

# WASHBURN LAWYER

Washburn University School of Law Alumni Magazine | Spring 2023



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# A Bright Future Ahead

Hello, everyone:

It is a great honor to continue to serve as interim dean at Washburn University School of Law. As I write this letter, I am still very excited about the news we received this spring: every single one of our December 2022 graduates who sat for the bar exam in February passed! I am proud of the work they put in to make this statement, especially as national pass rates continue to decline. As you may have read in the newsletter, we recently implemented a program that would provide BARBRI exam preparation for each student moving forward, and our December graduates were the first to benefit from this new partnership. I am grateful to the university administration who found a way to make this possible.

As we head into the summer months, we eagerly anticipate the opening of the new building. You, our alumni and friends, have been on this long journey with us, and we are delighted to see this project cross the finish line. In July, the new building will be our new home. I feel very privileged to be able to lead the Law School during this monumental transition.

As changes continue to take place on campus, one that directly impacts our Law School is the upcoming national search for a new, permanent dean. To best position the Law School for its future as a leader in legal education, a search for the most qualified candidate will take place the next academic year. Whether this role will be filled by an internal or external candidate will be determined by a selected committee. Work has already begun, and we expect a decision to be made during the next spring semester. In the meantime, I will continue to lead the Law School during this transition and keep you updated throughout the process.

Through all the change taking place on campus, one thing remains the same: the legacy of the Law School. Our graduates are now part of a family of Washburn Law alumni. Whether it's through multigenerational connections or relationships made at the Law School, numerous families have been a part of this respected tradition. It is our pleasure to highlight some of these stories throughout this edition of the magazine. We know there are more Washburn Law families out there. As always, we welcome you to reach out and share an update with us. The updates you share with us are shared within the Class Actions section of the magazine. These submissions are also where we begin looking for features for the next edition of the Lawyer magazine. We ask that you help us tell your stories with your fellow alumni. Submissions can be made by emailing [alumni@washburnlaw.edu](mailto:alumni@washburnlaw.edu) or visiting [washburnlaw.edu/alumninews](http://washburnlaw.edu/alumninews).

Our legacy families are not the only alumni highlighted in this edition. We also tell the story of the work our attorneys are doing in the field to advance justice within the courtrooms and help spread the word about a quality legal education at Washburn University School of Law. These accolades reflect a legal education with a reputation for creating expert attorneys. It is with this notion that I ask you to reach out to me. As I always say, this is your law school and I look forward to hearing from you.



Jeffrey D. Jackson, BBA '89, JD '92  
Interim Dean, Washburn University School of Law



## WASHBURN LAWYER

We welcome your suggestions about this publication. Please write, phone, email, or visit our website. Letters to the editor and news of jobs and honors are always welcome. Please include your name, class year, address, and daytime phone number. Letters to the editor may be edited for length and clarity.

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# Exciting Achievements

We approach the summer months with excitement and anticipation of the opening of our long-awaited new law school at Washburn University. Countless alumni and donors have been watching this project unfold and are eagerly waiting for this day to finally arrive.

I am honored to serve as chair of the board during this move and want to also recognize and thank my predecessors who served as chairs during this project: Lynn McCreary, '94; Lucky DeFries, '78; Jim Slattery, BA '70, JD '75; Sabrina Standifer, '99; Paul Hoferer, '75; and Steve Cavanaugh, BA '71, JD '80. I join these leaders and more than 60 different alumni who have served on the Board of Governors during this campaign in saying thank you to our loyal alumni and friends who chose to invest in our new home. It has taken hard work and persistence from our faculty and staff as well as the many alumni who have shown their commitment to complete this project. We hope each of you has the date, Friday, July 21, at 3 p.m. on your calendar for the ribbon cutting of this beautiful new building which will enhance the Washburn University campus.

We are grateful to Dean Jackson, our interim dean of the law school for his dedication and hard work while serving as dean and continuing to teach his classes during the construction of the new building.

As we move forward, a search for a permanent law school dean will occur. The decision has been made to conduct a nationwide search to find the best candidate for this role. We invite our own with connections to Washburn University School of Law to apply for the position as well. A committee of alumni, faculty, students, and university administration will be appointed to serve on the search committee. We anticipate announcing a permanent dean during the spring semester of 2024.

Another update that the Board of Governors was keenly focused on is the 100% pass rate of our December graduates on their bar exams in February. Many of our alumni and the entire Board expressed concern after a recent dip in scores and are very proud of this achievement; what a fantastic feat! Having been the first to benefit from the BARBRI partnership, I believe our December graduates saw an opportunity to take advantage of the new collaboration and excelled in their bar exams. If you know one of these December graduates, please join me in offering congratulations on this outstanding achievement.

We have much to be proud of at our law school, I look forward to witnessing what the future holds for our prestigious alma mater.

Respectfully,

Thomas A. Adrian, '69  
Chair, Washburn University School of Law  
Alumni Association Board of Governors



The Washburn University School of Law Alumni Association Board of Governors was first created in 1952. Our mission is to promote the interests of the Law School by engaging our alumni through service to the Law School and the Association, participating in alumni events and programs, remaining connected, and assisting to further scholarship funding. Appointments run July through June.

#### 2022-2023 Board of Governors

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# Facing Down Challenges

## *For Judge Candice Alcaraz, Her Mother's Guidance in Childhood Laid Her Path to a History-Making Position*

*By Lindsay Thompson*

When the **Hon. Candice Alcaraz, '16**, was sworn in as Wyandotte County district judge for Division 12 on Jan. 9, 2023, it was a historic event. She is the first Black female judge ever elected in Wyandotte County. The 32-year-old Alcaraz believes she may also be the county's youngest judge ever seated. Her win undoubtedly speaks to the ways her campaign resonated with voters. But her decisive 68.8% win over her incumbent opponent is also the result of two key principles Alcaraz's mother ingrained in her at an early age.

"My mother, bless her, she was thinking further ahead than I was," Alcaraz said. "She had the plan for me from the beginning. She said, 'Prove yourself in the classroom and pair that with a love and care for the community. Do that, and there is no way you can fail.'"

Alcaraz took her mother's words to heart. Even as a child, she was serious about achievement and overcoming obstacles.

She has kept all her childhood report cards and in them she can map how she grew into the position she holds today. One card included a note to her mother from the teacher. It said Alcaraz was a great student, but when she struggled with a subject, she was very hard on herself. What Alcaraz sees in that message is her deeply rooted personal expectations and drive to achieve.

"I've never really thought I'm competing against other people," Alcaraz said. "I'm competing against myself. I want the best from myself. I want to be my best self at all times."

During her studies at Washburn University School of Law, Alcaraz found faculty who helped her hone this work ethic. One professor who deeply impacted her was Alex Glashausser. She respected his depth of knowledge and the way he kept his students on their toes.

