

2010 Forty Under Forty – Union Leader – Feb. 1, 2010

Five members of the NH Bar under the age of 40 were recognized as young leaders in the Union Leader’s annual “Forty Under Forty” special section. The following are excerpts from those profiles, published in the Feb. 1 issue of the Union Leader. (The section was not posted on the newspaper’s website.)

DAVID ALLEN HELPS THOSE WHO TAKE “SMART RISKS”

By John Distaso

David Allen, a 33-year-old attorney who has quickly risen to become an associate at Sheehan Phinney Bass & Green PA, enjoys his work helping business clients who take “smart risks” because he sees a bit of his own father in them, he says.

He says his dad, William, “as an entrepreneur, started an insurance adjusting company when I was 12 or 13 years old. That had an effect on me.

“I admired his wherewithal and ability to make it work.”

Allen is a Manchester native and a graduate of Central High School and the University of New Hampshire. After earning his law degree at the University of California in San Francisco, he returned home.

“I loved San Francisco,” he says, “But I wanted to have career here. One of the nice things about being a lawyer is that you can contribute to your community and this is an area that I wanted to contribute to.”

At the firm, he helps New Hampshire businesses with “day-to-day commercial contracts, raising money and strategic transactions.”

As a former enforcement attorney in the state Bureau of Securities Regulation in the Secretary of State’s Office, Allen has experience in securities litigation, and views as a mentor bureau chief Mark Connolly, who has been in the news in recent months in connection with his probe into the Financial Resources Mortgage Co.

He says that more recently, he has learned much from veteran attorneys such as Brad Cook and Alan Reische.

“Not only are they really strong technical attorneys, people with good legal skills, but also people who are very community-minded,” Allen says.

They have inspired Allen to become intimately involved in the community. He particularly enjoys serving on the board of New Horizons, a Manchester homeless shelter, food pantry and soup kitchen.

“It has been eye-opening to see that there are people who are hungry and homeless in this area. The organization does a lot of good work and it’s exposed me to things I never really thought about too much.”

He has also been influenced by David Richman, a professor of theater and humanities at UNH, who despite being blind directs student productions.

“He’s a pretty special guy,” Allen says. “Not only is he an inspiring story, but a brilliant and kind person.”

Last year, Allen was appointed by Gov. John Lynch to the Citizens Funded Election Task Force, a bipartisan group developing a legislative proposal for the public financing of state political campaigns.

Allen says, “The quality of life here in New Hampshire is unparalleled. It’s very livable yet people are able to do a lot of sophisticated work due to our proximity to Boston. For people who are just starting out, there is a lot of opportunity here.”

Bio details: David Allen, 33

Home: Manchester

Birthplace: Manchester

Family: Parents, William and Julienne Allen; sister and brother-in-law, Sarah and Greg Tompkins

High school: Manchester Central

Higher Education: B.A. University of New Hampshire; J.D., University of California, Hastings College of the Law

Current job: Attorney, Sheehan, Phinney Bass + Green PA

Key past positions held: Investment associate, PanAgora Asset Management; attorney, NH Department of State

Volunteer activities: member, Citizen Funded Election Task Force (a bi-partisan group created by statute to develop a plan for the public financing of political campaigns in New Hampshire); director, Manchester Young Professionals Network; director, New Horizons for New Hampshire

Most admired person: David Richman, Professor of Theater and Humanities, University of New Hampshire

Key current professional challenge: Working with our clients on strategic and commercial transactions in what remains a difficult economic climate

GIVING BACK IS WHAT ATTORNEY JOCELINE CHAMPAGNE DOES

By Dan Tuohy

Service in AmeriCorps and work at the YWCA Crisis Center in Manchester further inspired attorney Joceline Champagne to give back.

So, after three years at the Manchester law firm of Cronin & Bisson, she landed a job four years ago with the pro-bono program at the New Hampshire Bar Association.

As coordinator of the Low-Income Taxpayer Project and co-coordinator of their Home Rescue Project, she's toiled on the front lines of the economic struggle and recovery in New Hampshire.

"I have a passion for volunteerism in all different forms," she said. "We work with volunteers every day; volunteers here are the attorneys."

New Hampshire attorneys donated about \$2 million of time for pro-bono work – free legal services. Champagne, 37, is in the middle of it all.

For her efforts and expertise, Champagne makes the New Hampshire Union Leader's 2010 class of "40 Under Forty", which honors those who work to make the state a better place.

Champagne, who grew up on Manchester's West Side, is a graduate of Trinity High School, Providence College, and University of Maine School of Law. She and her husband, Ted Petro, a professor at New England College, live in Manchester.

She attributes any professional success to her family; her father is Norman E. Champagne, a district court judge. "Any kind of recognition like this is partly due to one's support network," she said.

The support network of the attorneys participating in the pro-bono work never fails to impress her. "I think sometimes it goes unrecognized," she said.

