

VIRGINIA LAWYERS WEEKLY

# LEADERS IN THE LAW



# UP AND COMING LAWYERS

VIRGINIA LAWYERS WEEKLY

# 2022

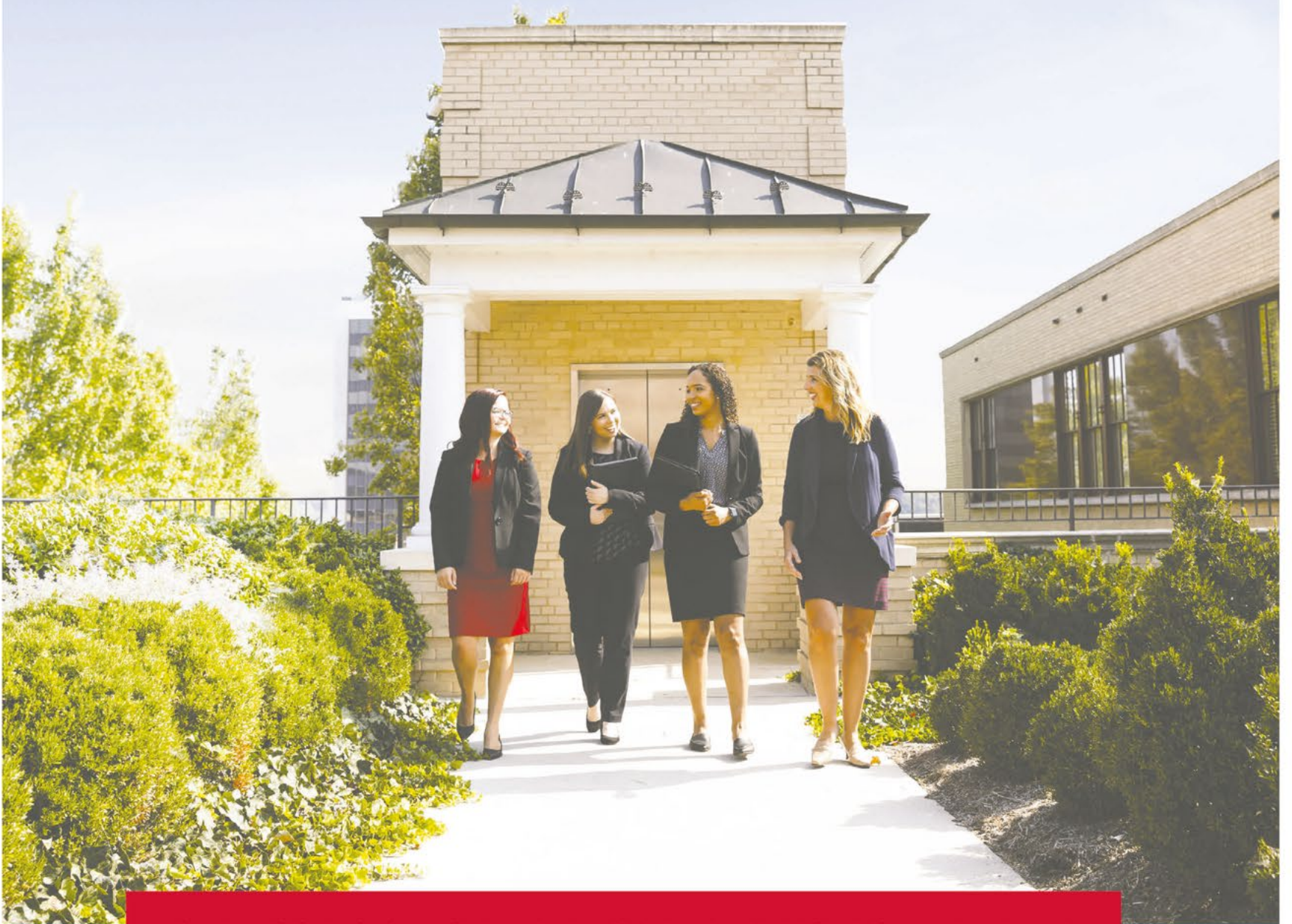
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## SETTING THE STANDARD

Virginia Lawyers Weekly is pleased to introduce the 2022 class of honorees in our “Leaders in the Law” program.

We seek to recognize attorneys who are setting the standard for other lawyers — those who changed practice, advanced the law or improved the justice system in Virginia. We considered numerous nominations from across the commonwealth, and all of the nominees were highly accomplished. We are very proud to honor these 30 leaders. We also recognized the 18 members of the 2022 class of Up & Coming Lawyers. These legal practitioners are establishing a name for themselves and

displaying the ambition, drive, determination and accomplishments that set them apart among their peers — in their first 10 years of practice. The 2022 Leaders and Up & Coming Lawyers were celebrated at an awards reception Oct. 25 at the John Marshall in Richmond. In this special section, we highlight their responses to a questionnaire, providing insight about them as individuals and about their accomplishments.

*Susan A. Bocamazo  
Sr. Group Publisher*

### TABLE OF CONTENTS



Matthew Allman.....	5B
Solomon H. Ashby Jr. ....	5B
Ryan M. Bates .....	6B
Jennifer Capocelli.....	6B
Deborah M. Casey .....	7B
Elliott Casey .....	8B
Darius K. Davenport Sr. ....	8B
Juanita F. Ferguson.....	9B
Thomas R. Frantz.....	10B
Lavonda Graham-Williams.....	10B
Robyn H. Hansen.....	12B
Dion W. Hayes .....	12B
Bradley R. Haywood.....	13B
Michelle Kallen.....	14B
John K. Karanian.....	14B
Anne C. Loomis.....	15 B
Tate C. Love .....	16B
Michael J. Lowell .....	16B
Kyle McNew .....	18B
Pia J. Miller.....	18B
Jennifer Minear.....	19B
Michelle R. Parker.....	20B
Jimmy F. Robinson Jr. ....	20B
Lindsay L. Rollins .....	21B
Jamel D. Rowe .....	22B
Richard N. “Rick” Shapiro .....	22B
Virginia B. Theisen.....	23B
William W. Turner.....	24B
Kristi A. Wooten.....	24B
Alejandra G. Zapatero .....	25B



Rachel W. Adams.....	27B
Christopher William Carlson Jr. ....	27B
Linda Choe.....	28B
Andrew O. Clarke.....	28B
Chrissy Cogbill Noonan.....	29B
Andrew Ferguson.....	30B
Steven Forbes.....	30B
Paul D. Fore.....	32B
Elizabeth B. Heddleston.....	32B
S. Spencer Katona.....	33B
Crystal Malik.....	34B
Jasmine R. McKinney.....	34B
William W. Nexsen Jr. ....	35B
Richard D. “Rick” Palmieri.....	36B
Rachel Robinson .....	36B
Heidi E. Siegmund.....	37B
Breanna N. West.....	38B
Christian Yingling.....	38B

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VIRGINIA LAWYERS WEEKLY

# LEADERS IN THE LAW



# Matthew Allman

## Counsel, Venable, Tysons

Florida State University College of Law

Once a presidential management fellow and financial management analyst at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Matthew Allman now focuses on securing zoning and land use approvals for developers and landowners in jurisdictions throughout Northern Virginia and in the District of Columbia.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Tallahassee. It's a great place to grow up, with lots of interesting things to do and plenty of other young people around.

**Important mentor:** My high school teacher and swim coach, Denny Bunn. He taught us about the importance of working hard, but always having fun while doing it.

**First job:** Lifeguarding. It was a surprisingly complex job, involving a lot more responsibility and work than I anticipated. It was a great

lesson about how every job is important and has its own unique challenges.

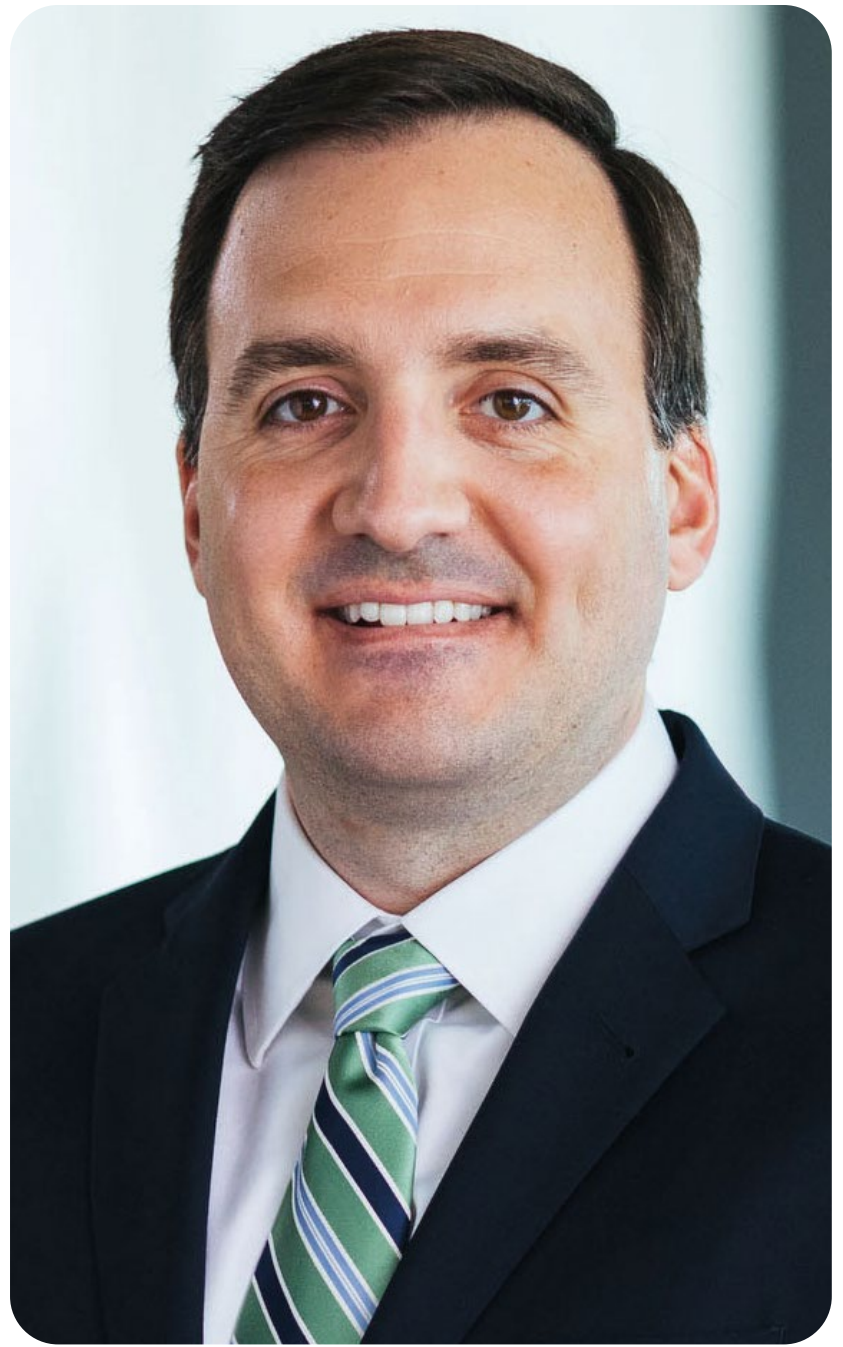
**Humbling experience:** I once received a tongue-lashing by an elected official at a public hearing. It wasn't a pleasant experience, but I recognized that it was a reaction to the position I was advocating and not a personal attack. It just comes with the territory, and you can't take it personally.

**I might have been:** Public policy.

**Guilty pleasure:** Watching college football and basketball. It's an addiction.

**Favorite getaway:** Anywhere with mountains.

**A month off:** Watch even more college football and basketball. It's an addiction.



# Solomon H. Ashby Jr.

## Partner, McIntyre, Stein & Ashby, Norfolk

University of Wisconsin School of Law

Diversity, equity and inclusion have long been hallmarks of Solomon H. Ashby's life, even before he began his career as an attorney 27 years ago. He has demonstrated his commitment to DEI initiatives since his years as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he served on the 1987 Steering Committee on Minority Affairs.

**Growing up:** I am a native of Hampton Roads, and I have been influenced by the communities where I grew up. I am a child of the 60s who began life in Norfolk and moved to Portsmouth to live in a great middle-class community where people cared for their neighbors as near extensions of their own family. The benefits of the civil rights era in Virginia have impacted me and the difficulties of the segregated society and implementation of integration was not a chapter in history but real life for my parents, extended family, teachers, mentors and community. Their experiences fueled my life-long obligation to defend equality for all and pursue just causes for others.

**Important mentor:** Herman Terry was my high school football coach and mentor. He cared for me as a player and helped me pursue my goals. With a quiet hand, Coach Terry guided my college selection path which led to the University of Wisconsin and ultimately my legal career. Compassion and care for others is not simply a requirement for one's occupation. Coach Terry continues to offer guidance, advice, and assistance throughout my life.

**Personal accomplishment:** Being a husband to my wife Adrienne and a father to my chil-

dren, Solomon III and Seth. I love my family and want nothing more than to bring joy to their lives and support them as they pursue their dreams.

**Professional accomplishment:** The opportunity to serve as chief legal counsel representing my hometown. If one were to assess the number of people impacted and the dollars at issue, one could easily call that the greatest accomplishment. However, I consider it a top professional accomplishment to provide legal services and assistance to neighbors, former teachers, friends, and family who contributed to my life.

**First job:** I was an apprentice painter at the Newport News Shipyard. I learned that hard work cannot diminish the joy of life and human spirit. All individuals possess dignity.

**I might have been:** A teacher. I believe the teaching profession has the greatest impact on the largest number of individuals, and it shapes many lives. It shaped mine.

**Guilty pleasure:** Video games.

**Favorite getaway:** Any family or school reunion or Norcom High School and University of Wisconsin homecoming where longtime friends gather and reconnect.

**You didn't know:** I was a chemist for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and I have a child in the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and another one in the U.S. Naval Academy.



# Ryan M. Bates

**Partner, Hunton Andrews Kurth, Washington, D.C.**

The George Washington University Law School

Ryan M. Bates is a pro bono all-star. He has been a board member of the Legal Services of Northern Virginia for eight years and spearheads his firm's partnership with the organization, designating attorneys for the Domestic Violence Clinic. In addition to training and mentoring the clinic's volunteer attorneys, he is a regular participant.

**Important mentor:** I had two. The late Fred Freilicher, my law school professor at GW, hired me as a law clerk at Hunton during my third year of law school. He instilled in me the importance of good writing. He would meticulously review edits to my briefs and didn't just make changes, he provided his rationale, and explained them one-by-one. My second mentor, Tom Murphy, provided invaluable mentoring throughout my career. He taught me how to zealously advocate for clients while upholding the highest degree of professionalism.

**Personal accomplishment:** Being a four-time finisher at World's Toughest Mudder, a 24-hour obstacle course race. It's a five-mile loop with over 20 obstacles placed on difficult terrain in temperatures often below 30 degrees. Because there are water obstacles and swimming involved, I run most of the race in a wetsuit. In 2018, I completed 65 miles, which placed me in the top 50 of over 1,200 competitors.

**Professional accomplishment:** Resolving a hotly disputed trade secret case a few years ago on behalf of a client whose senior executives had stolen trade secrets and manipulated

contracts before exiting the company and starting a competitive business. We were able to obtain what is believed to be one of the most wide-ranging preliminary injunctions in Colorado history, preventing the defendants from doing business with 90% of the industry. The court unwound contracts and preserved \$50 million in revenue for our client. Discovery uncovered that the defendants had deleted electronic evidence at the instruction of their counsel days after receiving a litigation hold. The court sanctioned the defendants for spoliation of evidence and found that their counsel suborned perjury, resulting in an adverse inference instruction, \$600,000 in attorneys' fees and piercing of the attorney-client privilege under the crime fraud exception.

**Guilty pleasure:** Ice cream. I used to be good about staying away from sweets. That discipline evaporated during the pandemic, and I now find myself asking my kids if they want to stop for ice cream more than they ask me.

**A month off:** I would take a road trip across the United States. As a child, I went on a two-to-three-week road trip, and some of my fondest childhood memories come from that trip. I would stop at as many national parks, waterparks, and tack tourist stops as possible.

**You didn't know:** I married my high school sweetheart. My wife and I met in study hall. We had separate study halls, but by mere coincidence or good luck, they merged into the same one. We struck up a conversation that first week and never looked back.



# Jennifer Capocelli

**Attorney, Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen, Richmond**

University of Kentucky College of Law

Jennifer Capocelli formed the workers' compensation department at Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen and will serve as chair the American Association for Justice Workers' Compensation Section in 2023. She also gives countless hours to the charity organization Girls on the Run.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Richmond and have lived here all my life, except for the three years in law school. The city has changed so much since I was a child. It has given me a true appreciation for what the city has to offer, from great restaurants to tons of fun things to do.