Her first course with Glashausser was torts. It was challenging for her, and she didn't earn as high a grade as she would have liked. When she took his course on remedies, she was determined that this time she would show him what she could achieve.

"I pushed myself," Alcaraz said. "I was answering questions in class. I was going to his study hours. I was going to prove to him I can do this because he believed in me."

She made an A in the class.

Washburn also challenged her to step out of her comfort zone. Uncertain of where she wanted to go with the law, she



Hon. Candice Alcaraz, '16. Photo submitted

was feeling stuck and directionless. Oral arguments were approaching, and she was petrified. Even as she walked up to the podium, dropping her papers on the way, her sense of dread was enormous. And then, to her shock, something took hold of her. She harnessed her nerves and knocked it out of the park.

Her professor at the time, Jeffrey Jackson, BBA '89, JD '92, now interim dean of the Law School and then director of the center for excellence in Advocacy, encouraged her to recognize her talent for oration and develop it.

"It was an amazing experience I still carry with me to this day. He let me know I did what I was supposed to do, and I was good at it," said Alcaraz. "I needed that. It was the

encouragement I needed to push me through to the end and get me on to the next destination.”

This experience made her realize that she wanted to be in the courtroom every day.

After graduation, Alcaraz went to work as an assistant district attorney for Wyandotte County. In the beginning, she wrestled with her nervousness, and she questioned if she was on the right path. She kept diligently working on her skills, but she didn't feel certain she truly had what it took.

The answer to these doubts came from a particularly harrowing challenge. She was on call when a triple homicide was called in. She showed up on the scene and found she instantly shifted into gear, evaluating what was needed and taking action.

“This was the first time I was going to see deceased bodies,” Alcaraz said. “I walked into the house, waiting for something to wash over me and give me an excuse to say, ‘This is not for me.’ And it never did. I walked in, took it in, and said, ‘All right, let's get to work.’”

After that, her confidence grew. She started to do more hearings and took on as much work as she possibly could. Following her inner compass, she worked hard to always surpass her previous best efforts. Before long, she was taking on high-profile cases.

Her work in the district attorney's office provided her many professional challenges and growth opportunities like these, but it also sparked a personal quandary. She was bothered by the fact that Wyandotte County lacked diverse representation in its judges. Over time, she was also dismayed by how one judge, her eventual opponent, managed his courtroom. Before long, she began to feel an internal pressure to do more than simply hope for change.

“Something in my gut said, ‘You don't have to wait for anything,’” Alcaraz said. “I told myself you can do something about it. You're always trying to be one of those people that says, ‘Don't just talk about it, be it.’ This is something you can do.”

With encouragement from her fiancé, she decided it was important to seize the moment and throw her hat in the ring.

When she pressed the button on her phone to post her campaign announcement, she was again overcome by nerves. She described the moment as the scariest in her life. But the flutter of anxiousness was quickly surpassed by her resolve to give this latest challenge her all, as she had many times before.

She built a campaign centered around a commitment to being visible to, and transparent with, the community. In an age where few people know who their elected judges are, she conducted a door-knocking campaign.

“I didn't care if it was raining, snowing, if it was 100 degrees outside,” Alcaraz said. “I was knocking on doors every single

day, as often as I could. And the people responded to me very well. Even people who didn't necessarily agree with me. By the end of our conversation, they had a newfound respect for me. They were equally surprised and proud that I was coming to talk to them, to see how they felt about certain issues and tell them who I am and what I bring to the table.”

What she brought to the table was both fresh ideas and an adherence to time-honored principles.

Her time in the district attorney's office had shown her what the community needed from the court system and what she could offer. She was concerned that most convicted defendants were back in the community in a short amount of time. She recognized the need for the courts to be informed of, and to consider, the range of programs available to defendants when considering sentencing so they could have the best chance of re-entering society prepared to take a different path.

“As a prosecutor, there were some people for whom I was literally their career prosecutor,” Alcaraz said.

“I would see them from the time they were juveniles through the time they were early adults. I thought, ‘How do I make sure that the community is assured that they're safe and that this person can come back into it positively?’ The goal should be, if possible, to get them through community programming, get them doing some community service so that they can give back something good to the community that they've harmed.”

Alcaraz has also centered her work on the basic principle that everyone deserves respect and deserves their day in court. Win or lose, she wants people to feel they have had their opportunity to be heard.

She is seeing the value of applying both approaches in her work on the bench, even in the civil cases she handles. For Alcaraz, every case is an opportunity for her to do better than before.

“I preached about respecting people and doing things differently in the courtroom, and I'm practicing what I preach on a daily basis,” Alcaraz said. “I'm seeing what I can do with my time here because I won't be in this courtroom forever. But if there is something, some change that I can affect while I'm here, I can feel good about that. I can rest peacefully at night.”

Alcaraz has many years ahead of her to effect change. Although the future is unwritten, it seems certain she will always approach it with the mindset she's carried with her throughout her life.

“It has been the same plan since I was a child,” Alcaraz said. “Just continue to prove yourself, but always keep in mind you have those two bases. You have your knowledge, but you also must have the care that goes with it. Those two things have led me to a solid career and put me on this path.”

# Keeping Family in the Forefront

*A Husband and Wife began Their Journey at Washburn Law. Now, Their Children Joined Them for an Important Moment.*

*By Angela Lutz*

For **Francesca Montes-Williams, '01**, and **Eric N. Williams, '01**, Washburn University School of Law is all about family. And in recent years, that connection has only grown stronger. It all began 25 years ago when Francesca moved to Topeka from her home in Florida. Three of her family members had attended Washburn and her cousin promised she would love the school, but for a girl used to soft sands and warm breezes, the winter weather came as a shock.

“It was 13 degrees and I was so excited about trying to catch snowflakes – it was a whole different world for me,” Francesca recalled. “I think Eric thought that was great.”

As she adjusted to frozen precipitation and the chill in the air, Francesca had something else going for her as well: her burgeoning romance with Eric, whom she met in their shared classes at Washburn. Right away the young law students found each other intriguing. Francesca remembers the two enjoying many intelligent conversations. After only a few weeks in class together, Francesca asked Eric out to lunch and the rest, as they say, is history.

## *Husband-and-Wife Team of Judges*

After law school, Eric and Francesca got married and had two children: their now 19-year-old son, Eric, in his second semester of college, and 15-year-old daughter, Francesca, finishing her freshman year in high school. They have also built their respective legal careers, with Eric serving as a district judge assigned to the criminal division and Francesca a district judge assigned to the family law division. Impressively, they've both been elected to positions in the 18th Judicial District in Sedgwick County, Kansas, making them the only team of spouses of district judges in the state. This professional connection has given their personal relationship a new dimension of depth and understanding.