The program, a non-profit sector of the state Bar Association, is fielding more calls from all over the state. The number of bankruptcy referrals in 2009 increased by 25 percent from the prior year. The Home Rescue Project saw referrals double from 2008 to 2009.

"It's just a sign of the economic times," she said.

Champagne continues to volunteer herself. She's participated in Leadership New Hampshire and Volunteer NH. She also serves on the board of the Women's Bar Association and advisory board for the Palace theatre. She said she sees an amazing group of people who give of their time and expertise.

"The young professionals in the state have so much to offer," she said.

Bio details: JOCELINE D. CHAMPAGNE, 37

Home: Manchester

Birthplace: Manchester

Family: Ted Petro, husband; Norman and Jocelyne Champagne, parents; Susan Champagne and Michelle Champagne-Field, sisters

High school: Trinity High School, Class of 1990

College/post grad degrees: Providence College, B.A., 1994; University of Maine School of Law, J.D., 1999

Current job: NHBA Pro Bono Low-Income Taxpayer Project Coordinator

Key past positions held: Associate attorney, Cronin and Bisson, PC; assistant Hillsborough County Attorney; domestic violence advocate, AmeriCorps Victim Assistance Program.

Volunteer activities: Volunteer NH! Board of directors; Palace Theatre Community advisory board; N. H. Women's Bar Association board of directors; AmeriCorps Victim Assistance Program Partnership; University of Maine School of Law Alumni Association Board of directors; N. H. Access to Justice Commission.

Most admired person (outside your family) Kristy Lamont, N. H. District Court/Court Improvement Project (former AmeriCorps Victim Assistance Program supervisor).

**CRAIG DONAIS LONGED FOR THE FREEDOM OF WORKING ON HIS OWN
By John DiStaso**

Inspired by his entrepreneur father, Craig Donais longed for the challenges and freedom of being on his own while working for a large area law firm.

So, about two years ago, he formed the Donais Law Offices, PLLC, in Manchester.

"I did see some benefit and challenge in being in business for yourself," he says. And so far, all is well for the 39-year-old husband and father of two young children.

His expertise is in business and corporate law; wills, trust and estate planning as well as real estate law.

The current economic climate, he says, has businesses restructuring and individuals who were laid off from large businesses starting their own firms. Others who remain employed have become engaged in "sideline businesses" to earn extra dollars.

And all need legal guidance.

An Attleboro, MA native and graduate of the University of Massachusetts and Suffolk University Law School, Donais came to New Hampshire in 1997 to clerk for former New Hampshire Supreme Court Associate Justices Sherman Horton and William Johnson. He moved to the Attorney General's Office, where he worked in the civil, environmental and transportation and construction bureaus.

Donais, who lives in Manchester with his wife, Mary Kate, and sons, Garrett, 8 and Aidan, 4, says most of his free time involves activities with his sons, such as the Cub Scouts, the YMCA and taekwondo.

Donais himself has been involved with scouting for 30 years, currently as a vice-president of the Daniel Webster Council, BSA.

He says that scouting is as important now as it was when he was a youth, if not more important.

“There are definitely challenges out there, and scouting for a lot of youth provides them with direction, adult role models and a way to learn values and be self-reliant.”

Donais is also the incoming president of the Queen City Rotary Club, a trustee of the Franco-American Centre and the Salvation Army advisory board. He served on the New Hampshire Bar Association advisory boards and committees.

Bio details: CRAIG S. DONAIS, 39

Home: Manchester

Birthplace: Attleboro, MA

Family: wife, Mary Kate; sons, Garrett , 8 and Aidan, 4

High school: North Attleboro High School, North Attleboro, MA

College/post grad degrees B.A. magna cum laude, University of Massachusetts at Amherst; J.D., cum laude, Suffolk University Law School

Current job: Attorney, Donais Law Offices, PLLC, Manchester

Key past positions held: Assistant attorney general; judicial law clerk, N. H. Supreme Court

Volunteer activities: Vice president for program, Daniel Webster Council, Boy Scouts of America (several other positions as well); president-elect, Queen City Rotary Club; past president, Franco-American Centre; Salvation Army advisory board; Safety & health Council of Northern New England, board member; Personnel Appeals Board, City of Manchester N. H. Bar Association committees (several committees); national liaison to the Boy Scouts of America for Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity

Most admired person (outside your family) Ronald Reagan

LISABRITT SOLSKY: BRING ON HEALTH-CARE REFORM

By Paula Tracy

Lisabritt Solsky enjoys a challenge.

She said she likes to be on a learning curve at work, dealing with complicated issues and collaborating with a team to come up with solutions.

So with health-care reform on the horizon, Solsky has a “bring-it-on” attitude.

A single mother of three small children, Solsky, 39 is a deputy Medicaid director for the N. H. Department of Health and Human Services in its Office of Medicaid, Business and

Policy. She has a law degree and a bachelor's degree in English and she grew up in Central Massachusetts.