**Important mentor:** Switching from doing insurance defense work to representing injured workers was an adjustment for me. Ashley Davis, who is also a former defense attorney, helped me make the transition smoothly. Ashley is a great sounding board and always gives great advice.

**Personal accomplishment:** Raising three wonderful children. While I am very proud of everything my children have accomplished, my children are just good people.

**Professional accomplishment:** Being asked to join Allen, Allen, Allen, & Allen and to start the workers' compensation practice group — and to help people who truly need it.

**Advice:** Treat opposing counsel with respect and civility.

**First job:** Working at a retail store while I was in high school. It taught me how hard people in the retail industry work, and I have a true respect for all they do.

**Humbling experience:** The first time I had to argue a motion in Fairfax County, I did not have a good understanding of the local rules and got yelled at by the judge because of it. That taught me to always have a good understanding of the local rules before you appear in court.

**Biggest challenge:** Starting a new practice group at my firm has been exciting and challenging. We had to build not only the department, but all the processes that go along with running that practice group.

**Work/life balance:** You must set aside time to do something just for yourself each day. Whether it's going for a run or binge-watching something on Netflix, you need to do something every day to help you unwind from the workday.

**I might have:** I would have followed in my mother's footsteps and become a nurse. My mom loved being a nurse, and I think I would have as well.

**Guilty pleasure:** Ice cream and lots of it. It could be freezing outside, but I would still want ice cream.

**Favorite getaway:** Smith Mountain Lake is my favorite place to vacation because you get the best of both worlds. You get not just the water, but also the mountains.

**Month off:** I would spend a month in Italy. My husband was born in Rome and still has family there.

**You didn't know:** I have run 13 marathons and have two grandchildren.



# Deborah M. Casey

## Principal, Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black, Norfolk

### William and Mary Law School

For more than three decades, Deborah M. Casey has concentrated her practice on representing Virginia's common-interest communities, providing legal counseling tailored to their needs. Her clients include a variety of condominium and property owners' associations, as well as mixed use and planned communities.

**Growing up:** West Hartford, Connecticut was a small New England town where I walked to school, played outside with the kids in my neighborhood until dinner, and knew my school mates, which helped form a strong sense of community. But, having spent most of my childhood summers in Virginia Beach with family, I knew I would settle where it was warmer and around family.

**Important mentor:** I have had a few non-family mentors in my career, whose encouragement provided the basis for forging a new path and continuing to move forward.

**Personal accomplishment:** Raising my three children, who have become engaged, contributing and kind citizens of the world.

**Professional accomplishment:** I am proud to be a fellow in the College of Community Association Lawyers, a specialty bar with less than 200 lawyers nationally that includes some of the most smart, thoughtful, funny and caring people I know.

**Advice:** Keep your nose clean.

**First job:** Working in the deli/bakery of a grocery store. From that experience, I learned customer service, organizational skills, salesmanship and how to work with all kinds of people.

**Biggest challenge:** Cutting a practice niche out of whole cloth.

**Work/life balance:** Schedule personal and professional priorities to make time for each.

**I might have been:** In architecture or interior design.

**Guilty pleasure:** Ice cream night.

**Favorite getaway:** I went to Montana and Wyoming last summer with one of my daughters. The hiking and scenery were amazing.

**A month off:** Travel.

**You didn't know:** An emergency appendectomy led to skipping my senior year of high school and going to college a year early. I broke my right wrist two weeks into my first year of law school and learned to write with my left hand.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL VLW HONOREES

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# Elliott Casey

## Staff Attorney, Virginia Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council, Williamsburg

University of Virginia Law School

Since starting at CASC in 2016, Elliott Casey has become the premier legal instructor for prosecutors and law enforcement officers in Virginia, and a recognized expert across the nation and worldwide on investigating and prosecuting white-collar crime. He was the key player in organizing the Virginia Cyber-crime Initiative.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Northern New Jersey in a community that valued academic excellence and intellectual and artistic achievement. I became accustomed to being the dumbest or least talented person in the room, which has helped me to be a lifelong student. I am rarely afraid to try something new and look foolish in the process.

**Important mentor:** Ron Huber, who was an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Charlottesville. He took me on as an intern and taught me, by example, the real qualities of a good prosecutor.

**Personal accomplishment:** I used to waste a lot of time playing video games and watching TV. I realized that I had wasted time learning about pretend worlds and made-up languages. Years later, I have learned Japanese, German, Chinese and Korean. And learned to play the cello, although I am not very good at it yet.

**Professional accomplishment:** I created an online encyclopedia for prosecutors where they can look up answers to questions, learn about different areas of the law, and get written and video training on hundreds of different topics.

**Advice:** "When you don't look forward to the smell of the locker room anymore, it is time to move on."

**First job:** I taught karate to children. I learned very quickly to pay attention to everything, everywhere, all the time, and to watch my words carefully.

**Humbling experience:** One day I was speaking ill of a colleague and did not realize that the person was nearby. Since then, I have tried to be respectful of people at all times, even when I think no one else can hear me.

**Biggest challenge:** Managing stress was a constant challenge when I was a prosecutor. To be honest, I did not do a very good job of managing my own stress.

**Work/life balance:** It is crucial to draw a firm line between your personal life and your professional life. There has to be a time when you put away your work phone and stop checking messages.

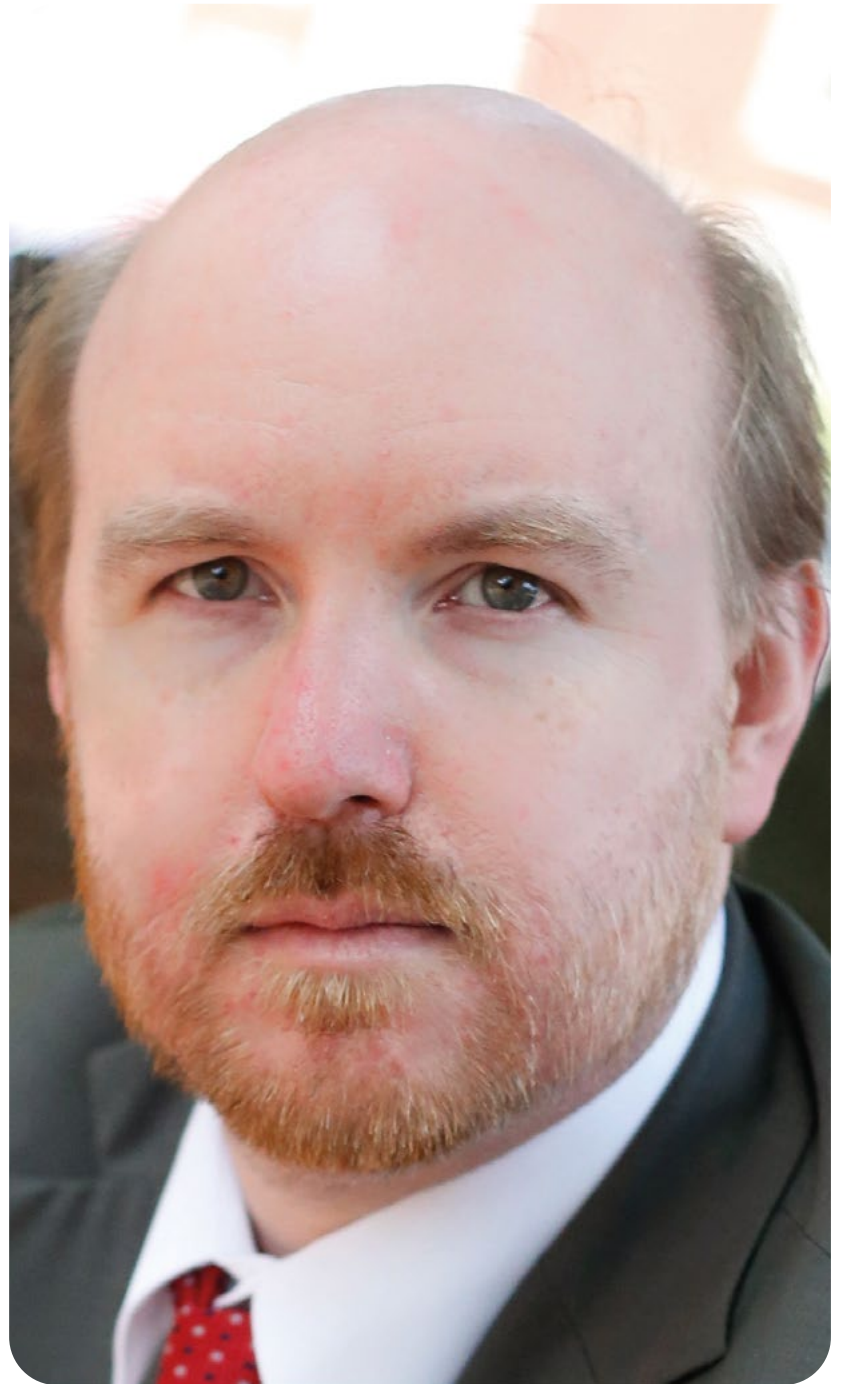
**I might have been:** I probably would have become a teacher.

**Guilty pleasure:** Watching travelogue and travel-food videos on YouTube.

**Favorite getaway:** I enjoy visiting Japan, especially the smaller cities, little villages and more remote areas.

**A month off:** I would finish walking the second half of the 88-temple walking pilgrimage on the Japanese island of Shikoku.

**You didn't know:** I was a scriptwriter for several children's cartoon shows, including "Spiderman," "Avengers" and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles." Also, I used to have long, blond hair down to the middle of my back.



# Darius K. Davenport Sr.

## Managing Partner, Crenshaw, Ware & Martin, Norfolk

University of Wisconsin Law School

Darius K. Davenport Sr. finds himself on the cutting edge of two ever-evolving arenas: politics and electronic data. His government and public sector work provides counsel to political subdivisions and other governmental entities, while his data privacy practice focuses on assisting clients navigate the rapidly changing landscape of data privacy laws and mitigating cyber risk.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Virginia Beach. The beach is a beautiful resort city where I have many fond memories. However, the lingering impacts of racial discrimination was infused into almost every facet of my young social life: public education, shopping, etc. My parents were educators, and they taught my siblings and me a complete American historical narrative that informed us equally about events from our past that would inspire pride and instances of shame and injustice. These lessons prepared us to appreciate the beauty of childhood and the sometimes-harsh realities of being a young Black male in Southeastern Virginia.

**Important mentor:** The late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia Leroy Hassel. He was a man of faith and had a brilliant legal mind. His knowledge of the law was formidable. In my former job, I would serve as his chaperone when he visited various law school classes when he would visit campus as jurist in residence. With no preparation, he would ask the professor which case or topic they were discussing and then he would give a detailed lecture for an hour with no notes or books. His love and respect for the law drove him to want to master it in its entirety.

**First job:** A lot attendant at a local high-end car dealership. I learned about hard work in extreme weather conditions, customer care,

and I also learned to maintain my composure in adversarial settings.

**Humbling experience:** While attending a career fair at a community center in Norfolk, a young boy told me that he "never met anyone like me" who was a professional, wore a suit to work, had traveled and was approachable. The young man had never seen the Virginia Beach oceanfront 20 minutes away. I learned that a part of my duty was to take time and make myself available to young people who may not have been blessed with my life experiences, and I learned how important exposure is in teaching young people about the world and what they can achieve.

**Biggest challenge:** Deciding to leave the practice of law for academia and then deciding to return.

**Advice:** Read the last case in the chapter first; that's the good law.

**Work/life balance:** Keep your faith and family first.

**I might have been:** A history professor.

**Guilty pleasure:** None of my pleasures involve guilt.

**Favorite getaway:** A warm Caribbean beach (Bahamas, Jamaica).

**Month off:** Global missions, family vacation and sleep.

**You didn't know:** I moonlight as a DJ with a good friend of mine from college. I also enjoy fishing.





# Juanita F. Ferguson

## Shareholder, Bean Kinney & Korman, Arlington

The George Washington University Law School

Juanita F. Ferguson has built her reputation in an industry of builders. She has a proven record of representing clients throughout the construction industry, including developers, homeowners, engineers, contractors, building materials manufacturers, subcontractors and suppliers.

**Growing up:** Washington, DC. To the rest of the world, the city represents politics and power. For me, it represented family, friends, and culture. It didn't matter about socioeconomic or educational background. Persons from various walks of life had a shared appreciation of community and local pride. The local news always reported on national events given that we were in the nation's capital so I learned at an early age how to relate to persons who didn't look or speak like me. It prepared me to be unafraid of the world that extended beyond Southeast D.C.

**Important mentor:** I have had so many that I would get into serious trouble by limiting it to just one. I will say that every non-family mentor gave me the proverbial kick that I needed to get to the next level personally and professionally.

**First job:** Operating a lemonade stand in my neighborhood. I learned (and did not fully understand at the time) that public relations skills and how you make others feel when they decide to deal with you is invaluable for professional and personal success.

**Humbling experience:** Early in my career I argued a matter and lost to a pro se pre-law

student. From that I learned that you must never take any adversary or opponent for granted.

**Biggest challenge:** Recognizing that on those occasions when you get knocked down (don't get the ruling you want, the client you thought you would land, etc.) you have to get back up right away and keep it moving. Life is moving at too fast a pace to stay down.

**Blue-sky goal:** To never stop being challenged.

**Advice to your younger self:** Don't be afraid to be wrong sometimes. We learn as much from what we don't know as what we do know in the practice of law.

**Work/life balance:** Faith in God and having an active spiritual life.

**I might have been:** I would have applied to the National Park Service to be an interpreter in one of our national parks.

**Guilty pleasure:** Expensive footwear.

**Favorite getaway:** Martha's Vineyard (domestic) and Paris (international). No matter how many times I have been to each, the thrill is still the same.

**A month off:** Visit the continents of Asia and Africa.

**You didn't know:** I studied classical flute for 10 years. I speak French (not totally fluent but I can master conversations).



CONGRATULATIONS

Jennifer  
Capocelli

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"Leaders in the Law"

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# Thomas R. Frantz

## Partner, Williams Mullen, Virginia Beach

William and Mary Law School

In a legal career spanning 40 years, Tom Frantz has established a reputation as a trusted adviser and mentor to attorneys and business leaders throughout Virginia. He is presently leading an initiative to combine the Hampton Roads and Richmond areas into one mega-region with the goal of enhancing economic development and prosperity.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Waynesboro, Pa., a small town where most of the industries were manufacturing and farming, and the small population had a strong work ethic.

**Important mentor:** Don Clark. He taught me to work hard and instilled the importance of careful and thoughtful analysis, clear communication, and always promptly returning calls.

**Personal accomplishment:** My family. My wife, Dianne and our two daughters, our son, their spouses, and five grandchildren who live near us. All are successful and happy.

**Professional accomplishment:** For the past 15 years, I have been leading an effort to get Greater Richmond and Hampton Roads working together as a mega region. We formed a 501(c)(3), known as RVA 757 Connects, entity to accelerate those efforts. I co-chair its board and we are making great strides in our efforts, including obtaining the funding for widening the remaining 29 miles of interstate on route 64 between Richmond and Virginia Beach. We have also filed a trademark for the two regions together as the I-64 Innovation Corridor and are leading an effort for the two regions together to become the 11th global internet hub in the world.

**Advice:** A surprising bit of good advice I received was from my college track coach telling me that if I would come to William & Mary and run for him, he would teach me to eat nails for breakfast. He did.

**First job:** Picking cherries, apples, and peaches in an orchard at age 14. Our compensation was based on productivity, so I learned to work effectively and learned about the importance of getting along with my co-workers.

**Humbling experience:** As a young lawyer, I had a client whose vehicle stalled on a railroad track in Louisiana. A train came and obliterated my client's truck and contents. I wrote a letter to the rail company, outlining my client's losses and demanding they make the client whole. Later, I got a call from one of the railroad's attorneys who explained to me that Louisiana had a "blow and go" statute and all a train needed to do was blow its whistle and continue on its right of way. I should have done a little more research before approaching the opposition.

**Biggest challenge:** Building a business and corporate practice in Virginia Beach. When I came here, it was mostly a resort town, but it has changed as the region has grown and become more complex.

**I might have been:** Involved in running businesses.

**Guilty pleasure:** Sports.

**A month off:** I would go to Europe or visit our national parks.



# Lavonda Graham-Williams

## Chief Legal Counsel, City of Portsmouth

William and Mary Law School

Lavonda Graham-Williams started her own law firm to focus on those with special needs. Over the years, her firm hired, trained and supported over a dozen attorneys, mostly women and/or people of color. Now chief legal counsel for the City of Portsmouth, she proudly serves her hometown by advocating on behalf of the city.