“We can certainly relate to what's happening with each other,” Eric said. “Having worked around the legal world for the last 20 years, we have an especially rich understanding of how the courthouse works, and we support each other that way.”

“Eric has really been my right arm walking me through the differences from hearing officer to district judge,” Francesca added. “Some of the questions that come up, he understands



Hon. Francesca Montes-Williams, '01, and Hon. Eric N. Williams, '01, with their children for her swearing-in. Photo submitted

it because he's been through it. We've always tried to keep it separate too. But we understand the challenges and when we need to, we can bounce things off each other.”

For each of them, becoming a judge was the fulfillment of a long-time ambition. Sworn in six years ago, Eric previously presided over juvenile, traffic, and criminal first-appearance cases before beginning his current role. He has also worked as a prosecutor and as general counsel for the state agency that licenses and regulates law enforcement, giving him the well-rounded experience he needed to become a judge.

“The most rewarding thing about being a judge is helping people and having an impact on the community,” Eric said. “I want to make the courthouse accessible to everybody and make sure everybody gets a fair trial.”

Francesca, meanwhile, previously worked as an administrative hearing officer in Sedgwick County presiding over child support enforcement cases and was sworn in as a district judge this January, making her the newest of the district's 30 judges. She believes strongly in the value of public service and hopes to use her position to make a positive difference in people's lives.

“It was a natural transition going from hearing officer to district judge, and I believe it gives me the opportunity to help more people in Sedgwick County,” Francesca said. “There are a lot of families that come to the courthouse and need answers, and I want to make the decision that's in the best interest of the children. I'm going to treat people the way I want to be



treated if I were on the other side of the bench. If I can make one difference for one kid, it will be worth it.”

### *All About Family*

Like Francesca, Eric also has a family connection to Washburn through his father, **Jackie Williams, '71**. Pursuing a legal career seemed like a natural choice for Eric as his father worked at the U.S. attorney's office for most of Eric's childhood and retired as the U.S. attorney for the state of Kansas. His father's influence has been a guiding force in Eric's life.

“He has been a long-time influence on my legal career and on Francesca's as well,” Eric said. “He's a great guy. I can't even put that into words. I meet people all the time who talk about what a good guy he is. He's been on the right side of the line my whole life. He is the quintessential public servant.”

For Eric and Francesca, the emphasis on family values came full circle during Francesca's swearing-in ceremony. This wasn't their first time, either. For Eric's ceremony six years ago, Francesca held the Bible and their children were present, so she knew she wanted the same for her big day. This time, her children held the Bible and Eric swore her in, making the event a memorable occasion for the whole family. Eric's father was present in the audience, along with friends and relatives from both sides of the family. Having strong support gave Francesca the push she needed to pursue her dreams.

“When I took on this position, we talked to the kids because I knew I would be tied to the office more,” Francesca said. “With their support, I went for this. Having them there that day was incredible, and my kids were so proud and excited.

It was just the four of us, and it was so special. There are no words for that. It was amazing that day.”

“It was a pretty packed courtroom,” Eric added. “Family is everything to us, so being able to participate in Francesca's swearing-in was so meaningful for us.”

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“The most rewarding thing about being a judge is helping people and having an impact on the community. I want to make the courthouse accessible to everybody and make sure everybody gets a fair trial.”

— Eric Williams

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For their kids, Eric and Francesca hope they are not only creating powerful memories but also setting a strong example of what it means to work hard and achieve their goals.

“There was something very special about my young daughter looking at me and being so proud,” Francesca said. “It was a great moment. It's always been about letting our kids know that if you put in the work, it will pay off. And they got to see that with their dad and again years later with their mom. Especially being Hispanic and a woman, it's a big deal, and I love being able to share that with my kids.”



Family and friends gather for Montes-Williams' swearing-in. Photo submitted

## *Strong Washburn Roots*

Going forward, Eric and Francesca are both glad to be working in legal areas they feel strongly about, and they recognize the great responsibility they have in serving their community.

“I’ve always been involved in the criminal law side of things,” Eric said. “I enjoyed working with juvenile offenders and the traffic and criminal first-appearance cases, but I’m passionate about criminal code and criminal law and how that impacts the community. I’m glad to be back in that realm.”

Francesca in particular knows that if she can help make a positive impact on the lives of the children she encounters in family court today, maybe she can help them avoid a visit to her husband’s criminal courtroom in the future.

“I’m passionate about helping kiddos and families,” Francesca said. “These kids are going to be the leaders for the future and if we can make a difference now, maybe they won’t end up in Eric’s courtroom and we can help them early on in their lives.”

For their successful careers, Eric and Francesca both credit their Washburn education with helping them get where they wanted to go. They cited influential visits from Washburn University School of Law alumni and participating in trial advocacy programs as particularly beneficial to their educational experience, as it gave them real-world evidence that they could dream big and achieve their goals.

“I drive by Washburn when I’m in Topeka, and boy that campus has grown,” Eric said. “Washburn was great. I really enjoyed the tight-knit community. There were a lot of opportunities, and they did a lot to prepare you for the real world.”

“The professors always had that open-door policy,” Francesca added. “Especially being so far away from home and being pretty much on my own, they were always there if you had questions. They would even say ‘Hey, here’s my phone number, call me anytime.’ You weren’t just a number at Washburn. The professors really wanted you to succeed, and it showed. Eric and I have done really well with that strong foundation Washburn gave us.”





Elizabeth Ngatia, BA '23, LEAP student. Photo by Jeremy Wangler

## Single Steps

*For Elizabeth Ngatia, a Journey of a Thousand Miles Winds up at Washburn*

*By Brad Porter*

For Elizabeth Ngatia, BA '23, entering Washburn University School of Law is the culmination of a journey. This journey began 8,744 miles away in Mombasa, Kenya. The fact that it has ended up with her and her sister both earning college degrees – the first in their family to do so – and Ngatia going on to law school in Topeka, Kansas, required an enormously unlikely confluence of circumstances, and more than a little luck. Enough so that, upon receiving her bachelor's degree in political science at this spring's commencement and seeing the scope of her achievement written on her parents' proud faces in Lee Arena, Ngatia commented to a nearby reporter "this is literally the American Dream."

She's right, but given that Ngatia, as the highest-ranking member of the 2023 senior class in the College of Arts and Sciences, was just honored with the Washburn University's Sibberson Award, and has already spent the last year taking law classes and earning praise as part of the Law School Early

Admissions Program, it might be Washburn Law's dream too. She is exactly the kind of person the LEAP program is designed for, and exactly the kind of student Washburn wants.

### *A New Continent*

Ngatia's journey started in southeast Kenya, where she and her sister were born, growing up speaking Swahili. Ngatia's father worked in a printing house several hours away, and the family also operated a small shop. Her parents' hard work allowed them to get by, but they yearned for better opportunity.

