My wife and I have four kids and their extra-curriculars consume just about all of our free time.

What do you like best about your practice area and why?

At-will employment. When the law treats both parties to an employment agreement equitably everyone is incented to do the right thing.

What is your favorite quote?

There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to the one who is striking at the root. – Henry David Thoreau

Who is your hero and why?

Martin Luther King, Jr. He understood principles of natural justice and reflected those principles back to society, appealing successfully to an entire country that we should live up to our own values. He was also an amazing intellect and charismatic leader who nonetheless carried himself with great humility.