**Growing up:** Portsmouth is a small town, so it was not odd to see your teachers in the local stores or even the mayor at church growing up. No experience seemed out of reach as a result. And opportunities to learn from those you knew or had some neighborly connection to were commonplace.

**Important mentor:** Dr. Vanessa Northington-Gamble. She has taught me many things over the years. One of the most precious is how to do what you love professionally and authentically as yourself and still thrive in a way that allows you to teach the same to others.

**Personal accomplishment:** I have been able to take on many adventures professionally in my life due in significant part to the love, support, and guidance of my husband, Valdez Williams, and our boys, Xavier & Maximus.

**Professional accomplishment:** Returning to my hometown of Portsmouth and serving as the first African-American woman as City Attorney is my biggest professional accomplishment. It was a full-circle moment for which no words could truly describe how much the opportunity meant to me.

**Advice:** Always speak first in litigation, even if it is simply to introduce yourself to the court or provide preliminary information to the tribunal. It will set the tone that you are ready and

knowledgeable.

**First job:** I was a page at the Portsmouth Public Main Branch Library. I was in a naturally quiet working environment where I always learned something new. I broadened my love of reading and developed a new love of writing. I also was able to interact with many different kinds of people regularly who were generally as curious as I was.

**Humbling experience:** The first time I couldn't save a client from the worst of the collateral consequences of his actions. It was my client who ended up reassuring me that everything was going to be alright because we gave it our all. I was so moved by his pep talk that to this day, on the wall in my office, there is a piece of art that reminds me daily that: "Everything Will Be Alright."

**Biggest challenge:** Learning when to say "No."

**Work/life balance:** Accept it will likely never happen and continue enjoying what you can when you can.

**I might have been:** A teacher and writer.

**Guilty pleasure:** Last-minute trips to faraway places.

**Favorite getaway:** Rancho La Puerta in Tacate, Mexico.

**A month off:** Travel to see my favorite international film festivals.

**You didn't know:** I am an avid children's book collector and a Harlem Renaissance enthusiast.





## BrownGreer PLC Celebrates Up & Coming Lawyer Breanna West



# Robyn H. Hansen

## Counsel, Sands Anderson, Williamsburg

William and Mary Law School

Robyn H. Hansen is a dynamic and seasoned labor and employment attorney with nearly 40 years of experience representing both public and private sector employers. Her practice is renowned for its comprehensive track record in handling virtually any employment law issue that may arise.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Danville, Virginia. Growing up in Danville gave me a strong sense of security, confidence and community. Danville was small enough that everyone seemed to know each other, yet during the 1960s and 1970s, its economy was vibrant thereby created an environment that encouraged growth, creativity and development.

**Important mentor:** Frank Blechman. He was in his eighties at the time and senior partner in my first law firm. As I worked with him, I found him to be a man of integrity and honor. I remember him stating to me words to the effect "Yes, we have to do that because we gave them our word."

**Personal accomplishment:** Partnering with my husband to raise and release successfully to adulthood our three children.

**Professional accomplishment:** The biggest professional accomplishments have arisen when without accolades or notoriety, I have provided a client with a bit of sound legal advice that has kept the client from getting into a dispute or trouble.

**Advice:** In order to effectively serve and take care for others, you have to first take care of yourself.

**First job:** At the Park Movie Theater in Danville

VA when I was 16. I learned how to serve the public including respect for the adage that the "customer is always right."

**Humbling experience:** The firm for which I worked required all new attorneys to get on the criminal court appointed list. This experience exposed me to people and ways of life I had not experienced previously and frankly would not want to personally endure. However, through the cases and the people that I met, I learned that the person who made that mistake and ended up in jail is a person just like me.

**Biggest challenge:** Balancing my duties and responsibilities as a wife and mother of three with demands of the practice of law.

**Work/life balance:** Enjoy the time you spend doing one without feeling guilty about not doing the other at that exact time.

**I might have been:** I wanted to be an actress. However, I am not so sure that I would have ended up pursuing that career, but it is or was a great dream.

**Guilty pleasure:** Drinking wine and eating chocolate.

**Favorite getaway:** A quiet beach.

**A month off:** I would write, and hopefully write that book I keep promising myself that I am going to write.

**You didn't know:** I love NFL football and am a huge fan of the New England Patriots. And I love to bake, particularly bread from scratch to include starting with milling the wheat berries.



# Dion W. Hayes

## Partner, McGuireWoods, Richmond

William and Mary Law School

As the Eastern District of Virginia grew into a premier venue for Chapter 11 bankruptcy cases, Dion W. Hayes has established himself as a go-to lawyer for clients in some of the most notable and complex bankruptcies filed in the Richmond court. His landmark victories have earned him national acclaim.

**Growing up:** Norfolk, Virginia. I love the water and have enormous respect for our nation's military and veterans.

**Important mentor:** Slate Dabney is a retired partner in my firm and taught me a great deal about bankruptcy law, the practice and business of law in general, and the work and commitment required to develop an expertise and reputation in your area of practice.

**Personal accomplishment:** Being dad to my two daughters, Elizabeth and Katie, who are very successful themselves and make me very proud. And being married for 27 years to my wife Anne, who is my best friend and a steady source of encouragement and sound advice.

**Professional accomplishment:** Serving since 2017 as the deputy managing partner for litigation at my firm, working with 500 or so litigators across the US and in the UK, and helping to manage and influence the future of such a wonderful firm, which took a chance on me 30 years ago.

**Advice:** Real lawyers do not fly during business hours. And a good brief is never really done but it does become due.

**First job:** Volunteer orderly at Norfolk General Hospital, while in 9th grade. I learned that people in labor need to be taken to the correct

department rapidly, and that department is on the 3rd floor, not the 2nd floor or the 4th floor. (I was not cut out for a medical or transport career.)

**Humbling experience:** It is never fun to lose in court, but I was advised once that if you do not lose in court occasionally, you are not testing the boundaries of the law enough.

**Biggest challenge:** Work-life balance.

**Work/life balance:** If you are not looking after your family life and your physical health, you cannot be your best at work. If you really enjoy your work, as I do, it can easily permeate your life, and succeeding at the practice of law takes a lot of hard work and commitment. But you need to do all you can to keep your perspective on work's place in your life and realize that friendships and your relationships with family are more lasting and important ultimately than a case or client won or lost.

**I might have been:** Political consultant or author.

**Guilty pleasure:** UVA basketball and football.

**Favorite getaway:** Ireland, from which my parents emigrated to Virginia in the late 1950s.

**A month off:** Travel around Ireland, visiting family and making some new friends.

**You didn't know:** I am first generation American, and my family has a geriatric Chihuahua named Peanut, who survived a copperhead bite this past summer. Before we got him, his name when he was incarcerated was Arthur.



# Bradley R. Haywood

**Chief Public Defender/Executive Director, Office of the Public Defender for Arlington County and City of Falls Church/Justice Forward, Arlington**

Columbia University Law School

It's not hyperbole to say that Bradley R. Haywood has changed the entire legal landscape in Virginia. As the founder of Justice Forward Virginia, he revolutionized the criminal justice reform movement throughout the commonwealth.

**Growing up:** I was born in Michigan but moved to Great Falls, a well-to-do suburb of DC, but my [parents] encouraged us to be grateful for our blessings and to see our station in life as an obligation to serve those less fortunate than ourselves.

**Important mentor:** Melinda Douglas and [her] hallmarks of model indigent defense: uncompromising, zealous and client-centered representation. It became my identity.

**Personal accomplishment:** I own a Cape Cod [home] in North Arlington that's nearly a century old. I've personally remodeled or rebuilt more than half of it with my own two hands.

**Professional accomplishment:** In 2020, the organization I founded, Justice Forward Virginia, led the effort to repeal mandatory jury sentencing. Virginia was one of only six states that retained any form of jury sentencing, and one of only two — the other being Kentucky — where jury sentencing was entirely mandatory.

**Advice:** [It was in a] birthday card my brother gave me right before I left for my first year of law school. As silly as it was, though, it contained a large grain of truth, which is that success begins with self-belief. Believe and you will achieve, as it were.

**First job:** Bus boy at the Old Brogue Irish Pub

in Great Falls. I learned that the restaurant industry can be really wild [and] that you can't skip work to try out for the tennis team. Because that's how I ended up being fired.

**Humbling experience:** During my first year as an attorney, being lectured by the deputy public defender after I had left a childish, snarky voicemail for a local prosecutor.

**Biggest challenge:** Cross-examination.

**Work/life balance:** My best tip for work-life balance is to never listen to anything I have to say about work-life balance.

**I might have been:** The hobby at which I achieved a level I never had with any other is cooking. So I'd have to say chef.

**Guilty pleasure:** My love of David Foster-era Chicago power ballads ("Hard Habit to Break," "You're the Inspiration"). I also love a good ice cream sandwich.

**Favorite getaway:** Key West.

**A month off:** Travel. I've been to over 30 countries. Next: Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Estonia, Scotland, Turkey.

**You didn't know:** 1) I'm a world-class karaoke singer. 2) In high school I ran and won a campaign for student government based entirely around my feigned love for Def Leppard and their lyrics. For example: "Rocket baby, COME ON, we're gonna FLY! ... with Brad Haywood as Senior Class SGA Rep."



**Michael Lowell**  
Partner



**Christine C. Noonan**  
Associate

We proudly congratulate **Michael Lowell** as an honoree for the 2022 class of Leaders in the Law and **Christine Cogbill Noonan** as an honoree for the 2022 class of Up & Coming Lawyers.

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# Michelle Kallen

## Partner, Jenner & Block, Washington, D.C.

Vanderbilt University Law School

A pioneer in politics and a champion for civil rights, Michelle Kallen was the first female solicitor general in Virginia's history. She also served as special litigation counsel in the House and represented the Select Committee to Investigate the Jan. 6 Attack on the Capitol.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Southern California and moved to Israel for three years during elementary school. I did not speak Hebrew at the time and had to learn a new language to communicate with my peers. When my family returned to the United States, I again was thrust into a different community and school. That experience taught me the value of adapting quickly to new circumstances without wallowing in the stress of change.

**Important mentor:** I met a woman who spoke on a panel on presidential appointments at a Women's Bar Association event. She became a mentor and an ally as I transitioned to life in Washington. Less than a year after we met, she unexpectedly passed away. Although we knew each other for only a short time, she left a powerful imprint.

**Personal accomplishment:** Maintaining an equal marriage with a partner whose career is just as hectic as mine. My husband is a professor of medicine at a university in Baltimore.

**Advice:** It is better to do something imperfectly than do nothing flawlessly. Many ambitious lawyers become paralyzed when they realize they cannot execute a plan to perfection.

**First job:** I worked as a camp counselor for people with special needs. The best counselors learned to see the world through their

campers' eyes, and to enjoy the world on the campers' terms.

**Humbling experience:** The first time arguing a case on behalf of the commonwealth before the Supreme Court of Virginia. The idea that I had the role of speaking on behalf of the commonwealth was daunting and a true honor.

**Biggest challenge:** Working from home with two little kids during Covid. When the pandemic hit, we had multiple fast-moving cases that required drafting briefs and preparing arguments in mere days. At the same time, our kindergartner transitioned to at-home school and our infant was still waking up multiple times a night.

**Work/life balance:** It is less a matter of finding the right "balance" and more like trying to ride a seesaw in the wind.

**I might have been:** I am fascinated by dermatology and the practice of medicine.

**Guilty pleasure:** Reality television featuring large families.

**Favorite getaway:** Thailand. From the beaches to the jungle to the food and the palaces, it [is] the perfect getaway.

**A month off:** I would take two two-week vacations. One family trip with our kids somewhere we would all enjoy (like Hawaii), and one for just my husband and me, somewhere abroad.

**You didn't know:** (1) I speak Hebrew fluently and with an Israeli accent; (2) I love super-spicy food.



# John K. Karanian

## Executive Vice President and Shareholder, Barnes & Diehl, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

John K. Karanian has focused his practice on family law matters since 2004 and has been exemplary in dealing with clients and colleagues alike. He also draws upon his background as a former practicing forensic and clinical psychologist with the Central Intelligence Agency.

**Growing up:** Suffield, Conn., a small rural town on the Massachusetts border known for its shade tobacco farms. My wife grew up in the same town and together we eventually settled in Powhatan, where we sought the same openness and quietness of country living as we had growing up.

**Important mentor:** Edward Barnes took a chance hiring me right out of law school with no experience and no idea of how to practice family law. He taught me how to be a lawyer. Not always by what he said, but often by what he did and observing him talk to clients, litigate cases, and run a law firm. His impact on my career has been incalculable.

**Personal accomplishment:** My 26-year marriage to my wife, Deedee.

**Professional accomplishment:** I have been able to work at the same firm since I graduated law school and to be able to work with mentors, colleagues, and co-workers that I respect and enjoy, many for 18 years.

**Advice:** Work hard and play hard.

**First job:** Working at a Crisis Stabilization Unit in Springfield, Mass., while in graduate school. It was a short-term residential placement for those in psychiatric crisis. I saw people struggling with serious life problems and emotional

crises which I had not been exposed to before.

**Humbling experience:** As a family law attorney knowing every day that each client looks to me for advice is most humbling.

**Biggest challenge:** The biggest career challenge has been to achieve a balance between time at work and time with family.

**Work/life balance:** Give yourself a break. Take time off when you can, leave early once in a while, spend time with family, and make time to do the things you like to do outside of work. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

**I might have been:** I was a licensed clinical psychologist prior to enrolling in law school so if I had not gone to law school, I would have continued to work in that field.

**Guilty pleasure:** Dark chocolate and Adam Sandler movies.

**Favorite getaway:** Mexico, Florida and any other place with sun, palm trees and warm water.

**A month off:** I would travel to Italy with my wife and explore the country and enjoy the Mediterranean at Capri or the Amalfi Coast.

**You didn't know:** Both my paternal grandparents survived the Armenian genocide. My grandfather left Armenia just before the genocide began in 1915 and my grandmother made a miraculous escape to America as a young girl. When I was 12 years old, I placed second in the New England Jet-Ski Championship.



# Anne C. Loomis

## Partner, Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders, Richmond

George Mason University School of Law

Anne C. Loomis has recently emerged as one of the state's sharpest minds when it comes to the utility tax and renewable energy spaces. Her most recent triumph, leading an acquisition of two large solar development projects by NV Energy, was one of the largest such acquisitions in the nation to date.

**Growing up:** I spent six years each in Richmond, Charleston and Wilbraham, Massachusetts. Living in three very different communities made me realize that people don't all act the same or think the same way, and there is no one right way to do anything.

**Important mentor:** The first tax partner I worked with, Michael Caballero, was the person who introduced tax to me in a way that resonated with me.

**Personal accomplishment:** Running the 2017 Richmond Marathon and finally meeting the time goal I had held for several years.

**Professional accomplishment:** Making partner at Troutman Pepper. I chose to join Troutman because I had such great respect and admiration for all the lawyers I knew there.

**Advice:** During my first week as a law firm associate, a speaker at orientation advised us to pay attention to all the little things that senior lawyers did, like how to lead a client phone call, how to compose an email, etc. Those are not things you learn about in law school.

**First job:** Working in a small financial services agency, doing whatever needed to be done around the office. The exposure to the annual

tax compliance process is what piqued my interest in tax enough to sign up for some tax classes in law school.

**Humbling experience:** I delivered a memo to a court without including the motion for summary judgment. Fixing it provided a good lesson in the fact that we all make mistakes, and the important thing is to figure out the solution instead of dwelling on the error.

**Biggest challenge:** I started my career in a law firm, but then spent seven years in-house before returning to private practice. Transitioning to an in-house setting was very intimidating at first.

**Work/life balance:** Prioritize the things that are important to you. That includes both big things and small things.

**I might have been:** Pastry chef.

**Guilty pleasure:** Enjoying that quiet time with a good cup of coffee and a silly novel.

**Favorite getaway:** Hawai'i, especially the Big Island.

**A month off:** Spend it in a mountain cabin with my family, somewhere I could run or hike every morning and cook every afternoon.

**You didn't know:** I played on the stage of Carnegie Hall as a senior in high school, as a clarinet player with the National Wind Ensemble. Also I have two kids (a son, 12, and daughter, 10) and three cats (one girl and two boys)!



## Quarles & Brady *congratulates* Christian Yingling

For your recognition as an  
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# Tate C. Love

## Partner, Timberlake Smith, Staunton

William and Mary Law School

If you ask Tate C. Love about his top career goals, he will say he's already attained one of them: He recently completed a term as president of the Virginia Association of Defense Attorneys and now serves as immediate past president. At TimberlakeSmith, Love leads the Criminal Defense and Traffic Practice.

**Growing up:** I was born and raised in Waynesboro, and while it's not perfect (and no place is), I found that the Shenandoah Valley is a pretty nice place to live and grow up. So, I returned there to live, work and raise my family.