I feel this is just a phenomenal time to be me or like me," she said. "Fortunately, I have an amazing and dedicated management team to work with." She said the infrastructure of the department is going to have to change dramatically to deal with health-care reform. It is an opportunity, she said, to "build it, grow it and see it change."

Solsky said the director and her boss, Kathleen Dunn, has a job description similar to that of a chief executive officer, while "I am more like a COO (chief operating officer) making sure that the program does the things right," she said.

Solsky said her job is to be sure that the contract the state has with the federal government to help 115,000 lives covered by Medicaid in New Hampshire – mostly poor children – is handled properly.

Some of her work includes health planning and research. Another area involves managing a busy data management and reporting section of the department. She said a lot of analysis goes in to looking at the cost and quality and comparison for those who are receiving Medicaid with those who are receiving private coverage.

The analysis shows children receiving Medicaid are in general sicker, and their mental health needs are more significant than children who are receiving private health-care benefits, Solsky said.

However, she said the state Department of Children Youth and Families "does a bang-up job of making sure these kids are not ignored."

Solsky has worked for the department since 2000. She began as general counsel to the Division of Family Assistance. Prior to that, she worked in Massachusetts and Merrimack Valley Legal Services.

She is a 1992 graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and received her law degree in 1995 from what is now the University of District of Columbia Law School.

Balancing her home and work makes for a long day, but she said she enjoys it tremendously.

"I still feel the opportunity to some cutting-edge stuff," she said.

Bio details: Lisabritt Solsky, 39

Home: Concord

Birthplace: Holden, MA

Family: Children, Cadence 7, Athan 5, and Miles, 3

High school: Wachusett Regional High School, 1988, voted class optimist

College/post grad degrees B.A. English and Women's Studies, UMass-Amherst, 1992, Juris Doctor, District of Columbia School of Law, 1996

Current job: Deputy Medicaid director, state of New Hampshire

Volunteer activities: N.H. Bar Lawyer in Every School program, 2006-2007; Concerts in your Home, a new venture that I'm really excited about. Through a network of over 700 amazing nationally recognized musicians and hundreds of music lovers across the country, concerts are hosted in living rooms for friends on a donation basis. All donations go straight to the musician who is able to play in a comfortable welcoming environment without competing with televisions to an audience of true listeners and whose pay is not based on a percent of the bar sales. The audience has an intimate musical experience with friends. I think it's an amazing way to support performance art and bring it to the people, especially in an age where listening rooms are scarce, tickets are expensive and venues are not always family friendly. I have always fantasized about having my favorite musicians perform in my living room; now I can make it happen.

KATE VAUGHN: EDUCATION MOST IMPORTANT THING GOVERNMENT DOES

By Mark Howard

Four years ago, Kate Vaughn challenged a veteran school board member for her seat in an inner-city ward. She lost.

Last year, Vaughn ran again, this time with the help of retiring Ward 5 school board member Katherine Labanaris and won. She now sits on the Manchester school board as well as the board of trustees of her high school alma mater, The Derryfield School.

"I care about education," said Vaughn, who is 37. "I really believe education is key. It's key in my life. It's key in everyone who is successful. It's the most important thing government does."

Vaughn started her career as a teacher, first for the Cushing School, a private boarding school in Ashburnham, Mass., and then at the Manville School, a privately operated, publicly funded school for problem children in Boston.

It was an amazing place, but with an incredibly high burnout rate. Staff assistants stayed in the halls to quickly remove disruptive students, Vaughn said. "I had quick reflexes at the time," she said, quickly ducking her head as if to avoid a thrown object.

She eventually enrolled in Boston University law school, and moved back to her native New Hampshire.

She has been an associate at the McLane, Graf, Raulerson & Middleton law firm for six years. She is a litigator specializing in commercial and environmental law.

Vaughn is a Democrat and counts Congressman Carol Shea-Porter as one of her most admired figures. "It's a tough time (for Democrats)," she said. The country is in two wars, the economy is abysmal and health care needs work.

“No matter who is in power,” she said, “right now would be a rough time.”

Bio details: Kate Vaughn, 37

Home: Manchester

Birthplace: Manchester (I grew up in Mont Vernon)

Family: Parents, Mark and Aggie; brother, Mark

High school: The Derryfield School

College/post grad degrees B.A. William Smith College; M.S. Ed. Simmons College; J.D., Boston University

Current job: Attorney at McLane, Graf, Raulerson & Middleton, Professional Association

Key past positions held: Before starting law school, I was a special education teacher at Cushing Academy in Ashburnham, Mass., and The Manville School in Boston.

Volunteer activities: Manchester Board of School Committee, Manchester Heritage Commission, William Green Manchester Youth Leadership, The Derryfield School board of trustees, Manchester Bar Association Executive Committee.

Most admired person (outside your family) Thurgood Marshall, Carol Shea Porter and many of the teachers and mentors I’ve had along the way.