Like many Kenyan families, Ngatia's parents applied for the Green Card Lottery, an annual program run by the U.S. State Department that represents one of the only legal pathways to immigrate to the United States. It was such a longshot that even when Ngatia's mother received her letter announcing she had won, she assumed it was a scam. If her father hadn't found the letter weeks later in a pile of junk mail, and then managed

to make arrangements in a hurry, including only gathering up money for airfare two days before they had to depart, the opportunity might have been lost forever.

Even during the trip itself, they were still at the mercy of fate. While in the air, the host family they had lined up in Boston backed out at the last minute – they had nowhere to stay, and the possibility loomed that the family might need to be split up. But Ngatia’s father hit the payphones in the airport, and eventually a family member who had attended ministry school in Kansas City, found someone willing to host them. All they had to do was move to some place called Fort Scott, Kansas.

## *A New Life*

The family settled in Fort Scott, sight unseen, and began their new lives in America. Both of Ngatia’s parents got jobs at a Wendy’s, and Ngatia and her sister started school. The small town didn’t have much of an immigrant community, so the

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“I push myself hard because I know what my parents put in to get me here. Everything I accomplish is not just for me, it’s for them as well.”

— Elizabeth Ngatia

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family learned the ropes of American life from the relationships they built, beginning with a local Presbyterian church. Over time, those relationships helped her mother get a job in a senior living home and Ngatia’s father a job at a print shop.

Ngatia and her sister worked hard too, not just in their studies as they had to quickly get acclimated to life as American kids, but also in the workforce, with both getting jobs as soon as they were able. Liz’s sister has gone on to be a nurse, but Liz got set on a different path when she got a job in high school working for the Bourbon County Attorney’s office.

“Pretty much all of the lawyers there were Washburn grads, and they told me a lot about the university, the law school, life in the capital city. Then I went on a campus visit and just fell in love with the place and the community. I was hooked,” she said.

## *A Standout Ichabod*

At Washburn, Ngatia followed her parents’ example by working her tail off. She showed an early interest in political science. Back in Kenya, there was a great deal of local corruption, so as a young child, she had become interested in good government. She became involved in student government at Washburn, including serving as diversity and inclusion chair, and got involved in the Pre-Law Club. She worked as a resident assistant and as an office assistant on campus. She even studied abroad, visiting European capitals as part of a trip organized by the political science department.

Not long into her undergraduate experience, Ngatia became convinced of two things: She wanted to go to law school, and she wanted to stay at Washburn. She applied to the law school’s early admittance program and was accepted. As part of the accelerated program, that meant she took first year law school courses as an undergraduate senior, with those classes counting to both finish her undergraduate degree and begin her juris doctor.

“Coming into Washburn Law, I definitely had some imposter syndrome,” Ngatia recalled. “Here I was a first year without even a bachelor’s degree. But I figured out pretty quickly how common that was. None of us felt like we knew anything, even those first years who had master’s degrees or PhDs. I got over it and just got to work.”

Now, having finished her first year, Ngatia earned her bachelor’s degree and this summer has a job lined up interning at Stinson LLP, first in their offices in Kansas City, and then embedded in-house with one of their larger local clients, Hallmark. It’s a long way from Wendy’s in Fort Scott where her parents started their family’s journey in Kansas.

“I push myself hard because I know what my parents put in to get me here,” Ngatia reflected. “Everything I accomplish is not just for me, it’s for them as well.”

This fall, when Ngatia returns to campus, she’ll still be working hard – now as a small group mentor helping other incoming 1Ls make their own transitions to Washburn Law. Because if there’s one thing Ngatia is an expert on, it’s making transitions, one incredible step at a time.

# Making a Modern Impact

## *Attorney Helps Modernize Public Records Access in Supreme Court Case*

*By Angela Lutz*

Imagine requesting a series of emails from a public agency and being told that not only will you have to lug away four heavy boxes full of printed papers, but you will also have to pay for it. Prior to this year, that's what reporters regularly encountered. But **Maxwell E. Kautsch, '03**, couldn't stand for that. In a case he argued and won before the Kansas Supreme Court, Kautsch helped modernize the Kansas Open Records Act.



Maxwell E. Kautsch, '03

“The case makes it so that public agencies must disclose records in the format in which they possess the record,” Kautsch explained, meaning that if someone requests access to emails, the documents must be delivered in the same electronic format, which is quicker, cheaper, and less burdensome to search than thousands of printed papers.

“This is the 21st century. Surely there must be an easier way to share information that is not only more cost-effective but also environmentally friendly,” Kautsch added. “The case is important because it has a definite positive impact on transparency. It streamlines the means of access.”

The win is a highlight in Kautsch's nearly 10 years of focusing on First Amendment rights and open government law. From his private practice in Lawrence, Kansas, he serves as the hotline counsel for the Kansas and Nebraska associations of press and broadcasters, handling various private actions related to access to records, proceedings, and meetings. He is also president of the Kansas Coalition for Open Government,

meaning he spends a lot of time fielding questions related to government transparency and working to educate the public on these issues.

“Without a functioning press, democracy doesn't work,” Kautsch said. “There has to be a way to hold the government accountable for the decisions it makes, and there has to be some sort of objective standard for truth. Trying to educate the public about obtaining facts and then fairly and accurately reporting the documents that contain those facts – that's how I see my job.”

This focus on media law is a natural evolution for Kautsch, who is a former criminal defense attorney and undergraduate English major who appreciates good writing as much as he values the truth. During his time at Washburn University School of Law, he valued the many opportunities he had to focus on legal research and writing, which help with performing discovery and writing evidence-based briefs.

“The best advice I could ever give to a law student would be to work on developing written communication as much as possible,” Kautsch said. “Every time you read a brief that falls short, you just wonder to yourself, what was the client paying for? I think it hurts the profession in general to see poorly drafted pleadings and motions.”

In Kautsch's career, he finds it rewarding that reporters and other members of the public seeking the truth can contact him for assistance. “The information I'm telling them has to be helping someone,” he said. “The fact that it perpetuates itself tells me that society is still in the market of taking reasonable effort to hold our government accountable.”





Chase L. Miller, BA '12, JD '15, and Monte L. Miller, BS '81, JD '84, in the Lyon County Courthouse with Richard E. Miller, Sr.'s, '54, picture.  
Photo by Jeremy Wangler

## A Lasting Impact

*Three Generations of Washburn University School of Law Graduates Impact One Community*

*By Dannie Harris-Cooper*

Alumni know that connections at Washburn University School of Law run deep and often carry a lasting impact in small communities across the country, especially in rural Kansas. The Miller family in Emporia is no exception.