**Important mentor:** I've known Chuck Hodsdon, an attorney in Bangor, Maine, since elementary school. He showed me, by example, how to be a good lawyer, husband, dad, and Christ-follower, and to keep those roles in the right priority.

**First job:** I worked at Arby's. God bless those that do, but I learned that I wanted to quickly graduate from working in fast food.

**Humbling experience:** Being a really bad associate at my first firm out of law school, due to no fault of the firm. I learned I had to find the right fit for me to be a good lawyer and good employee.

**Biggest challenge:** My biggest career challenge was getting through those first few years of practice when I was trying to figure it all out. I worried that I was committing malpractice of some sort every day.

**Blue-sky goal:** I have already served as president of the Virginia Association of Defense Attorneys, so my next goal would be to win a jury trial in Waynesboro Circuit Court sometime in my career to erase the stain of losing my mock trial there in high school.

**Advice to younger self:** Relax a little and value relationships more.

**Work/life balance:** None of us will ever achieve perfect work/life balance, but do your best to leave work at work when you walk out the office door.

**I might have been:** I would have been in bad shape because I have a real lack of practical skills. But I might have tried my hand at sports journalism.

**Guilty pleasure:** I enjoy cocktails that some less enlightened persons might describe as "girlie." I also like Easy Cheese, that liquid cheese that comes in a can.

**Favorite getaway:** The Outer Banks of North Carolina.

**A month off:** I would nap a lot, hand out with family, and watch more William and Mary sports.

**You may not know:** I was born Matthew Tate Love and I later legally changed my name to Tate Custer Love to honor my grandfather.



# Michael J. Lowell

## Partner, Reed Smith, McLean

George Mason University School of Law

Michael J. Lowell is a leading expert in international trade and national security, helping global clients navigate complex and ever-evolving areas of law. He leads a group of more than 60 lawyers around the world and has helped guide his law firm through the most uncertain of times.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Falls Church and Arlington in the 1970s and 1980s, where many of the kids were the children of federal government employees. I knew a lot of parents who worked in national security and that caught my interest at an early age and probably influenced my career choice.

**Important mentor:** "Take a position and go full steam ahead." I learned [that lesson] from John D. McGavin — and many others he and his partners shared with me early in my career.

**First job:** When I was 13, I washed golf clubs at Washington Golf & Country Club, then moved up to being a dishwasher. These were jobs that allowed me to interact with all kinds of people and personalities, which has been very helpful in getting a read on people and situations I have faced as a lawyer.

**Humbling experience:** As a young lawyer I took on a small case involving a dispute between neighbors. My client was insistent that the matter rose to the level of a jury trial when it could have been resolved by paying a small fine. I knew [the judge] from law school where he was a mentor to me. With a smile, he half-jokingly asked me if I was requesting a jury trial. When I said yes, the whole courtroom burst out in laughter. That day I learned that

good lawyers push back on unreasonable client requests.

**Biggest challenge:** In a very significant matter focused on national security and technologies relevant to the US warfighter, I served as the external monitor overseeing implementation of a corporate compliance program for this publicly traded multinational. This already complex case was complicated when the company engaged in multiple acquisitions, merged with another publicly traded company, and went through several leadership changes including three general counsels in the four years of the monitorship. The matter was successfully resolved but only because of the coordinated effort of the many dozens of people who were involved as well as a great partnership I had with the company and the US government regulator.

**Work/life balance:** For me, integrating my professional and personal life has been the key. My wife and I are a team.

**I might have been:** Real estate finance or development.

**Guilty pleasure:** Celebrity gossip.

**Favorite getaway:** Anywhere with my wife.

**A month off:** I'd build a French-style garden in my yard at home. I've always loved Paris and the gardens there.

**You didn't know:** I married my high school sweetheart, Jocelyn, and we have 12 children.







2022

Virginia Lawyers Weekly

Unsung Legal  
Heroes

**Unsung Legal Heroes** honors the law firm employees who have consistently gone above & beyond the call of duty, often behind the scenes. This award is reserved for the state's most talented & dedicated legal support professionals.

**The honorees will be chosen from several different categories:**

Firm Administrator ▪ IT/Operations ▪ Legal Marketing Professional  
Law Clerk ▪ Legal Secretary ▪ Paralegal ▪ Receptionist ▪ Court Reporter ▪ Librarian

A special section will be published **Monday, Dec. 26**, with all the chosen honorees.

**NOMINATE A HERO TODAY!**

Visit: [valawyersweekly.com/unsung-legal-heroes](http://valawyersweekly.com/unsung-legal-heroes)

Nominations close **Friday, Nov. 4.**

Please contact us at 800.456.5297 with any questions.

VIRGINIA  
Lawyers Weekly

# Kyle McNew

## Partner, MichieHamlett, Charlottesville

Washington and Lee University School of Law

Kyle McNew has become one of the state's most trusted advocates when it comes to personal injury and products liability cases. He has successfully argued complex issues before the state Supreme Court and in U.S. District Court cases throughout Virginia.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Portsmouth and went to high school in Suffolk. I began my career living in Norfolk and working in Virginia Beach. Frankly, I think seeing the dysfunction and inefficiency that permeates Hampton Roads politics helped confirm my instincts of being a coalition builder.

**Important mentor:** Gary Kendall, Bryan Slaughter and Greg Webb. They gave me an excellent platform to learn and build my current practice.

**Personal accomplishment:** Being a good husband and father (I hope!). My father was a successful attorney but was an even better husband and dad, and my goal has always been to be like my father.

**Professional accomplishment:** My two clerkships. When you see all of the insanely talented and qualified people that apply, it both makes you feel good about having gotten selected.

**Advice:** Advice is good if it makes sense, and if it makes sense it shouldn't be surprising.

**First job:** In high school, I worked for a family friend that did landscaping during the summer. I was VP in Charge of Weed Whacking, Push-Mowing, and Mulch Hauling.

**Humbling experience:** My first court appearance. My supervising partner sent me

to Virginia Beach Circuit Court on a motion I could not possibly lose, a motion to enforce a settlement agreement where we represented the payer. I literally had the check in the folder in the courtroom. Opposing counsel, a much more senior member of the bar and a Capo of the Virginia Beach courthouse mafia, pulled some kind of legal voodoo. Before I knew it I was on my way back to the office, still holding the check. What'd I learn? Experience matters.

**Biggest challenge:** Dealing with the pressure and anxiety that comes with knowing that my clients, not to mention my partners and your staff, are depending on me to succeed and not letting that paralyze me or make me fearful of failure.

**Work/life balance:** Manage your calendar instead of letting it manage you. Just because there is an open spot on the calendar does not mean you are available.

**I might have been:** In marine biology.

**Guilty pleasure:** Mindless, formulaic thriller novels.

**Favorite getaway:** Roatan, Honduras.

**A month off:** I would travel with my family to somewhere where I could spend a week sightseeing and doing cultural stuff, a week just truly relaxing, a week scuba diving, and a week doing land-based outdoor adventure and activity.

**You didn't know:** 1) I really love Broadway musical soundtracks; 2) Despite having the completely unfair and unwarranted reputation of being loud and obnoxious, I really cherish silence.



# Pia J. Miller

## Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney, Community Justice and Policy, Fairfax Commonwealth Attorneys' Office

William and Mary Law School

Over the course of her career, Pia J. Miller has demonstrated a proven commitment to public service and community justice. Early in her career, she realized a desire to work for underserved populations, and soon realized the positive impact that progressive prosecution could have in the effort to achieve criminal justice reform.

**Growing up:** I mainly grew up in Ft. Worth, Texas and Boston. Those two completely different environments gave me the ability to adjust and to adapt to my environment.

**Important mentor:** My 11th grade calculus teacher, who pushed me to apply to colleges which I would not have otherwise considered if it were not for him. That led me to my alma mater Northwestern University.

**First job:** As a cashier/server at a small local deli. I learned a lot about running a small business and customer service.

**Humbling experience:** Every single time that opposing counsel or a judge thinks that I am the defendant - it reminds me that as a woman of color, we still have so far to go in terms of representation in the criminal justice system.

**Biggest challenge:** Helping newer attorneys to adjust to their new lives as trial lawyers.

**Blue-sky goal:** I want to increase funding for public servants (court-appointed counsel, public defenders, and prosecutors) in order to provide a more manageable and sustainable career path for young attorneys.

**Advice:** Stay calm. Stay focused. You will always land where you are supposed to. Continue to lean on those you trust, but even more so, trust yourself and your intuition.

**Work/life balance:** Find your happy place - whether it is the beach, a good book, or a walk in the park. Commit to getting to your happy place at least once a week.

**I might have been:** Psychology.

**Guilty pleasure:** A good nap on the couch with my favorite fleece blanket.

**Favorite getaway:** Any Caribbean island.

**A month off:** Take an intensive on-site workshop to become a certified yoga instructor.

**You didn't know:** I took Latin for six years and do not speak any other languages besides English.



# Jennifer Minear

## Director, McCandlish Holton, Richmond

Cornell Law School

As the president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association from 2020-2021, Jennifer Minear led the organization during the challenging first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. A champion for justice in immigration law, she is often quoted in the media on issues related to employer-based immigration policy and the impact on businesses and institutions.

**Growing up:** I grew up in suburban Maryland, a very culturally and ethnically diverse environment. It exposed me to an array of cultures, politics, interests, and opinions that are somewhat unique to the nation's capital and that shaped my world view and my willingness to recognize, consider, and value a wide range of opinions.

**Important mentor:** My law partners, Helen Konrad and Mark Rhoads. They took a chance hiring me as an associate in 2004 and immediately invested in my success, encouraging me to explore whatever aspects of immigration law I personally found interesting (and supported) an insane amount of volunteer work I did.

**Personal accomplishment:** Finding and marrying my husband, Jason, is by far my favorite human on the planet. I strive every day to be more like him and to be worthy of his love.

**Professional accomplishment:** From June 2020-June 2021, I led the American Immigration Lawyers Association as its national president. The immigration bar faced [unprecedented] threats. And lawyers and their clients were confronting the financial and emotional challenges created by the COVID pandemic.

**Advice:** Always remember that you can't control what others say or do, but you CAN control how you respond to what others say or do.

**First job:** Bussing tables at a dinner theater. I learned a lot about professionalism (or the lack of it), sexism (there was tons of it), detail orientation, and customer service. All skills one needs as a lawyer...

**Humbling experience:** When I was a junior associate litigator early on in my career, the partner I worked for permitted to [only] carry his briefcase and the exhibits to [a] hearing. Afterward, he deliberately created a conversational circle of attorneys with me - the only female in the group - on the outside of the circle. It confirmed that this firm, this partner, and that type of practice did not represent the type of lawyer (or human being) I wanted to be.

**Biggest challenge:** Practicing immigration law under the presidential administration that was in office from 2016-2020.

**Work/life balance:** Take breaks during your workday, even if it's just 10 minutes, to leave your desk to focus your mind and body on something other than work.

**I might have been:** Likely something in the arts. Music or theater.

**Guilty pleasure:** Sleeping in (preferably all day) on a weekend.

**Favorite getaway:** Anywhere (or nowhere) with my husband.

**Month off:** I would read every book I've been meaning to read for years that I never have time for.

**You didn't know:** (1) I am painfully shy but try to hide it; (2) I can't whistle.



# Setting the standard.

Congratulations to our partners, **Anne Loomis** and **Christopher Carlson**, for their legal excellence, and the rest of the *Virginia Lawyers Weekly 2022* Leaders in the Law honorees.

Anne Loomis – Leader in Law

Christopher Carlson – Up & Coming

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# Michelle R. Parker

## Attorney, The Decker Law Firm, Norfolk

Regent University School of Law

Aside from running a busy practice that handles civil, probate and traffic cases throughout Greater Hampton Roads, Michelle R. Parker is a regular speaker at forums regarding the importance of having a will. She has also taught several CLE courses and moderates the “You Be the Judge” program, which encourages women and minorities to seek judgeships.

**Growing up:** My father was in the Navy. We were stationed in Italy when I was born and again when I started pre-school, so my first memories are of Verona, Italy. I attended an Italian elementary school until about third grade in Bussolengo, a town just outside of Verona, Italy. The experience of attending the schools in Italy gave me an incredible start with my education and I was fluent in Italian.

**Important mentor:** When I began working at The Decker Law Firm, the partners were all mentors and provided guidance in developing my practice and in further developing my skills and education as an attorney.

**First job:** At a hotel where I helped set up and break down banquets. I learned interpersonal skills, how to work as part of a team, and to lift with your legs.

**Humbling experience:** I had one of those “Murphy’s Law” level humbling days earlier this year. First, the clerk called asking if I intended to show up for my hearing. There was no hearing on my calendar, but I advised I was on my way. I wasn’t wearing a suit, but I usually have a spare blazer in the office, unless it is at the dry cleaners, as it was on this day. And finally, while sprint-walking to the courthouse, my shoes fell apart. I began rethinking my life

choices and wishing I had some duct tape. But I learned that people generally do not look at your feet, to keep breathing and moving forward, and that the unexpected will happen and your response to it will determine the outcome. The hearing went well and not one person noticed my shoes . . . or lack thereof.

**Biggest challenge:** Balancing my career and a sudden, serious health crisis of a family member.

**Blue-sky goal:** To help as many people as possible with their legal issues. Sometimes that involves legal representation and other times this involves listening and life advice.

**Advice:** Do not let anyone tell you who you are; that you must know/figure out for yourself.

**Work/life balance:** Figure out what you enjoy doing, then schedule time for it.

**I might have been:** Psychology.

**Guilty pleasure:** Fresh, just-baked chocolate chip cookies or brownies with ice cream, and funny TikTok videos with puppies/dogs, especially the boxy headed variety.

**Favorite getaway:** Beaches in the summer; mountains in the fall and winter; hiking and walking trails in parks in spring and fall.

**A month off:** Spend time with my family and try to finish the many household projects I have started.

**You didn’t know:** I learned to ski in Italy.



# Jimmy F. Robinson Jr.

## Managing Shareholder, Ogletree Deakins, Richmond

William and Mary Law School

Jimmy F. Robinson Jr. is not only a leader at Ogletree Deakins, but also an industry leader in the diversity arena. He chairs the firm’s Diversity and Inclusion Practice Group, dedicated to assisting and advising clients in the development of their professional DEI strategies and initiatives.

**Growing up:** I grew up in rural Alabama. Talladega, to be exact. One day my dad decided not to come home, and he never did again. Despite this, my childhood was one of ignorant bliss. We were proud, humble, but barely making it.

**Important mentor:** S.D. Roberts Moore — “Rabbit,” at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore. He taught me how to manage tough cases with even tougher opponents.

**Personal accomplishment:** Surviving and thriving. Poverty in the south is real. But my family knew I was different and they all rallied behind me to make sure that I had access to the resources I needed to make unthinkable strides.

**Professional accomplishment:** Helping my community. I am most proud of the moments when people call me and ask for help navigating a particular situation.

**Advice:** My paternal grandmother, Emma Lee Jackson, who everybody called Big Momma. She was a character straight out of a movie. She dressed funny, walked funny, dipped snuff, chewed tobacco, said whatever she wanted to say, laughed loud, and drove like a crazy person. She would say stuff like, “Don’t give up what you want most for what you want

now,” or “The church pews are full of saints, but if you really want to know how to navigate this world, talk to the sinners, start with me.”

**First job:** As a clerk at the local health department, I learned how to be discreet, to comfort people, and to seek solutions in an effort to help them solve their problems.

**Humbling experience:** When I was a 2nd-year associate I was five minutes late to a hearing. The judge threatened to put me in jail and called me “Boy.” The reason I decided not to move back to Alabama to practice law was because of racist acts like this.

**Biggest challenge:** Changing the perception of what people think about lawyers.

**Work/life balance:** Extend graces! We all need it. And a little bit of grace from others often makes all the difference. Reciprocation is key!

**I might have been:** I would have worked at an HBCU with the eventual desire of becoming president. Who knows; that may be my next act.

**Guilty pleasure:** Clean sheets! I love putting on fresh laundered sheets with clean pillow cases, with a fresh blanket and a nice comforter.

**Favorite getaway:** Home/bed!

**Month off:** Work on my book that I have been trying to write for a decade now.

**You didn’t know:** I am fluent in sign language and I make my own bowties (and all the curtains in the house).



# Lindsay L. Rollins

## Corporate Claims Attorney, Progressive, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

A former partner at Hancock, Daniel & Johnson, Lindsay L. Rollins handles the busy practice of corporate claims at Progressive. She focuses on insurance coverage litigation and counseling, as well as general commercial litigation.

**Growing up:** My hometown is High Point, N.C. The neighborhood I grew up in was filled with families who all looked out for one another. Growing up in that environment gave me a strong appreciation for community.

