



## Hanging a Shingle in Rural Kansas

Cal Williams, '78, Advocacy Practitioner in Residence

The winding road in **Cal Williams'** career has always intersected with Washburn Law. After graduation in 1978, he did extensive litigation work in Osage and Shawnee counties in Kansas, and finally set up practice in Colby, Kan., in 1993. But over the years, Williams has always made time to give countless hours back to the Law School.

"A highly skilled defense lawyer, Cal has been an Intensive Trial Advocacy Program (ITAP) team leader, instructor, and mentor to many, many students," said Michael Kaye, professor and director of the Center for Excellence in Advocacy. There is an end in sight for his legal career as he winds down his practice with the goal of taking down his shingle in 2016.

Williams often lectures to law students about the nature and value of practicing law in a rural area. In a recent presentation to Washburn Law graduates, Williams said, "There is a job out there for each and every one of you, you just have to have guts enough to go out and start it rather than find it."

Often, students who are looking at careers in Western Kansas will ask him, "So who is going to give me a job?" His response is, "Nobody is going to give you a job. You're going to make your own job. You're going to look at three, four, or five communities in a six-county judicial district. Look at the demographics and figure out where you're going to fit best. See what's going on, see what's needed. Study the area." He emphasizes that there's a different fit for everybody and there are a million ways to find a job and make it work, but there aren't any excuses for not finding a job.

Williams goes on to say, "You don't have to get hired, you can make your job." It can be done, just like he did, "by putting some shiny plastic letters on a piece of wood, putting it on a chain, and hanging it in the window. And there's your shingle — the start of your legal career in rural Kansas."

"If you want to be your own boss, and you want to chart your own course, it takes time," said Williams. "There's a three- to five- to ten-year cycle before you get over a hump and start making the money that you think you oughta be making."

Recent graduate **Chris Rohr, '14**, has been mentored by Williams before and during Law School, and since graduation. Rohr shared that Williams was not only influential in his decision to attend Washburn Law, he was also instrumental when starting his solo practice in September 2014 in Colby.

"Under Cal's guidance, I assisted him in various cases and each time I came away with practical experience that could not be gained elsewhere," said Rohr. "Cal's continued efforts to offer advice and insight in my daily practice are making me a better lawyer every day. I am where I am today because of Cal's generosity and support."

In rural practice, it's easier to be a big fish in a small pond, in Williams' opinion. Yet, it's still essential, no matter where you practice, to get along with the bar and the courts, and uphold professional ethics. But, it's especially essential when you're in a small community, because you still have to live in and be a part of the community. "When that client is gone, you're going to see that judge and that other attorney again, probably this week or next week," said Williams.

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## Kuckelman, '90, Named Alumni Fellow

School of Law Honoree

**Michael Kuckelman, BBA '86 and JD '90**, was honored as Washburn University's Alumni Fellow for Washburn Law during the Fellows Luncheon on Nov. 14, 2014, at Bradbury Thompson Alumni Center.

While at Washburn he was a member of Alpha Delta fraternity, Inter-fraternity Council, Student Council, Moot Court Council, and Order of Barristers, and was editor of the *Washburn Law Journal*.

A native of Atchison, Kan., and resident of Olathe, Kan., Kuckelman is a partner at Kuckelman Torline Kirkland and Lewis specializing in commercial and personal injury law. He was previously an attorney at Blackwell Sanders and was a member of the plaintiffs' executive committee appointed by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York to litigate the 9/11 World Trade Center cases.

Kuckelman is a member of the Kansas, Missouri, New York, U.S. Supreme Court, and Supreme Court of England and Wales bars. His community service includes the Catholic Education Foundation Board, Maur Hill-Mount Academy Board of Directors, and Washburn University Foundation Board of Trustees.

Over the years, he has assisted several families with adoptions and does the work pro bono because he believes in uniting parents with children.

## Williams *(cont. from page 14)*

It's also important to build rapport with other attorneys when practicing in rural areas or as a solo practitioner. Williams believes that you need someone to fall back on, that you call and say, "here's my situation, I'm kind of concerned about this, and have I done something wrong?" and get a second opinion.

For Williams, Joel Meineke was that resource. When Williams was practicing in Linden, Kan., Meineke was a solo practitioner in Topeka and shared with Williams "what you don't seem to realize is you're a member

of the biggest firm in Kansas. All solo practitioners. If we were a firm, we would be the biggest firm in Kansas. We do everything, and there's someone who can answer any question. I don't know a solo out there that wouldn't try to help and be reasonable with you, just like you're expected to do as time goes by."

Almost every summer for the past 10 years, Williams has spent a week at the Law School serving as an ITAP faculty member. ITAP is a total immersion trial skills course in which students spend entire

days learning and practicing trial skills. Williams, along with other faculty, coaches and mentors students in the finer points of trial advocacy. A noteworthy result of the week is that the ITAP students learn the importance of becoming thoughtful, credible, professional, energetic, and compassionate advocates — essential skills that will serve them well in their careers.

"Simply put, he is an outstanding teacher, alum, colleague, and good friend," said Kaye.