### *Building a Legacy*

As a kid, **Monte L. Miller, BS '81, JD '84**, found himself captivated by his father's work. At just 12 years old, his dad shared insight into one of his cases. His father had been the Ellsworth County attorney and successfully prosecuted a double murder case. Even at a young age, it didn't intimidate Monte. In fact, it had just the opposite effect. It made a lasting impact that would shape his future.

"He let me look through the prosecutor's case file," said Monte. "He showed me the Kansas Reports that talked about the appeal of that case. And there was just something about the actual facts that I knew something about that piqued my interest and I thought, 'that's pretty neat' and that's how it all got started."

**Richard E. Miller, Sr., '54**, began his career in law after earning his undergraduate degree from Kansas State University. He went to Washburn Law and worked as a dispatcher for the Topeka Police Department while earning his degree. He was in private practice and the Ellsworth County attorney from 1954 - 68. After moving to Emporia, Kansas, in 1968, he served as an assistant Lyon County attorney, and was then elected as a juvenile and probate judge before being elected as a 5th Judicial District judge. Before Richard's passing in 1997, he

was heavily involved in the community, volunteering and serving in leadership roles in his church, Emporia Masonic Lodge No. 12, and several bar associations.

Today, Monte and his son, **Chase L. Miller, BA '12, JD '15**, are carrying on his father's legacy and helping the community where he grew up. Like his father before him, Monte began his working career in law enforcement as a Lyon County jailer, then to Chase County as a deputy, then undersheriff, then acting sheriff.

"I was also on the Topeka Police Department when I left Chase County to attend Washburn, so we had that in common," Monte shared. "That law enforcement aspect came from my father. He had a dual career as well, with prosecution and law enforcement. A number of factors came together to make that happen."

After obtaining his law degree, Monte would go on to start Miller & Miller with his father. Coming back home to Emporia was the next logical step in his career.

"My father had left the bench and he had a thriving law practice," he said of making the decision to go back to Emporia. "It was pretty clear he could use some help. It only made sense to come back here where I was somewhat known."

Breaking away from tradition, Chase began his education knowing he would follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps and ultimately attend law school. He took a more traditional path, first earning his bachelor's degree from Washburn University and going from there straight into law school. His decision to attend Washburn Law would come to the delight of his father, proud that he would continue to carry on the family legacy.

"I couldn't have been happier," Monte shares of the decision. "Obviously the pride of my son wanting to do what I do."

Chase began his journey on the debate team in high school. He would go on to continue with debate at Washburn University, earning a scholarship and winning a national title with the team in parliamentary debate during his sophomore year. Debate was the start of it, but it was far from the only influence on his decision to pursue a career as a lawyer. As a child, he had the opportunity to see firsthand the impact his dad had on their community. He recalls strangers in the community coming up to his dad and being thankful for what his father had done for them.

"There was one time in high school when a younger kid walked up to me and said, 'Hey, I just found out that I was adopted and that your dad handed me to my parents,'" Chase shared. "He was really grateful and that was cool."

Being raised in the culture and working at his father's firm in high school helped to solidify that law school decision, providing a well-rounded perspective before ever enrolling.

Working alongside his dad has had countless benefits.

"We have always had a relationship where we work together really well," he shared. "I get to spend significantly more time with my dad than most people would have with their dads. And I get direct candid access to basically two generations of practical wisdom and knowledge as far as the practice of law goes."

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*"We have always had a relationship where we work together really well. I get to spend significantly more time with my dad than most people would have with their dads."*

— Chase L. Miller

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Earning a degree from his father's alma mater had its benefits as well. Both Monte and Chase had many of the same instructors during their time at Washburn, including Professor Michael Kaye and Professor James M. Concannon.

"Having the same professors and having the same culture to be raised in as a young attorney is important to the continuity of the practice of law and the administration of justice. To have that through Washburn, I'm very appreciative of that," said Chase.

### *Civic Commitment*

Their education is not the only thing this father-son duo has in common. Both share a passion for their community as well as an enthusiasm for high speeds.

On a beautiful sunny day, Monte prefers the open air to the confines of a desk. It's not unusual to find him in his leathers, enjoying the breeze from the back of a motorcycle. As a member of Fire & Iron M.C. (Motorcycle Club), some of his rides are to the benefit of others. Fire and Iron M.C. is a motorcycle club made up of firefighters, emergency workers and others who are associated with the fire service who love to ride and are committed to the Brotherhood that being a firefighter means. Members are comprised of active and retired, full-time/career, paid-on-call, volunteer firefighters, emergency management, dispatchers, mechanics, or inspectors who work in direct support of the fire service. Members of FIMC not only share a passion for protecting the lives and property of the citizens of their communities, but also each other and the open

road. FIMC takes great pride in its efforts to support various charities and rides.

Working as legal counsel for three fire districts in the area for over 30 years, Monte qualified.

Chase, on the other hand, prefers the comfort of his sports car. The importance of giving back to the community for him first revolved around attracting people into his community and economic growth. Like most small towns, Emporia is experiencing a loss of employable adults as people leave to find better opportunities in nearby Wichita and the Kansas City metro area. At the time, he didn't feel as though this had the impact he was hoping for. He has since rededicated his time to providing dignity in defense.

"I try to the best of my ability, to not only deal with direct court things but also collateral issues that come up in criminal defense cases so that to the extent we can we avoid their life collapsing and getting caught in a spiral," Chase shared of working with the community. "I'd like to show that people can remain in the community and be successful."

Both men have also been involved in a number of organizations throughout the community during their careers. The generosity of their time cannot be overstated with involvement in organizations like Hetlinger Developmental Services, Emporia Metropolitan Planning Commission, Emporia Humanitarian Center, Crime Stoppers, and United Way of Emporia, just to name a few.

Even though Monte and Chase are the only two in the family to follow in Richard's legal footsteps, service to others is not new to the rest of the family. Monte's wife, Jackie, a retired state trooper and retired State Regional emergency manager, is now a member of Missouri Task Force One, a FEMA urban search and rescue team and is a member of the Kansas Search and Rescue Program. She also owns Midwest Search and



Monte L. Miller, BS '81, JD '84, with his father, Richard E. Miller, Sr., '54. Photo Submitted

Rescue Solutions where she assists in training first responders in search and rescue. Their daughter, Kaitlyn, has earned her medical degree, and their daughter, Miranda, is a student support advocate.

"If we can help each other without sacrificing ourselves, then it's the right thing to do," said Monte. "I'm honored to be in the profession. I really like helping people. It is so much fun when you can find the solution for someone. Or when they're in a dire situation and you can mitigate the impact on them. The happier you can make people, the happier you're going to be."