**Important mentor:** I have been very fortunate to have many mentors over the course of my life and my career, including teachers, friends, colleagues, and bar association leaders.

**Personal accomplishment:** While I hope my biggest personal accomplishments are still ahead of me, for now I will give myself a pat on the back for surviving becoming a new mom to twins during a pandemic while maintaining an active legal practice.

**Professional accomplishment:** Is it cheesy to say this award? Perhaps. But receiving this recognition feels like the culmination of so many other professional accomplishments that I'm proud of.

**Advice:** Sometimes a hasty reaction to a mistake is worse than the mistake itself.

**First job:** Scooping ice cream when I was 14. I learned that I enjoy working and get a lot of satisfaction from having a job and a purpose.

**Humbling experience:** I once embarrassed myself by confidently presenting a summary of cases that dealt with a completely [incorrect]

type of coverage and then doubling down on my embarrassment by doing the same again when given a chance to redeem myself. [That] taught me to appreciate the mentors who helped me grow and develop as a lawyer (and to take it easy on new associates!).

**Biggest challenge:** As it turns out, my biggest personal accomplishment and my biggest career challenge to date are the same: Learning how to balance the demands of legal practice with the demands of parenthood.

**Work/life balance:** Don't try to do it all yourself! While my instinct is to do everything on my own, it's a losing game.

**I might have:** In an alternate reality I think I would enjoy working in a skilled craft like carpentry or tile work.

**Guilty pleasure:** Pizza dipped in ranch dressing. Don't knock it 'til you try it.

**Favorite getaway:** Wintergreen is a special spot for our family. My husband proposed at Wintergreen and every year we do a Valentine's Day trip, complete with a heart-shaped pizza from Blue Mountain Brewing.

**Month off:** While I'd love to say that I would travel the world or do something life-changing, realistically I would devote the whole month to doing projects around our house.

**You didn't know:** First, I am an avid supporter of animal rescue. Second, I only very recently started drinking coffee and I have to limit myself to half a cup per day. The last time I drank a full cup I built two shelving units and reorganized our entire laundry room before lunch.



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# Congratulates

## Solomon H. Ashby Jr. on his inclusion in the 2022 class of Leaders in the Law



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# Jamel D. Rowe

## Lead Senior Associate, Livesay Myers, Fairfax

### William and Mary Law School

Jamel D. Rowe played an integral part of the fight to remedy the inconsistent application of the Indian Child Welfare Act toward Native American tribes when she penned amicus briefs in the Supreme Court case *Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl*, 570 U.S. 637 (2013).

**Important mentor:** My 9th-grade math class teacher. Math has always been my weakest subject and that year was particularly hard as I had transitioned from public school to a private college prep school. She worked with me during school hours, after school and even on weekends to help me understand the material and achieve good scores on her exams. When I would become frustrated or want to give up, she encouraged me to forge ahead.

**First job:** Growing up I was not the type of person who easily walked up to strangers and started conversations. Working in a local clothing store at 16 made me break out of my comfort zone and approach customers (i.e., strangers) who needed help. It definitely improved my interpersonal skills, which are crucial in the practice of law.

**Work/life balance:** Do not provide your personal cell phone number to clients unless you have an urgent matter or deadline. Do not check emails after you leave the office. I find

those two tips allow myself to be officially off the clock and able to fully disconnect from work and enjoy my personal life.

**I might have been:** The Foreign Service of the State Department, due to my desire to see more of the world and different countries.

**Guilty pleasure:** I became a big crafter during the pandemic and purchased a vinyl cutting machine that allows me to design and cut vinyl that can put on anything, like shirts, travel mugs, wine glasses and more. I've used them to create cute baby onesies and Christmas ornaments for family and friends.

**Favorite getaway:** Ireland. I've been there twice and ideally would like to move there. There is no green greener than the grass in Ireland. Everyone is friendly and the relaxed feel permeates every aspect of life there.

**A month off:** Travel. I enjoy traveling to different locations and experiencing different cultures. I would focus my travel on Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

**You didn't know:** I enjoy British murder mystery TV series and making bread (thanks pandemic!)



# Richard N. "Rick" Shapiro

## Managing Partner, Shapiro, Washburn & Sharp, Virginia Beach

### George Mason University School of Law

Richard N. Shapiro has practiced personal injury law for over two decades and has litigated injury cases throughout the eastern United States, including wrongful death, trucking, faulty products, railroad, and medical negligence claims. He is also a published author and prolific U.S. inventor who holds 18 patents.

**Growing up:** Norfolk was my home and during what's now called middle school I was bussed across Norfolk, and then during high school at Granby some students were bussed to Granby, so I learned a lot about diversity and accepting all kinds of people by attending public schools in Norfolk during that time.

**Important mentor:** Congressman Bill Whitehurst was a great mentor. I interned for him on Capitol Hill when I attended the University of Maryland.

**Personal accomplishment:** Designed and patented folding wagons and carts and then licensed one of my patents to Radio Flyer wagons, who added the feature to several of their wagons.

**Professional accomplishment:** Working about seven years on one wrongful death case. I obtained a major trial verdict in Knoxville and the Tennessee Supreme court affirmed the verdict.

**Advice:** I read an interview with George Harrison of the Beatles, and he said John Lennon gave him great advice about songwriting, that is always try to finish a complete song while you had the mood in your head. When I write

a brief, or when I was writing fiction book chapters, I would try to complete a first draft of the brief in one sitting, or complete a draft of a book chapter in one session also.

**First job:** Newspaper boy at about 14 or 15. I delivered early mornings, it was dark, I had to wake up before sunrise, and then get back home and try to sleep some before getting up for school. I learned a lot about responsibility ... but I did not last a whole year.

**Biggest challenge:** Following the golden rule, no matter how irate I felt about something the opposing lawyer did in a case.

**Work/life balance:** Get meaningful exercise no matter how overwhelmingly busy you believe you are, and fight to carve out the necessary time, it repays you many times over by keeping you sane.

**I might have been:** Fiction author or inventor/product designer.

**Guilty pleasure:** Playing guitar and bass in a rock garage band called Skeeter & the Conditions.

**Favorite getaway:** Skiing in Colorado.

**A month off:** Try to complete another fiction novel.

**You didn't know:** I have designed, patented and licensed folding wagons and baby strollers. I wrote a fiction book called "Taming the Telomeres" that won the Readers' Favorite Gold Award for suspense thrillers in 2015.



# Virginia B. Theisen

## Senior Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General, Richmond

William and Mary Law School

Virginia B. Theisen has managed a massive caseload over the course of her career — 360 appeals in the Virginia Court of Appeals and over 65 appeals in the state Supreme Court, while constantly ensuring that she prioritizes the legal system's human factor. In 2020, Theisen was elected as a fellow in the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Chesterfield County and attended public school. My parents were supportive and encouraged me to participate in high school sports, music, and debate.

**Important mentor:** In my first job out of law school, my boss was the Roanoke City Commonwealth's Attorney Donald Caldwell, an extraordinary trial attorney. He encouraged me, and all the young attorneys in our office, to constantly improve our skills (the encouragement sometimes came in a loud voice). We all became better attorneys because of his guidance.

**Personal accomplishment:** I consider my biggest personal accomplishment raising a son, who is a thoughtful young man.

**Professional accomplishment:** By working as a criminal appellate attorney, I have been involved in several cases that have shaped the development of criminal law in Virginia. In 2020, I was inducted as a fellow in the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers.

**Advice:** My dad encouraged us to use our words carefully. He said that if your words hurt someone, it is like putting a nail in a post. An apology can remove the nail, but the hole will still be there.

**First job:** During summer breaks in college, I worked at Logos Bookstore in Richmond with kind and generally wonderful co-workers. I learned that great colleagues make all the difference in job satisfaction. This principle remains true in my current job.

**Biggest challenge:** Time management. When the cases keep coming, they can consume all my time. Of course, the recent challenge of the pandemic meant that for months I missed the inperson colleague collaborations that I find so valuable in my work.

**Work/life balance:** The times I have had good work/life balance are the times when I consider what non-work activities will mean as the years go by.

**I might have been:** A teacher at the college level. I enjoyed the two semesters I taught an appellate practice seminar as an adjunct professor at UVA Law School.

**Guilty pleasure:** Hallmark Channel movies.

**Favorite getaway:** South Carolina beaches.

**A month off:** I would work on my tennis game to reduce the level of embarrassment I currently feel on the tennis court. And I would put a dent in the stack of non-law books on the coffee table.

**You didn't know:** I sang alto in church praise bands for many years. As a result, I can find a harmony part to sing for most any song. Also, I hiked in the Canadian Rockies while pregnant.



# Congratulations

TOM FRANTZ & RICK PALMIERI

Congratulations to **Tom Frantz** and **Rick Palmieri** on their recognitions as a **Leader in the Law** and an **Up & Coming Lawyer**, respectively. Tom and Rick are valued members of Williams Mullen and are respected for their accomplishments as attorneys, their commitment to serving our community and their humility and generosity as individuals. Thank you, Tom and Rick, for being great leaders and friends to our clients, our colleagues and our community.



Tom Frantz



Rick Palmieri

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# William W. Tunner

## President and Director, ThompsonMcMullan, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

Known for his steady counsel and ability to stay calm under pressure, William W. Tunner has cultivated his litigation practice for 27 years. He has served as lead counsel in over 40 jury trials through verdict, as well as countless bench trials and hearings. He began his term as president of ThompsonMcMullan in 2021 and sits on the Virginia House of Delegates House Ethics Advisory Panel.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Richmond and attended the Collegiate School. It was a nurturing, yet competitive environment. The boys' school had a Lord of the Flies survival element. The impact was positive, and it was good training for things to come.

**Important mentor:** Glenn Huff was the managing attorney at Huff, Poole & Mahoney when I was an associate there in the 1990s. Glen taught me how to manage my cases and the value of preparation. He was always a gentleman, and I still try to model myself after him.

**First job:** After college, I was a waiter at the Olive Garden on Broad Street (in Richmond). I was a member of the original wait staff. I learned three things: I was a below average waiter; it is very difficult not to mix up drink orders for a table of 8, and I could not survive working for tips unless I became better at my craft.

**Humbling experience:** About 20 years ago, I was dressed down in a hearing by a local federal judge for not agreeing to opposing counsel's request for extra time to file a responsive

pleading after his client was already in default. The judge called me "callous" and I wanted to crawl under the table, it was so bad. I have not refused a request for an extension since.

**Biggest challenge:** The challenge is to show up for work every day, year after year, even when you are not feeling it. Consistency and repetition. Slow and steady wins the legal race.

**Blue sky goal:** It would be exciting to grow my practice beyond just Virginia, into a regional or national practice.

**Advice to younger self:** Don't schedule an 8:00 a.m. class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and don't take the federal income tax course, no matter when it is scheduled.

**Work/life balance:** Remember to get enough exercise, coach little league and enjoy the weekends with your wife and kids as much as possible.

**I might have been:** A coach, sports psychologist or a marine biologist.

**Guilty pleasure:** Hot, cheesy, pepperoni pizza. And horror movies.

**Favorite getaway:** The Ware River and Mobjack Bay in Gloucester.

**A month off:** Sail to Bermuda and back (hopefully).

**You don't know:** I am a terrible saxophonist and guitar player.



# Kristi A. Wooten

## Founder, Wooten Law Group, Chesapeake

Regent University Law School

Kristi A. Wooten runs a five-attorney domestic relations law firm while balancing several community leadership positions. She has chaired Chesapeake Regional Healthcare's governing body through a pandemic, a multi-million dollar building project, bonding, several legal matters, and the overall growth and success of this Chesapeake cornerstone.

**Growing up:** I grew up in rural California. Neighbors were close, though their houses physically separated by acres of land. The fire department was run by volunteers, including my dad. Everybody had chickens. Lots of chickens. Growing up in California provided outdoor adventures in a beautiful state. Our closest town had one stop sign and a family grocery store when I was young. By the time I left home after college, the town had become a city.

**Important mentor:** Judge Frederick Creekmore. I had the wonderful opportunity to clerk for and then serve as staff attorney some great Judges in Chesapeake Circuit Court. He had the grace of a true southern gentleman. He was a thoughtful jurist. He always had words of wisdom for me and reminded me to "not work too hard."

**Personal accomplishment:** Raising wonderful children. Of course, this accomplishment is not of just my making. I am blessed with a husband who is a grandfather and our children have had great teachers. Our girls are exceptional: excelling in academics, sports, and the arts. Most importantly, they are really good people who are grounded in faith and aspire to love others.

**Professional accomplishment:** Opening my own law firm. In 2010, during a recession and with two little children, I left my old firm and started my own. We have thrived.

**Advice:** When you are frustrated or angry with another person, take 24 hours before you respond.

**First job:** At 15, my first job was working for Long John's Silvers. I learned that I do not want to clean public restrooms for a living. I also learned that I hate seafood.

**Humbling experience:** I remember being a newly minted lawyer and having a judge yell at me in front of a client for the first time.

**Work/life balance:** Well, I'm in the office at nearly midnight typing this answer so my balance is a bit off. I'm trying really hard to write an inspirational answer. I got nothing ... I am imbalanced.

**I might have been:** I would either be a speech writer or run a bed and breakfast. I love a good bumper sticker moment in a speech, but I also love to serve a good breakfast casserole.

**Guilty pleasure:** Take 5 candy bars, which are hard to find, so I may just hoard them in my desk.

**Favorite getaway:** Any place that I do not have to plan the menu or wash the sheets.

**A month off:** I would read the stack of books on my nightstand and clean out my sock drawer.





# Alejandra G. Zapatero

**Partner, Erickson Immigration Group, Arlington**

University of Richmond School of Law

Alejandra G. Zapatero has been a champion for companies who hire foreign workers making the oft-arduous journey to start a new life and career in America. She advises clients from startups to Fortune 500 companies on establishing and refining immigration programs, including strategies for hiring, compliance, and complex immigration matters.

**Growing up:** I grew up in the Hampton Roads area surrounded by a diverse community that helped shape my world view and ultimately my passion for immigration law.

**Important mentor:** Jerry Erickson was the most impactful career mentor of my life. He taught me so many lessons that I carry with me today and pass on to others. Importantly, Jerry always believed in me and thoughtfully pushed me, at times even beyond what I thought I was capable of, to help me grow and see my full potential.

**Personal accomplishment:** My family, both the one I was born into and the one I am creating.

**Professional accomplishment:** Becoming the youngest shareholder in my firm through dedication, hard work, and integrity.

**Advice:** The world is both bigger and smaller than you think.

**First job:** Working at the Hampton Tennis Center stringing racquets, working as a

cashier, assisting with tennis camp lessons, refilling water jugs, collecting stray tennis balls, and brushing the clay courts. I learned to find joy in a job well done.

**Humbling experience:** Early in my career I made an avoidable mistake on a filing and had to answer to the boss's boss for my error. I learned to never make that mistake again and more importantly the experience reinforced the concept that owning your mistakes is necessary to both maintain integrity and to grow.

**Biggest challenge:** Navigating a male-dominated field as a young first generation Peruvian American woman.

**Work/life balance:** Always remember what is most important and offer your energy and focus accordingly.

**I might have been:** A professor.

**Guilty pleasure:** Watching a TV show or movie I've seen before just to turn off my brain.

**Favorite getaway:** A beautiful beach that I haven't been to yet.

**A month off:** Go to the aforementioned beautiful beach I have yet to discover.

**You didn't know:** I love to snorkel and I hate the cold.



## Congratulations to Robyn Hansen

For being recognized in  
**Virginia Lawyers Weekly's Leaders in Law**

Robyn is a seasoned attorney who brings over 35 years of experience helping employers meet a wide spectrum of their legal obligations.

Congratulations, Robyn, on this well-deserved recognition!



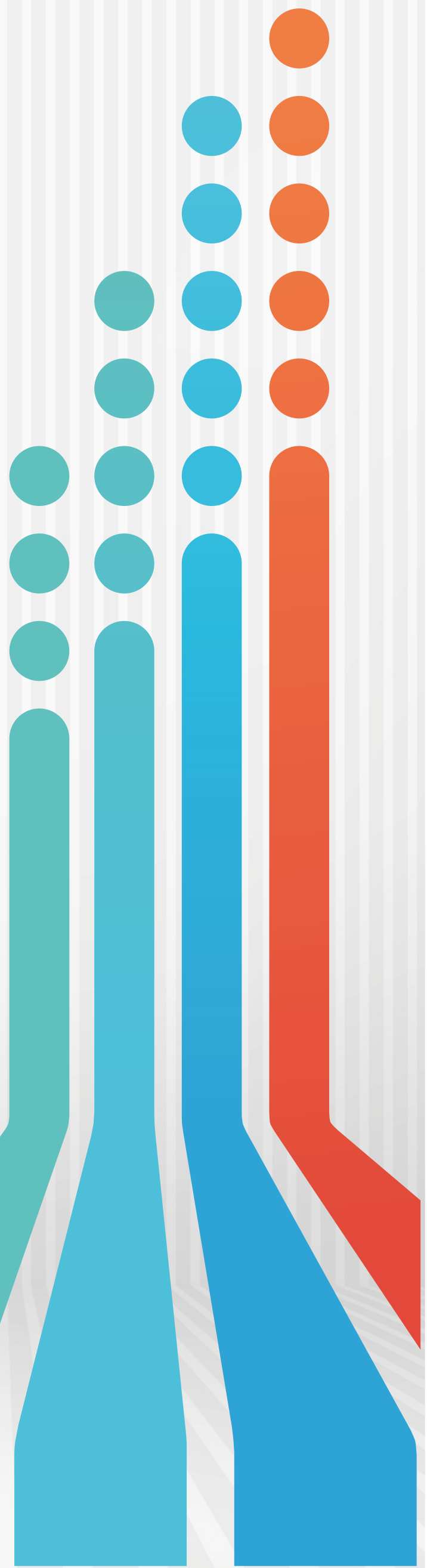
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# UP AND COMING LAWYERS

VIRGINIA LAWYERS WEEKLY



# Rachel W. Adams

## Associate, ThompsonMcMullan, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

**Rachel W. Adams** immerses herself in her clients' businesses and becomes part of their team to understand the world in which they operate. Despite that intense process, Adams strikes a balance between firm leadership and community service. She recently completed a term as an associate trustee on Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

**Important mentor:** An undergraduate professor, Karen Telis, was an important mentor at American University. She encouraged me to pursue a law degree after gaining some experience working in the D.C. area. I followed her advice and the two years I worked prior to attending the University of Richmond School of Law helped me be a better law student and lawyer.

**First job:** As a banquet waitress at a country club in my hometown when I was 16, I learned how to communicate with different people, manage my time, and juggle many responsibilities all while maintaining a calm and composed demeanor. As a lawyer, I continue to apply the same customer service values I learned from that and other service-oriented jobs.

**Humbling experience:** During my first year in practice, I was the most junior associate on a high-stakes case staffed with experienced and well-regarded attorneys. I was intimidated and was delegated administrative tasks, including drafting basic pleadings and compiling trial preparation and exhibit binders. I learned to value and take ownership of each task

associated with the greater goal of defending our client.

**Career challenge:** My biggest career challenge so far has been dealing with imposter syndrome. As a lawyer in my first five years of practice, I have experienced internal feelings of self-doubt and insecurity many times. I have learned to harness those insecurities by focusing on being the most prepared lawyer on the team.

**Advice to my younger self:** I would say don't be so hard on yourself. Law school is a stressful time. I recall feeling as though every paper I wrote or exam I took was the end-all-be-all for my future career. I wish I had afforded myself some more grace during those three years.

**Work/life balance:** I am the mother of two beautiful young children, ages 2 and 6 months. When I had my son two years ago, I read an opinion piece that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg published in the New York Times, in which she attributed her professional success to her daughter, Jane: "I attended classes and studied diligently until 4 in the afternoon. The next hours were Jane's time, spent at the park, playing silly games or singing funny songs, reading picture books and A. A. Milne poems, and bathing and feeding her. After Jane's bedtime, I returned to the law books with renewed will." I share Justice Ginsburg's view of balancing my professional and personal life and believe my children have made me a better lawyer.

**Favorite getaway:** Emerald Isle, N.C.



# Christopher W. Carlson Jr.

## Associate, Troutman Pepper, Richmond

The George Washington University Law School

Less than a decade into his career, Christopher W. Carlson Jr. has already established a far-reaching practice that has benefited businesses, professional organizations, and local governments. He devotes his pro bono practice to defending individual civil rights. In 2021, the American Bar Association awarded him the Jefferson B. Fordham Up & Comers Award.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Prince George's County, Md. Living inside the Beltway impressed on me the day-to-day importance of government and how decisions made by government officials and their staff can impact lives. It also made me a long-suffering fan of D.C. sports teams.

**First job:** As a teenager, I cut grass around the neighborhood. Since my business was predicated upon referrals, this experience instilled the importance of personal business relationships. The greatest business development tool is providing quality service.

**Blue-sky goal:** I have learned there is a reason my profession is called the practice of law. We will never achieve perfection, but every day we strive to get better through practice. I find fulfillment in the engaging, complex, and dynamic work that I get to do on behalf of my clients every day and look forward to continuing to grow such partnerships. I hope that every day I get better, and every day I do not stop striving for (unattainable) perfection.

**Advice to younger self:** Keep challenging yourself and do whatever you can to find space to take on new opportunities. People, myself included, are comfortable with complet-

ing assignments they have done and succeeded at before. Raising your hand for tasks that are new and uncomfortable are pivotal to personal growth.

**Work/life balance:** As a Christian and dad to two boys under two years old, finding time to dedicate yourself fully to your faith and family is crucial. Even more important is communicating to your colleagues the times that are off-limits while you protect similar times for your colleagues.

**I might have been:** An entrepreneur and business owner. I am captivated by the passion and pace of start-up culture, and my work gives me just a glimpse of how the law can enhance or inhibit a consumer-benefiting product from reaching the marketplace.

**Guilty pleasure:** I get giddy when a new episode of Hardcore History by Dan Carlin drops. Carlin's unorthodox way of thinking about historical events, coupled by the historical depth of each 3-to-6-hour episode, creates an unmatched learning experience about historic events that matter.

**A month off:** I get antsy after a week of vacation. But if I had a month, I would invest my time understanding a culture or group of people. My son Jack is adopted, and his family hails from Guanajuato, Mexico. I would find joy in understanding his lineage.

**You may not know:** My boys, Jack and Maddox, are only 6.5 months apart (few people get paternity leave twice in a year). And I'd rather run to podcasts than music.



# Linda Choe

## Staff Attorney, Fairfax County Public Schools, Falls Church

Syracuse University College of Law

As president of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Virginia, Linda Choe is dedicated to opening doors to diversity in the legal profession, notably by building relationships with Virginia's diversity bars. Such efforts have included a virtual judicial panel event with the Hispanic Bar Association and the Northern Virginia Black Attorneys Association in December 2021.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Arlington, the daughter of two loving parents who immigrated from South Korea. My parents came up in the aftermath of the Korean War and moved to the states to seek better opportunities for our family. I have learned from their sacrifices, determination, and hard work, and I strive to be the best version of myself because of them.

**Important mentor:** I am grateful to retired judge Joanne F. Alper, circuit court clerk Paul Ferguson, and retired circuit court clerk David Bell for giving me an internship at the Arlington County Courthouse, and the chance to work as a court clerk before I went to law school.

**First job:** In high school, I worked at a florist shop. I learned it is never a good idea to make a mistake on an anniversary arrangement. Learning about the importance of customer service has transitioned well into my career as an attorney who counsels clients in various public and private sectors.

**Humbling experience:** When I practiced family law, I helped clients whose families were affected by abuse and addiction. These situa-

tions were humbling because while these situations were tragic for all parties, they especially impacted children who were involved. I was in awe of their resilience in the face of uncertainty, and these experiences underscored the importance of always being kind because you never know what someone is going through.

**Blue-sky goal:** To continue working at the Office of Division Counsel of Fairfax County Public Schools, and someday argue before the Supreme Court of Virginia on behalf of Fairfax County. Personally, I'd like to run a marathon and sing a duet at a coffee shop with my husband, James Abrenio, who is a good singer, great guitar player and even better litigator.

**Work/life balance:** I try to take a few hours each week to do something I really enjoy. This allows me to step away from the stress of work and life, and taking this time, even if it's only for a few minutes, makes me a better lawyer, wife, and mother.

**I might have been:** A health and fitness professional.

**Guilty pleasure:** Eating Crumbl cookies and watching TLC (The Learning Channel). Favorite getaway: I love the boardwalk at Rehoboth Beach, Del. It's my happy place.

**You didn't know:** I teach a cardio dance class at George Mason University and have been teaching fitness classes for the past 10 years. I am the only one in my family who is left-handed.



# Andrew O. Clarke

## Partner, A. Clarke Law Group, National Harbor, Md.

The George Washington University Law School

Andrew O. Clarke recalls one of his career's proudest moments when he took his 4-year-old daughter to court to watch him at work. When she told him she wanted to do that too when she grows up, he said he almost burst into tears. "The sacrifices and late nights are worth it to give them a chance to do great things in life," he said.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Westchester, N.Y. My parents immigrated here from Jamaica before I was born. Being a first generation American has its challenges, which can be both a positive and a negative. The lack of institutional knowledge on becoming successful in America is a challenge. At the same time, we were not deterred from our quest for success in America by long standing racism and institutional oppression.

**Important mentor:** Kelvin Ramos. He is my brother from another mother. I've known him since I was 14 and he was 16. We grew up in White Plains together. Different schools, different cultures, different socioeconomic backgrounds but he was so wise beyond his years and always made sure I stayed on track. We are still close to this day and he was the best man at my wedding.

**First job:** I worked at D and H Jamaican cuisine for my aunt and uncle in Delaware. I learned not only the power of process in business but the power of having a dream and moving toward it every day.

**Humbling experience:** In Arlington Circuit Court looking for trials to watch, I stumbled

upon a trial with Damon Colbert, an Arlington legend. He was arguing a case and I thought the passion and preparation behind his arguments was great, even entertaining. I learned that you have to love and believe in your client's case.

**Blue-sky goal:** To pass down a widely successful business to the next generation.

**Advice for younger self:** I was very stubborn. I knew I wanted my own business and would not let anything deter me from that, so I would have told myself, "Listen, you don't know anything."

**Work/life balance:** Google calendar. It saved my life. Running a business for six years helps you learn how your business ebbs and flows. I feel like now after doing it for so long, I am just starting to get my social life back.

**I might have been:** A human resources professional. I was a recruitment support assistant at Christiana Hospital in Newark, Delaware before entering law school. My guess is that I would have stayed in that industry or started a coffee business.

**Guilty pleasure:** Networking events. I love meeting and connecting with new people.

**Favorite getaway:** Montego Bay.

**You don't know:** I was in musical theater in high school, and my favorite movie of all time is "The Devil Wears Prada."



# Chrissy Cogbill Noonan

## Associate, Reed Smith, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

**Chrissy Cogbill Noonan** lives by West Point's motto: "Duty, Honor, Country." Growing up, she idolized her father, a lawyer, West Point graduate and Army veteran. She is deeply involved in pro bono work, including serving on the executive board of VirginiaFOREVER, a coalition that advocates for increased government funding for water quality improvements and land conservation.

**Growing up:** I'm a life-long Richmond native. My father, who is a lawyer, influenced me to become a lawyer too. He taught me that having a good reputation is as important as doing good legal work and that it is important to build long term relationships by being a person of your word and doing the right thing.

**Important mentor:** Years ago, when I was deciding to move from government into private practice, I met a mom who had a son the same age as mine at the same school. She said to me: "You should walk into a room like you are the most popular girl at the prom, so everyone wants to dance with you." Her message to me was to be confident, demand the best for myself and empower other women. Laura Collobell Marshall has been a friend and mentor since the first time we met for coffee.

**First job:** As a teenager, I was a hostess at a restaurant in Midlothian called Bottega Bistro. That job taught me the importance of being on time, respectful, friendly, and service-oriented. I also learned how to deal with difficult customers.

**Humbling experience:** When I work at the Legal Aid Justice Center Housing Law Clinic, I am humbled every day by the challenges I see and the gift I have been given to be of service. We must never take for granted the ability to be in clean and safe housing. I've seen women and children on the edge of their lives, living in unsanitary conditions without hope for the future. It fuels my passion to continue to serve.

**Biggest challenge:** There is no feeling quite like walking into a general assembly session in a room filled with adversaries, working on a contentious piece of legislation and wondering how we will come to terms with all the diverse needs and interests involved. A large part of my practice is managing and leading stakeholder working groups, and often I am the one revising legislation to get a bill to pass.

**Advice to younger self:** It's okay to have a winding path in your career because you will end up where you should be at different times in your life. I was a paralegal, then an insurance defense lawyer, then worked for the Virginia legislature, and am now in private practice. I am happy where I am right now, and my path is still winding.

**Guilty pleasure:** Local craft beer at Ardent Brewery and Pearl's cupcakes.

**You didn't know:** I married my high school sweetheart and I play competitive tennis.



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# Andrew Ferguson

## Solicitor General, Office of the Attorney General, Richmond

University of Virginia School of Law

At a relatively early stage of his career, Andrew Ferguson has already charted more accomplishments than many lawyers with decades more experience. After clerking for Judge Karen L. Henderson on the D.C. Circuit and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, he went on to serve as special counsel to various members of congress, most recently Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Harrisonburg in the Shenandoah Valley. It is the best place in America to grow up. It is verdant and beautiful, and full of hardworking, salt-of-the-earth people who are the best our country has to offer. I learned the value of hard work, the importance of conserving our natural resources, and how to love God and family.

**Important mentor:** Apart from my father, Justice Clarence Thomas is my most important professional mentor. He is the greatest living American and one of the most influential judges in American history. Notwithstanding his public prominence, he is exceptionally generous with everyone. Since I left his employ, I have not made a career decision without first seeking his counsel.

**First job:** Working as a cook and server in a retirement community during high school. It taught me patience, compassion, and the value of a hard-earned dollar.

**Humbling experience:** Getting my first opinion draft marked up beyond recognition during my first clerkship with Judge Karen Henderson on the D.C. Circuit. My overweening confidence vanished when I got that draft. I learned to take criticism, and not to put too much stake in

my work. One can and should always improve one's work. I'm very grateful Judge Henderson taught me that lesson as early as she did.

**Biggest challenge:** I have not remained at any job for very long. Starting a new job can be challenging, and I've done that a lot. While the variety has been interesting and rewarding, there is much to be said for the stability and opportunities one enjoys by staying with a single employer for the long haul.

**Blue-sky goal:** To honor God in all my work, even when that work seems mundane or unimportant.

**Advice to younger self:** Remember that work is instrumental. It should be done well and be done in a way that glorifies God. But the reason we work is to feed, clothe, and shelter our families. Therefore, don't allow work to consume you as though it were an end in itself. Assign it to its proper place in your life and focus on the things work makes possible — the care of one's family and the pursuit of edifying nonwork activities.

**I might have been:** A historian. I seriously entertained pursuing a Ph.D. in the history of foreign relations but decided against it.

**Guilty pleasure:** I have an insatiable sweet tooth.

**Favorite getaway:** Hiking in mountains almost anywhere, especially in the Shenandoah National Park.

**A month off:** Travel to Rome, Istanbul and Jerusalem.



# Steven Forbes

## Associate, Moran Reeves Conn, Richmond

North Carolina Central University School of Law

Though still early in his career, Steven Forbes is already making his mark as a leader at Moran Reeves Conn and in the profession. Deeply involved in the Hill Tucker Bar Association, Forbes is gaining recognition for his transactional practice in securities and corporate finance. He chairs the firm's important DEI program and is making great strides to move those initiatives forward.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Hampton. My upbringing taught me the importance of hard work and motivated me to evolve as a person and as a professional.

**Important mentor:** Vincent Robinson allowed me to intern with his office while I was an undergraduate at VCU. He also paid for several of my law school applications and gave me my first opportunity to work as a lawyer out of law school. He taught me the importance of maintaining a good reputation within the legal community.

**First job:** My first job was as a trial lawyer for The Law Office of Vincent L. Robinson. I learned about the importance of being prepared for court, how to set client expectations, and some of the business aspects of running a law firm.

**Humbling experience:** I was not as thoroughly prepared for my first bond hearing as I thought. After the hearing, Judge Johnson, who was the sitting in Henrico J&DR Court

at the time, pulled me into his chambers and explained the importance of being prepared each and every time you step in front of a judge. I learned there is no such thing as over-preparing.

**Biggest challenge:** Maintaining a healthy work/life balance

**Blue-sky goal:** I want to be in a position where I can practice law for free.

**Advice to younger self:** Success is when opportunity meets preparation. Keep your head down and do the work. Do not skip steps. Be patient. Your time will come and when it does you will be ready to embrace the responsibility associated with it.

**Work/life balance:** Be present in the moment. When you are at work, be present at work. When you are at home, be present at home. Try not to let one overlap with the other.