# A Bigger Impact

## *Desire to Make a Difference Led Belsan to an Impressive Career*

By Annie Flachsbarth

While some may feel a successful, 10-year career with the U.S. Department of Justice might allow you to sit back and rest on your laurels, **Timothy M. Belsan, '09**, chose to do just the opposite. In 2022, he took on a new challenge as the assistant deputy enforcement director with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

“The higher you climb on the ladder, the harder it is to pivot to something else,” Belsan said. “Despite the challenge, I was interested in broadening the reach of how many people I could impact and jumped at the opportunity when it arose.”

Belsan had worked his way up to the highest ranks within the DOJ as the director of the Office of Immigration Litigation. Belsan’s work has mostly focused on prosecuting war criminals, human rights violators, spies, and terrorists who concealed their crimes during the naturalization process, as well as litigating other immigration-related cases. While that work is important, moving to the CFPB affords him the opportunity to have an even broader impact.

Created after the 2008 financial crisis, the CFPB is dedicated to making sure consumers are treated fairly by banks, lenders, and other financial institutions.

“We are all consumers in some respect. We all rely on credit reports, loans, credit cards, bank accounts. Our team helps ensure that all of it functions correctly,” Belsan said. “An error at a big bank or credit agency could impact millions of people.”

The impact he can have in government is possible in part because of the help he had with law school – he received the J.L. Weigand, Jr. Notre Dame Legal Education Trust Scholarship during all three years at Washburn Law.

“I was on the fence about law school, but ultimately, that’s what brought me to Washburn Law – having a full-ride scholarship and a stipend on top to cover living expenses,” Belsan said. “It made it possible for me to attend law school but not rack up a ton of debt, which is what allowed me to go into public service.”

While at Washburn, he was the editor-in-chief of the Washburn Law Journal. It’s also where he eventually met his wife, fellow Washburn graduate, **Asha Plattner, AS '08, BA '09**. They now reside in Maryland and have two children, a four-year-old daughter, Mira, and a three-year-old son, Mekhi.

After graduation, Belsan clerked for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Deanell Tacha for two years.



Timothy M. Belsan, '09

Tacha sat on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, so Belsan traveled to Denver every other month where he found himself surrounded by fellow clerks who had graduated from law schools across the country.

“The other clerks talked a lot about job plans. Many were hoping to get on with the Department of Justice,” Belsan said. “I hadn’t considered it

as a serious possibility until then, and it became a realistic opportunity because of the clerkship.”

In 2011, Belsan was hired at the DOJ through its honors program and moved to the Washington, D.C., area. During his time with the DOJ, Belsan received numerous awards, including the Civil Division’s Rookie of the Year Award, the Attorney General’s Award for Distinguished Service, and the Civil Division’s Special Commendation Award. In 2020, Belsan was awarded the Gears of Government Award by the Office of Management and Budget, in recognition of “exceptional delivery of key outcomes for the American people.”

A zealous advocate for government service, Belsan believes Washburn’s competitive tuition rates help students enter the workforce with a lower debt burden – creating more opportunities to enter into public service.

“It helps so that graduates don’t have to take a job that pays six figures because of student loans. Instead, they can pursue a job that they want to do and will find fulfilling,” Belsan said.

“Many of the people with whom I went to law school had an interest in public service,” Belsan said. “Many wanted to practice family law, work for legal aid, or specialize in another area that they viewed as making a difference in society. That was a very common theme among a lot of my classmates.”

According to Belsan, Washburn Law is the perfect place for attorneys who want to see that positive difference.

“One of the great things about Washburn Law is you get the training you need to hit the ground running,” Belsan said. “That, combined with being in the capital city, creates a lot of opportunities to make a difference.”



Hon. Kathleen Lynch, '92. Photo submitted.

## The Hon. Kathleen Lynch

### *A Wyandotte County Judge has Inadvertently Become an Advocate for Mental Health*

*By Angela Lutz*

*Over the last 15 years, Judge Kathleen Lynch, '92, has become an unexpected mental health advocate. In her position as a district judge in Wyandotte County, Kansas, she has helped change the way individuals with mental illness interact with the legal system, leading to a courtroom experience that is more efficient and compassionate. She sat down with Washburn University School of Law to discuss her trauma-informed approach to the law, the benefits of video court, and how she tries to do the most good for the people she serves.*

#### *What sparked your interest in becoming a mental health advocate?*

I was sworn in as a judge in August of 2006. If you had told me at that time I would become this huge mental health, trauma-informed care, crisis intervention training advocate, I would have said you were nuts. I had no background in that area, but it was pretty clear early on that the system we had wasn't working. For the care and treatment docket, after the probable cause hearing and the trial, we had to review the case every 90 days, so we wouldn't look at it again until then. Usually before that they would show up on a revocation of outpatient treatment orders. What I had was a revolving door of mental health patients living with their symptoms every day,

but nothing was getting better for them, and it wasn't getting better for the court system either. We kept seeing them cycle through.

About that time the executive director of Wyandotte Behavioral Health Network reached out to talk about the care and treatment docket. We discussed what we could do better, and they educated me on what people with mental health problems face in the court system.

### *What changes have you made to better serve individuals living with mental illness?*

I attended a trauma-informed care seminar, and I heard a woman speak who had lived experience. She would walk into that courtroom and see the judge in his black, shiny robe and his high, leather chair, and even though she was trying not to react, it would trigger her symptoms and she would end up back in jail. I turned to one of the people at the seminar and said, "I don't have to wear my robe." A lot of folks living with mental illness haven't been treated so well by people in authority. We see their symptoms as defiance of orders when in fact it's a reaction to the whole situation. Since I quit wearing my robe, we haven't had one violent or scary incident. That was our first step toward a trauma-informed courtroom.

### *What are some other differences in a trauma-informed courtroom?*

Counsel doesn't stand up when they announce their appearances. We explain the process as we go so a person living with mental illness can know what's going on. I always ask their permission to call them by their first name. I extend those courtesies that sometimes we forget when we're trying to get through proceedings. That's been a real challenge for me – I talk fast, I walk fast, I do everything fast. Sometimes folks living with mental illness need a little time to absorb ideas and concepts, so you can't rush them. Our clerks were also trauma-informed, and it has helped them in their approach to dealing with folks.

### *What has been done to help keep people with mental illness out of the legal system?*

We opened a 24-7 crisis center on the Wyandotte Behavioral Health Network campus, and it's voluntary so they can leave unless they are a danger to themselves. That's a huge asset to our community because if someone is in crisis, they don't have to go to the ER. We've stolen a lot of ideas from the state of Arizona, and they have a 72-hour involuntary commitment center, and most crises resolve within that amount of time.

They never have to be adjudicated or go to the ER or to jail – that is the worst place to try and deal with it.