**I might have been:** A medical doctor.

**Guilty pleasure:** Oreo cookies.

**Favorite getaway:** Aruba.

**A month off:** I would play golf and spend time with my wife and children.

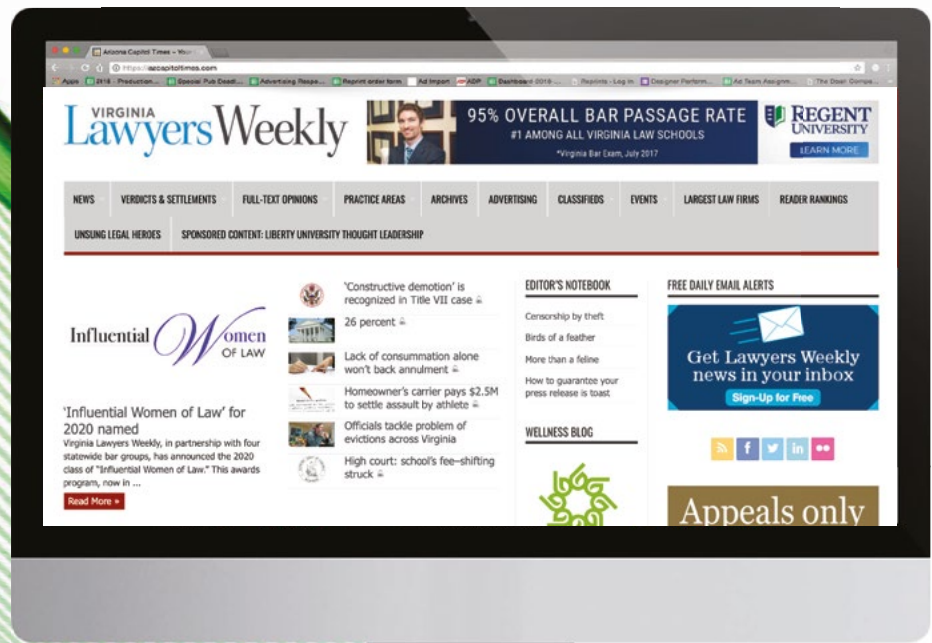
**You may not know:** I have had a pet turtle for 25 years, and I am a big Usher fan.



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## Paul D. Fore

### Senior Trial Attorney, Virginia Indigent Defense Commission, Warrenton

Florida Coastal School of Law

Paul Fore has made a mark early on in his legal career with successes like *Ryan Berkeley Allison v. Commonwealth of Virginia*, a merits argument in the Court of Appeals that became a published opinion. He also serves on the Fauquier Rappahannock Family Treatment Court Planning Committee, helping address the needs of families affected by parental substance abuse.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Charles County, Md., a mix of suburbia with a hint of city life. Growing up in such a diverse environment has helped me feel compassion and empathy when working with my clients.

**Important mentor:** I worked in the same restaurant for 10 years on and off through college and before law school. My boss had a large influence in my career as a lawyer. I was in training to become a manager, but when I was accepted into law school, he encouraged me to follow my dream.

**First job:** I was a fry cook at a local burger place. Working there taught me the importance of listening to people who are more experienced in the job. As a lawyer, I am constantly seeking advice and learning from my colleagues. Being open to learning, from both successes and failures, is a key part of being a successful lawyer.

**Humbling experience:** The most humbling experience I have had as a lawyer was in a criminal case. I was explaining the offer to a client. After speaking with her, I asked what she wanted to do, and her response to me

was, "Would you tell your sister to take this offer?" That question humbled me because I had never been given the opportunity to see my clients from that perspective. I have used that perspective as a frame of reference in all my cases ever since.

**Biggest challenge:** Becoming accustomed to the adversarial nature of the other side of cases when I am trying to accomplish my clients' goals is sometimes challenging.

**Blue-sky goal:** I would like to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

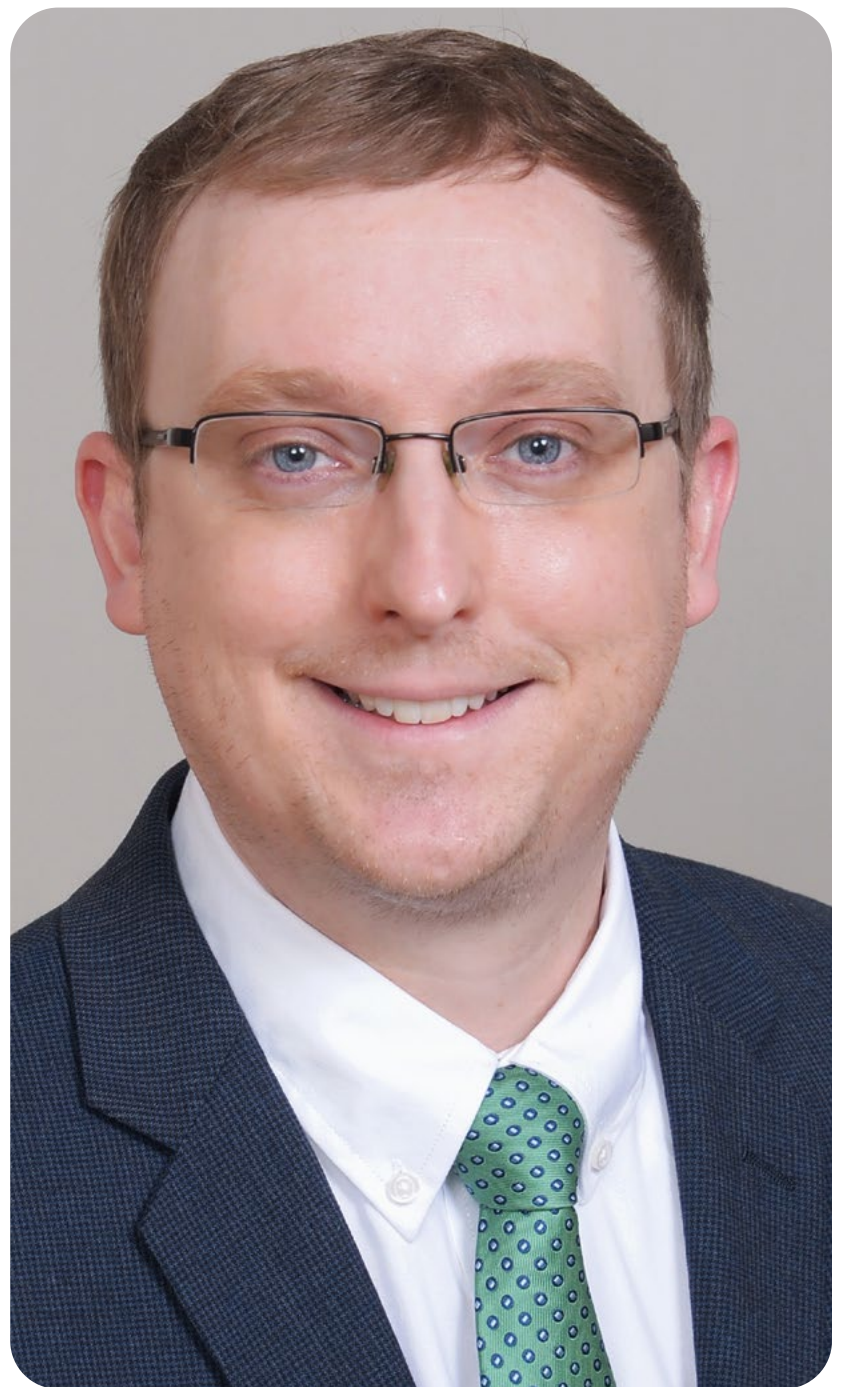
**Advice to your younger self:** I would tell my younger self in law school that it's all going to be worth it in the end. Keep studying and don't stress so much about passing the bar. Put in the work, and you will be successful.

**Work/life balance:** I limit the work-related apps on my cell phone. Phones are interconnected with our daily lives, and I think it is important to not be reminded of work when I look at my phone.

**Guilty pleasure:** Going to concerts to hear bands I have listened to since I was in high school.

**Favorite getaway:** I love going to the beach with my family.

**You didn't know:** My sister was also employed as a public defender, and I am licensed to practice law in Maryland and D.C.



## Elizabeth B. Heddleston

### Associate, Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black, Roanoke

William and Mary Law School

The first word that comes to mind of the partners at Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black when referring to Elizabeth B. Heddleston is "impressive." With the retirement of the previous leader of the firm's health law practice in 2021, Heddleston played a major role in the difficult task of managing his transition away from practice. During that same period, she obtained her certification in Healthcare Privacy Compliance.

**Important mentor:** I have wonderful mentors at WRVB, including some inspirational working moms. These women have encouraged me, supported me, and offered a sympathetic ear. The pandemic has been tough on working parents and having supportive mentors has made a big difference.

**First job:** I was a journalist at The News & Advance in Lynchburg. I honed my writing skills and loved meeting people from all walks of life. We are living in divisive times, but that job taught me the importance of listening and finding common ground.

**Humbling experience:** I am a health lawyer and work with healthcare organizations, large and small. While Covid-19 hit many industries hard, the healthcare sector has been in the eye of the storm. I have been humbled by the determination and grit of healthcare providers who keep stepping up and saving lives in these challenging times.

**Biggest challenge:** My greatest challenge has coincided with my greatest joy: caring for my two amazing daughters while juggling a demanding legal career. I love the challenge

and complexity of my health law practice and I love being a mom, but there are times when the fatigue sets in and I feel pulled in many different directions. I've learned to be flexible and to lean on the support of family, friends, and colleagues. I've also learned the value of unplugging to be fully present for my girls.

**Advice to younger self:** Be brave, ask hard questions, and take chances. Don't hesitate to reach out for advice. Keep your eyes open for new opportunities; you may find them in unexpected places.

**Work/life balance:** Balance can be an elusive goal. I have learned to embrace the messiness of being a lawyer and a mom. It's hard, it can be tiring but it's incredibly rewarding. Flexibility is key. I am a big fan of the hybrid work schedule. Some days I love working from home so I can squeeze in a few extra minutes with my daughters at the end of the day. Other days I'm more productive in my office downtown, where I can connect with colleagues and get work done in a diaper-free zone.

**Favorite getaway:** My husband and I prefer adventurous vacations involving hiking, rock climbing, and exploring. Highlights include mountaineering in Peru, rock climbing in Spain and swimming with whale sharks off the coast of Mexico.

**You didn't know:** I memorized 20 or so digits of Pi when I was a freshman in high school. I still recite them from memory every year on March 14, Pi Day. Oh, and pie is one of my favorite comfort foods.





## S. Spencer Katona

### Shareholder, Spotts Fain, Richmond

William and Mary Law School

From his youthful employment ventures as a dockhand at a Rappahannock River marina to his role as a shareholder at Spotts Fain in Richmond, Spencer Katona's life has been all about working — and playing — hard. His practice focuses on lending and financing transactions; off the clock, he's equally devoted to outdoor sports and family time.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Dunnsville, which has a post office, a church, and not much else. It is close to the Rappahannock River, where I spent a considerable amount of my youth swimming, boating, and developing a love for the water and nature.

**Important mentor:** I once worked with an incredibly hard worker and overall good person named Rowe. He actively sought out issues to fix and jobs that needed to be done and tried to always stay busy. Rowe showed me what it really means to go above and beyond to provide service, whether that is to a boss or clients.

**First job:** I worked as a dockhand at a marina on the Rappahannock River for seven summers beginning in high school. Working at a marina is not glamorous. It is a customer service job and most of the time is spent cutting grass, cleaning, and generally maintaining the property. Working at the marina taught me how to be responsible for running a business on a day-to-day basis.

**Blue-sky goal:** I want my clients to view me as a friend, and not just their attorney.

**Advice to younger self:** As a young attorney, you are not expected to know everything, and in fact, you don't know what you don't know. Don't be afraid to ask questions of senior attorneys and find mentors who can give you unfiltered advice.

**Work/life balance:** Establish a schedule. It can be flexible, but it is important for setting expectations both at the office and at home. For me, that means getting into the office relatively early, but also leaving early so I am always home for dinner, bath, and bed for my young kids.

**I might have been:** A business and finance executive because it was my major. However, I graduated in the Great Recession when finance jobs were few and far between, so I am not sure where I would have ended up had I not gone to law school.

**Guilty pleasure:** My guilty pleasure, if it can be considered that, is a run alone on a trail. My career and children combine to squeeze the time that I have. My escape is finding an hour or two to get out and be alone in nature with my thoughts.

**Favorite getaway:** Figure Eight Island, N.C. It is quiet and peaceful and has been a bright spot of every summer my whole life.

**You don't know:** I have a twin sister who is also an attorney, and I enjoy waterskiing.

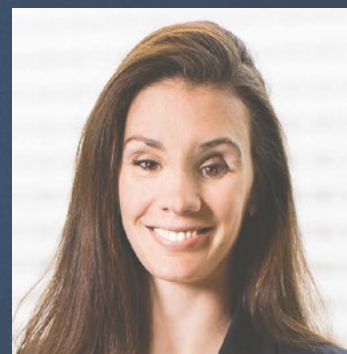


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# Crystal Malik

## Director, McCandlish Holton, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

Crystal Malik's interest in immigration law began while sponsoring her husband's U.S. immigrant petition, an experience that motivated her to choose this practice area. While working toward her undergraduate and graduate degrees, Malik was a paramedic and after graduate school, she was a Spanish teacher. Today, she provides pro bono legal services to the local rescue squad where she previously worked.

**Growing up:** I spent most of my childhood years in Grundy, a beautiful, nature-filled area and a small town where family is everything.

**First job:** My first job was inspecting, cleaning, inventorying, and dispatching ambulances before I became an EMT. That job taught me about the importance of attention to detail, preparation, and pretending to be calm, until you are calm. It also reminds that in any situation, it could always be worse.

**Biggest challenge:** My biggest challenges have been about balancing work and family time, and making sure to dedicate time to both.

**I might have been:** Before becoming a lawyer, I was a paramedic and then a middle-and-high-school teacher. If I hadn't become an attorney, I could see myself continuing as a teacher.

**Guilty pleasure:** Watching romantic comedies and home renovation shows.

**A month off:** I would love to travel, spending a week each in Montreal, London, Madrid, and Paris.

**Important mentors:** Every single person – from

staff to attorney - in my practice group. The knowledge and experience I've been able to glean from each of them is unbelievable.

**Favorite getaway:** Anywhere with a beautiful beach – I love Virginia Beach because it is close by.

**Humbling experience:** My pro bono cases nearly always have novel case points and complex fact patterns that remind me how much I don't know and that the intersection of different types of law require separate specialties. One case involved a client who needed help across several different areas of law, including criminal, immigration, family, and tax. A team of skilled lawyers were drawn in to support the client and to fit the puzzle pieces together. It took diligent attention and timing by every one of us to keep the client's life on the rails. It reminded me why it is important for attorneys to work together and have a network of people who know more than each of us alone.

**Work/life balance:** I take hints from my daughter. When I was in law school, she was under 5. I would remain at school for a set number of hours dedicated to schoolwork. If I studied at home and she took away my books, I knew it was time to stop. She also lets me know that answering work emails in Disney World or King's Dominion is inappropriate. Her constant reminders that there are other important things in the world remind me to concentrate on balance and try to do better.

**You don't know:** I love to sing (loudly) and constantly, and I started my first job when I was fourteen years old.



# Jasmine R. McKinney

## Staff Attorney, Swedish Match North America, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

Jasmine R. McKinney has distinguished herself as a leader who is passionate in her commitment to her profession and service to others. Heavily involved in the Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference, she is on the board of governors and has twice received the YLC Significant Service Award. Among her many community service activities, she is a mentor and tutor at Peter Paul Development Center.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Hampton. Both my parents are alumni of Hampton University, so I spent a lot of time participating in educational programs and summer camps on campus. Those experiences gave me a strong desire to learn and pursue my educational goals.

**Important mentor:** I was a Girl Scout for about nine years. My troop Leader, Geraldine Wright, always taught us as young girls that we could achieve any goal we set. This impacted my career because even as a lawyer I have never felt there was anything I could not do once I set my mind to it.

**First job:** I worked at a movie theatre when I was 16. I learned the value of working hard and earning my own money.

**Humbling experience:** My most humbling experience occurred when I worked at legal aid. Working in a law office where most clients came to me in dire need of assistance for basic life necessities like housing, taught me that the minor inconveniences or problems I face every now and again are trivial.

**Biggest challenge:** While working at legal aid, I was sometimes unable to help every person

who needed it simply due to the large number of clients applying for assistance and the lack of time and resources.

**Blue-sky goal:** To serve as a member of a board of directors for a business or non-profit organization.

**Advice to younger self:** I would tell my younger self in law school to worry less about what my future would look like compared to my counterparts, and to say "yes" to as many opportunities as possible.

**Work/life balance:** Always make time for the things you want to do when you are not working. I always make it a point to do something just for me each day, so my entire identity does not become wrapped up in my work. Attorney wellness is stressed so much more now, and I believe it is important to stay connected to the things I enjoy outside of work.