In the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department, cadets receive crisis intervention training. We tell everybody this is not a punishment court, it is a helping court. We are trying to help them get through this crisis. I couldn't do any of this work without my community partners – the sheriff's department, behavioral health network, municipal court, everybody has embraced the idea that we can be better.

### *Since the pandemic hit, you've relied more on video court. What have been some benefits of that approach?*

Video court involves a lot of stakeholders. For years we could not get everybody to say yes at the same time. Then in 2020 all those people suddenly had to agree, because we had no other choice. My senior-in-high-school son taught me all about Zoom, and then we held court on Zoom. My joke was, "It only took me a global pandemic to get video court." We have kept Zoom for care and treatment docket. It works so well I've also kept it for my protection from abuse and protection from stalking docket. What is better for victim safety than not having them in the same area as the person who abused them?

It will be interesting to see where we are in five or six years, but the efficiencies are hard to get away from. If you have a \$20-per-hour warehouse job and you come to court for child support and sit there for two and a half hours for a case that takes 20 minutes, I've pulled you out of half a day's wages, you had to pay to park, and then I tell you the child support amount after I've cost you all this money. Or is it better for someone to have an early lunch, sit in their car, turn on their phone, and do court in 30 minutes before we all go on with our day?

### *How did Washburn help prepare you for your legal career?*

Washburn was awesome, I loved law school. It's a grind, but I had such wonderful professors at Washburn. I've had great debates in law school that transferred to my private practice and then to being a judge. I always tell everybody that if you want to learn the theory of the law, go somewhere else. If you want to learn how to practice law, go to Washburn. That's been my experience as a private practitioner and in the courtroom.

# A Greater Purpose

## *An Award-Winning Alumnus Strives to Make a Big Impact in Health Care*

By Annie Flachsbarth

When **Daniel S. Creitz**, '13, graduated from law school, he wasn't exactly sure where his career would take him.

"I knew that I wanted to go into private practice for a while. I wanted to be able to try cases and know how that worked, but I also knew that eventually I wanted to be a part of something bigger," Creitz said. "I knew pretty early on that hard work and honesty are going to be the two things that get me to where I want to go."

Now, as the senior vice president and chief compliance officer for Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas in Pittsburg, Kansas, Creitz is helping the organization make a huge impact and winning awards for his work. As he explained, the services his health care system provides to rural southeastern Kansas, as the largest health care provider in the region, is not only important, it's crucial.

"Kansas is the 34th healthiest state in the union, but if you remove nine of the counties, we'd be the 10th healthiest," Creitz said. "We're operating in the sickest region of the state, but we're providing low-cost, high-quality services directly to those who need it the most. That's something that makes you feel really good every day."

On average, 1,400 people visit one of their sites for a service each day. As Creitz put it, you don't always get to be a part of something that's so expansive every day in the legal profession. It's also why he connects so strongly with a quote written on the back of his hospital badge: "Do all the good that you can, for all the people you can, in all the ways you can, for as long as you can." That mission came from Mother Mary Bernard Sheridan, the nurse responsible for bringing modern health care to southeast Kansas, who also founded Mount Carmel Hospital in Pittsburg, which once stood in the same location where Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas stands today.

"That is written on the walls of the clinics, and encompasses the mission and values we have here," Creitz said. "We live by that. From the providers to the nurses and housekeepers, it's universally embraced."

When hired on at Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas, Creitz made history as the first attorney employed by a health center in the state of Kansas. Now, he leads an in-house legal department of other attorneys and staff that oversee a myriad of components of the health care system, such as compliance and the contracting and vetting of providers.



Daniel S. Creitz, '13

"What I love about what I do is that I'm a part of something bigger than myself that is truly making a dent on our community," Creitz said.

### *Rooted in Service*

As son of the **Hon. Daniel D. Creitz**, '85, Creitz grew up in the legal profession, so to speak. He remembered summers in Erie, Kansas, his hometown of a little over a 1,000 people. It had two stop signs and one gas station, and his dad had the only law office in town.

"I remember riding my bike to the gas station to get two pops, taking them to Dad's office and sitting down with him to hear him talk about his day," Creitz said. "He instilled in me the belief that I could really do this."

His father was a private practice attorney for 17 years and has served 20 years on the bench. As a result, Creitz gravitated toward law from about age 7 or 8, occasionally thinking about medicine along the way.

"I don't want to say it was all I knew, but it was ever-present in my life," Creitz said. "Dad always viewed his job as a public service. As you trace the profession back in history, administering the law was intended to be a public service, and there are many lawyers – particularly Washburn grads – who still believe that it should be."

Creitz's mother is in her 40th year teaching, and he knew he would either grow up to be a teacher or a lawyer.

"I had two really good role models in my parents. They were very hard workers as well as very public service and community-oriented," Creitz said. "I saw their hard work every day and twice on Sunday."

### *Making an Impact*

Creitz was recently honored as the 2023 recipient of the Geiger Gibson Emerging Leaders Award. The award celebrates young leaders whose specific work has helped better the health of medically underserved patients, communities, and special populations. Award recipients are usually nominated by their CEO and must meet certain criteria, including being under 35 years old, serving in health care, and not a CEO or project director. Adding to the prestige, Creitz was the first awardee

from Kansas, and he was also the first attorney to win the award.

“Those are two very distinguished points. It’s rare to have an attorney in health care, and it was also rare for how young I started,” Creitz said. “Additionally, although we’ve had two or three nominations in Kansas over the past 10 years, I’ve seen who has received the award before and who has been nominated. It was very humbling to be the first in our state to receive the award.”

As a Geiger Gibson Emerging Leaders award recipient, Creitz has the opportunity to participate in some unique experiences, including being a guest lecturer at George Washington’s Milken Institute in Washington, D.C. He credits his receiving the award to a combination of hard work, a belief in the cause, and those who encouraged him along the way.

“While this is certainly hard work and I had a role in developing my own piece of it, I also had a lot of great mentors over the years,” Creitz said. “My boss is a phenomenal mentor. She has been incredibly gracious with her time. She is a very kind, very understanding, and incredibly intelligent woman.”

Although their career paths were different, Creitz’s father also significantly influenced him.



Daniel S. Creitz, '13. Photo submitted.

“I always joke that my dad and I have two things in common: We have the same name and we both have JDs from Washburn,” Creitz said. “But in reality, we also both view our work as public service. He’s on the bench because he can cause a net positive effect on drug court and judicial finances at the state level. With me, I’m always working to create a sustainable system of health care, workforce, and education.”

As a matter of fact, education is an area Creitz is passionate about finding ways to grow.

“I work in an organization that is 88% women. When my daughter says she wants to be a doctor one day, I want her to connect with educational initiatives and let her go to a health camp. Ultimately, I want to create those opportunities in the community for her and anyone who interacts with us,” Creitz said. “We can get back to that as a legal profession. We can tell kids that they can be lawyers one day, and I can do that within a health care entity and help bridge that gap. I’m going to try.”