**I might have been:** An educator or business executive.

**Guilty pleasure:** Cheesecake.

**Favorite getaway:** I like to travel to the West Palm Beach and Ft. Lauderdale area to visit family.

**A month off:** I would travel through Africa or Europe.

**You didn't know:** I recently started collecting and growing houseplants. I have about 15 different plants so far. And I have a goldendoodle named River that weighs 92 pounds.



# William W. Nexsen Jr.

## Attorney, Rutter Mills, Norfolk

University of Richmond School of Law

William W. Nexsen Jr. is known at Rutter Mills for his caring attitude and for treating his colleagues as family. Passionate about the legal profession and dedicated to community service, he is a leader in a variety of organizations, including on the Norfolk Court Appointed Special Advocates board. He also is vice president of the Special Olympics of Virginia Young Professionals.

**Growing up:** I was born and raised in Norfolk. Practicing law in my hometown, working with people I grew up with, and representing neighbors is a special experience for me.

**Important mentor:** The year before I went to law school, I worked for Pete Decker Jr., at The Decker Law Firm. "Uncle Pete," as he was known throughout Hampton Roads, was an inspiration, both as an attorney and as a person. He cared about his community and everyone in it, especially his clients. He had a gift for making everyone he met feel important and special. He gave of himself tirelessly and taught me about how the practice of law can and should be about one thing above all: helping people.

**First job:** After graduating from Davidson College with a degree in psychology, I worked for a year at The Pines Residential Treatment Center in Portsmouth, a facility for adolescents with behavioral and psychiatric issues. I saw firsthand the struggles many boys and girls in Hampton Roads dealt with and witnessed how much the children, and our community need caring and capable advocates and counselors.

**Humbling experience:** The feeling of leaving court knowing I could have been more prepared was something I experienced only

once or twice when I was first starting out as an attorney. I learned if you are prepared and know the facts and the law, only so much can go wrong.

**Advice to younger self:** See as many different areas of law and get as many different experiences as possible. Whether it's through classes, clubs, externships, or internships, law school is full of free time and opportunities that won't be available once you've graduated and started your practice.

**Work/life balance:** Burnout is real, and it's important to find the activities and relationships that recharge you. For me, it's exercise and spending time with friends and family, especially my nieces and nephews, who aren't old enough to know or care that I'm an attorney and who remind me that there's life outside work. Once I've taken time to give to myself, I'm better able to give to my clients.

**I might have been:** A mental health counselor. I was a psychology major and had completed a year of a master's degree in counseling when I took a summer internship at a law firm and never looked back.

**Guilty pleasure:** Naps.

**Favorite getaway:** Anywhere with sun and sand.

**You may not know:** My last non-legal job was coaching surf camps the summer before starting law school, and I'm undefeated at arcade basketball pop-a-shot.



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# Richard D. “Rick” Palmieri

## Partner, Williams Mullen, Richmond

University of Richmond School of Law

Richard D. “Rick” Palmieri has carved a niche in business aviation transactional work since assuming the role as lead transactional partner on a multitude of deals. He has established his leadership skills in a variety of capacities, including as a past president of the Special Olympic Virginia’s young professional’s board, a member of the Richmond Forum board, and as an NCAA Division III football official.

**Growing up:** My father was career Army, so I grew up moving every three years. That exposure to diverse people and places throughout my childhood showed me the importance of embracing diverse perspectives in all facets of life.

**First job:** I worked as an intramural sports official while an undergrad at N.C. State University. That job taught me so many of

the skills I now use as an attorney, including self-confidence, communication skills, and attention to detail.

**Work/life balance:** Calendar the most important things in your personal life in the same way you calendar important things in your personal life, and protect them in the same manner.

**Advice to younger self:** Take classes that align with your career or personal interests, rather than just for bar exam preparation. Leave the bar exam preparation to the bar prep courses.

**I might have been:** A meteorologist.

**You didn’t know:** I am a college football referee and my undergraduate education is in meteorology.



# Rachel Robinson

## Senior Associate, Alex Levay, Leesburg

Pepperdine Caruso School of Law

From chairing the Hon. Thomas D. Horne Leadership in the Law week-long camp for high school seniors to serving on the Loudoun County Bar Association’s board of directors, Rachel Robinson exemplifies leadership in the legal community. During her first year as a member of law camp, Robinson demonstrated her commitment to future attorneys when she shepherded 24 students on a field trip to the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Growing up:** I grew up with a wonderful family in Texas. My parents raised my siblings and me to believe we are all a small part of something bigger than ourselves.

**Important mentor:** When I was an intern at the Leesburg Office of the Public Defender, Bonnie Hoffman gave me a little table to work on as an intern in the kitchen because there was no other space. From that point on, she mentored me and taught me how to prepare and fight for our clients. She also pointed out Renee Berard as an attorney to watch in trial. Now I work with Renee. Both women have made me a better attorney and a better person.

**First job:** My first job was at a fireworks stand during the hot Texas summer when I was about 11. I learned how to work a calculator and where to run if something started to smoke.

**Humbling experience:** I represented an indigent single father who had no choice but to bring his little children with him to court, as well as an indigent new mother whose only crime was driving with an unpaid speeding ticket to the grocery store for baby formula she

didn’t know she would need. The prosecutor shamed her in court for not already having formula at home when her baby was born. I will never forget those two experiences.

**Career challenge:** Balancing work with life as a new mom. It is so much harder than I could ever describe.

**Blue-sky goal:** To be a circuit court judge one day. The jury trials, criminal sentencing, and custody determinations are just a portion of what the court handles, but they are so important and impactful on the community. It would be a real blessing and honor if I ever got to serve in that role.

**Advice to younger self:** Go to the beach more. I went to Pepperdine in Malibu and I wish I had soaked it up even more.

**I might have been:** A marine biologist or a social worker.

**Guilty pleasure:** Watching “Survivor.”

**Favorite getaway:** Milford, Pa. The town has a Readers and Writers Festival every year that is wonderful. When I’m not there, you’ll find me hiking a mountain or lounging on a beach.

**A month off:** I would hike a portion of the Appalachian Trail or spend the month living abroad.

**You don’t know:** I’m surprisingly good at keeping plants alive, and I was on “Wheel of Fortune.”



# Heidi E. Siegmund

## Associate, McGuireWoods, Richmond

University of Virginia School of Law

Heidi E. Siegmund has distinguished herself as a pro bono stalwart at McGuireWoods' Richmond office. As part of the "Clinic in a Box" program, she trained 22 lawyers and legal professionals to help nonprofits draft or revise their anti-harassment and nondiscrimination policies. Following the training, Siegmund supported the volunteers as they met with nonprofit clients to review and revise their policies for immediate implementation.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Stafford County, which is physically and culturally caught between liberal and suburban northern Virginia and rural and conservative central Virginia. That environment taught me to understand and respect different perspectives.

**Important mentor:** I clerked for Judge Robert E. Payne in the Eastern District of Virginia. He is generous and patient with his clerks. He always wanted to hear our thoughts on difficult or novel legal issues and was happy to talk through what worked in court and what didn't. That experience has had a huge impact on my practice.

**First job:** In college, I worked as a veterinary assistant. Of course, animals can't speak up for themselves, so it was the assistant's job to be their advocates and try to help their owners find the best solutions based on the circumstances. I learned to be calm, empathetic, and persuasive in what were often highly emotional situations.

**Humbling experience:** I have worked with some extraordinary trial lawyers at McGuireWoods who have shown me how much I had (and still have) to learn. One lawyer, who worked as a plaintiff's attorney before coming

to our firm, told me in the nicest way that I would fail plaintiff lawyers' kindergarten, and that was humbling for sure.

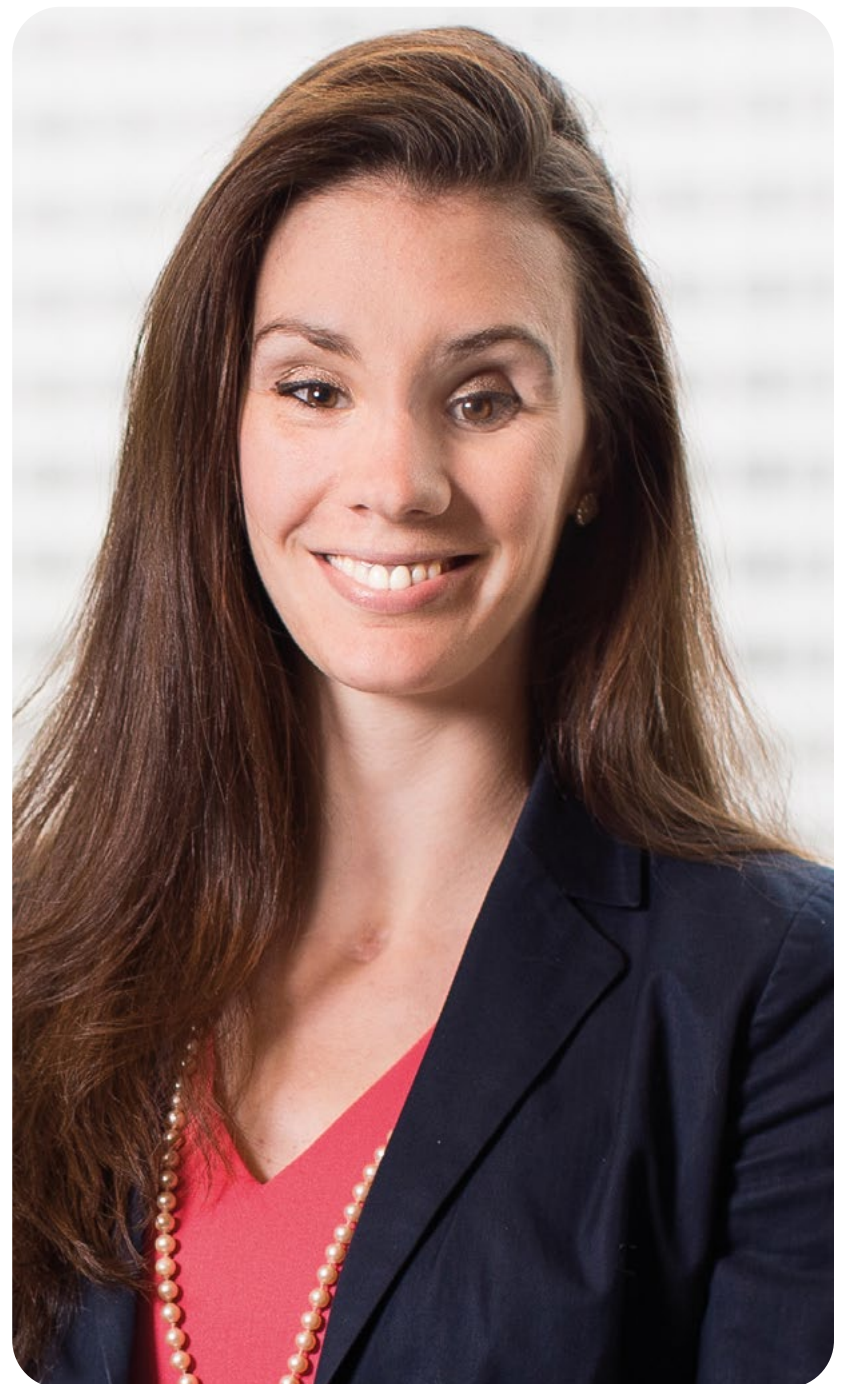
**Biggest challenge:** Learning to strike the right balance as a female leader. Sometimes I worry about coming across as harsh or nagging, but when I'm less assertive, I stand to be perceived as a pushover or having my work moved to the bottom of the pile. I work with many great attorneys with different leadership styles, so I try to learn from every experience as I develop my own.

**Blue-sky goal:** To be a lawyer that clients and other lawyers seek out as a first-chair trial attorney and as a mentor.

**Advice to younger self:** Don't compare yourself to other people. It's so easy and tempting, especially in law school, to set your expectations based on others, their study habits or how much they write on exams. I found that once I stopped doing that and focused on what worked for me, law school was a lot less stressful.

**A month off:** I would spend a few weeks in Australia and New Zealand, which have always been on my bucket list. Then I'd spend quality time with my horses.

**You didn't know:** I graduated high school when I was 16, and I was in a bad accident my first year of law school that shattered my face and ruptured an eye. But I only missed two weeks of class.



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# Breanna N. West

## Counsel, BrownGreer, Richmond

Suffolk University Law School

Breanna N. West knows as well as any lawyer that navigating the demands of her practice can be challenging. At BrownGreer, she oversees fraud investigations of the NFL Concussion Settlement Program, a practice that requires intense oversight. As a member of the Virginia Trial Lawyers Association Diversity and Inclusion Alliance she spearheaded the "Tough Talks" webinar project featuring panels of attorneys discussing race and social justice.

**Growing up:** I grew up in Gloucester County, and always wanted to escape to a city. My hometown lacked many people who looked like me and I wanted more diversity. My dad's side of the family was from Richmond, so after college I lived and worked there for two years prior to law school.

**First job:** In high school, I worked as a cashier at Eckerd which is now Rite Aid. I learned how to count change fast, and to have patience with people, especially the elderly. Cashiers helped unload shipments of merchandise and stock the shelves. These tasks highlighted my need for a mentally stimulating and challenging career.

**Important mentor:** Damon Pendleton, with whom I worked at my first law firm, has been supportive and he has guided me through my legal career. He has always been a sounding board and someone I could go to both personally and professionally.

**Humbling experience:** Having to take my first nonsuit in a general district case. I had tried a few cases in general district court and felt

like I had the lay of the land down. I hadn't prepared as much for one case, and I was basically eaten alive by a defense attorney. That experience taught me to overprepare and to always see things from the other side's perspective.

**Advice to younger self:** I would tell myself that growth doesn't happen where you are comfortable, that I should challenge myself, and step outside my comfort zone. I had some opportunities in law school I wish I had taken. I was so used to certain areas of law that I stayed within those parameters throughout law school when I could have pivoted and tried something different.

**Work/life balance:** Create hard stops and firm boundaries. I try to work within a certain time frame each day to have a hard cut-off and enjoy free time in the evening. Every day looks different, but I have a sticky note on my desk that says: "Everything is not a priority," and reminds me that all tasks won't be accomplished in a day.

**I might have been:** A teacher. I like working with children, and I taught summer school while in college. My grandfather was a former school principal and an adjunct professor at Virginia Union University, and he heavily influenced my life.

**You didn't know:** I am an avid runner. I have one marathon and six half marathons under my belt. I'm also a DIYer and am renovating the house my grandfather left me in Northside.



# Christian Yingling

## Associate, Quarles & Brady, Washington, D.C.

Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University

At Quarles & Brady, Christian Yingling's people skills are second to none. Shortly after she joined the firm, she skillfully handled a witness during a trial with the touch of a seasoned attorney, and it quickly became apparent how well she connects with a jury. Clients and colleagues likewise respond favorably to her, as her reputation and skill continue to bloom.

**Growing up:** I grew up mostly in northern Virginia, and the diversity of people and of thought made me stronger.

**Important mentor:** Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge Stephen C. Shannon. Not only did he provide an incredible educational experience when I clerked for him, he has guided my career choices since my clerkship ended. He inspires those around him to be better lawyers and people, and I am proud to call him a mentor and a friend.

**First job:** I clerked for the Fairfax County Circuit Court. I learned what good and bad motions practice looks like and how important it is to have a cordial relationship with other lawyers and court staff. I also learned that your reputation will precede you.

**Humbling experience:** My most humbling experience concerned my first protective order appeal to circuit court. I had never done a trial at the circuit court level by myself before, and I was scared and intimidated. I learned to trust the process and gained self-confidence from the experience.

**Biggest challenge:** Being a woman in a field dominated by men – especially as a litigator. I have experienced harassment because of

my gender, which can be demoralizing and dehumanizing. I have witnessed and experienced male attorneys, and even some clients treat me and other female attorneys different from their male counterparts. There are different work-life balance expectations female attorneys must achieve. Despite this, there are many attorneys and judges – both male and female – who have fought for opportunities for me, and I am grateful to them.

**Blue-sky goal:** I would love to argue a case before the United States Supreme Court.

**Advice to younger self:** I would tell my younger self in law school that it was all going to work out, and that the experiences I am having and the friends I am making are well worth the effort.

**Work/life balance:** Take time to eat dinner with your family.

**I might have been:** A singer. My undergraduate degree was in music, and I trained to be an opera singer. I never liked the world of auditioning, but as a litigator, I constantly use the skills I learned as a trained performer.

**Guilty pleasure:** Chocolate and bad reality television.

**Favorite getaway:** Honolulu.

**A month off:** I would sleep. Then I would travel across Europe with my husband and take my kids to the beach.

**You didn't know:** I have a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and I went to college at 14.



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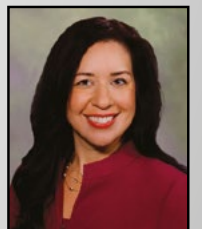
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