Creitz’s goal is to create the biggest net positive impact on people today and tomorrow – and it’s because he’s seen firsthand the impact it has made.

“It goes back to the fact that I very much believe in what we do here,” Creitz said. “Our chief clinical officer delivered my two kids. I get health care here. My family gets health care here. I believe in what we do, and it’s just an incredible experience and I’m very lucky to be where I am.”

Creitz also credits his wife of 12 years, Kylie, with much of his success. The two met on a blind date as undergraduates at Pittsburg State University. While in college, she worked at Community Health Center and Creitz would clean the lobby as he waited for her shift to end. She eventually joined him in Topeka while he attended law school. The two married when he was a 2L.

“My law school friends would tell you she is probably the best part of me,” Creitz said. “She worked very hard to help get me through law school, and I couldn’t have done it without her. She was kind of that person that took care of a large group of us and helped make sure we were okay. A lot of credit goes to her. She’s very gracious and has really allowed me to tackle this career. I can’t appreciate her enough.”

The pair have a two-year-old son, Liam, and a 6-year-old daughter, Spencer, who, coincidentally, wants to be a doctor one day, something that further motivates him to continue developing the health care presence in his community.

“It’s nice to be a part of something where I can grow professionally while also growing the organization and helping our community,” Creitz said. “Those things working in concert together in rural Kansas is a dream come true.”



Director Tony Mattivi, '94, and Hon. Mary Mattivi, '94. Photo by Jeremy Wangler

## Law in Common

*For One Couple, Washburn Law School was the Foundation of Professional Success with a Happy Marriage and Family*

*By Lindsay Thompson*

Director **Tony Mattivi, '94**, and Judge **Mary Mattivi, '94**, found more than just a great legal education at Washburn University School of Law, they found each other. In the 29 years since they graduated, they have been on a unique and sometimes challenging adventure, building fascinating careers and raising a family together.

The two grew up states apart, Tony in Colorado and Mary in Missouri.

Early careers and educational pursuits were not without their trials. After dropping out of college, Tony was considering a career and worked for several years as an EMT and a paramedic. He would later decide that college was unfinished business and went back to obtain his bachelor's degree before ultimately deciding to go on and earn an advanced degree. Earning a C in organic chemistry deterred him from pursuing medical school, and after speaking with current law school students at the time, he chose to pursue a law degree at Washburn.

Mary, however, had a more traditional path to law school. She studied criminal justice as an undergraduate in Missouri and did not consider law school until a professor asked her what she planned to do with her degree. After working in a district attorney's office, she realized room for advancement was incredibly limited without that degree. It was a fateful decision that would lead her to Washburn as well.

The two met at orientation. They became part of the same circle of friends, spending time together studying and socializing. The group of future attorneys also had a special Thursday night ritual.

"You did not miss LA Law on Thursday night," Mary said. "Nobody missed that. Everybody gathered."

Tony and Mary started dating during their second year of law school. They enjoyed having a shared academic pursuit. They commiserated about difficult classes and respected one another's need to spend long hours studying. Although Mary joked that Tony took it to greater extremes than she did.

“There are two examples I will never forget,” Mary said. “One of them was when the season finale of Seinfeld was on. He studied instead of watching it. I was like, ‘There is no way I am missing this.’ He went into another room and studied while I cackled and watched that episode. And then another time, somebody gave him the John Grisham book, ‘The Client’. He said, ‘I’m going to save this for after finals.’ And I was like, ‘That’s crazy! I’m reading it right now.’ So, I read his book while he studied.”

They graduated together in the spring of 1994, launched their careers, and married the following February.

Tony started his career as an assistant district attorney in the Shawnee County District Attorney’s Office. After a year, he moved on to the Kansas Attorney General’s Office and in 1998 joined the United States Department of Justice, where he would remain for 22 years.

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“We both recognize the time commitment it takes and how to form our life around that. I feel that’s a unique thing we’re able to do for each other.”

— Mary Mattivi

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Mary started her career as an assistant county attorney for Lyon County. After two years and the birth of the couple’s first child, Julia, she realized a lengthy commute would not work for their family and she began working as a defense attorney in Shawnee County District Court. From there she went on to be an assistant county attorney for Jackson County where she unsuccessfully ran for county attorney. Upon the birth of their second child, Matthew, she chose to return to Shawnee County where she served as assistant district attorney for eight years. During that time, the couple had their third child, Hope.

During this busy and often chaotic life of family and careers, a couple of unique opportunities arose. In 2007, while Tony was at the Department of Justice, he took a detail with the Regime Crimes Liaison Office. This detail took him to Baghdad for six months, to serve as an adviser to the Iraqi High Tribunal on several prominent war crimes cases against members of Saddam Hussein’s regime.

It was an experience that shaped the rest of his career, but Tony points to Mary as the key to his success in that detail.

“The credit really belongs more with Mary than it does with me because for six months I was 7,000 miles away and we had three little kids at home,” said Tony. “They were 3, 7, and 10 when I was gone. I had my hands full professionally, but she had her hands full at home and was working that entire time.”

After he returned from Iraq, the couple decided on another detail for Tony which would create a wonderful opportunity for the whole family, a move to Washington, D.C. They wanted their kids to expand their horizons and experience living in the capital for a year.

In 2008, Tony found what he was looking for. He was selected to lead the prosecution team against Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, the alleged mastermind of the U.S.S. Cole attack.

“That [commission] came at the perfect time,” Mary said. “Our kids were in grade school. It was an easy move. And it just ended up being this really great experience where we got to see all of D.C. It was supposed to be for nine months to a year, and it ended up being two years.”

The family moved back to Topeka. Upon her return, Mary served as a pro tem judge in Topeka Municipal Court and in 2012 was appointed judge in the Shawnee County District Court where she serves to this day. Tony continued to serve as lead prosecutor on the Cole case until 2013. In 2015, he received the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service in recognition of his work. He retired from the Department of Justice in 2020. However, retirement wasn’t the end for Tony. After he too had an unsuccessful political campaign for attorney general, he was appointed director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation in January of 2023.

Even though their journey wasn’t always easy, they credit one another for having made it possible to keep their family a priority while pursuing their careers.

“We both understand the pressures,” Mary said. “We both recognize the time commitment it takes and how to form our life around that. I feel that’s a unique thing we’re able to do for each other.”

For the Mattivis, having the law in common set the stage for a unique adventure and a happy union.

# Giving Back

## *Alumnus Helping to Educate the Next Generation of Attorneys*

By Angela Lutz

Like many criminal defense attorneys, **Ronald Wurtz, BA '70, JD '73**, pursued his profession because he is passionate about achieving justice and making sure everyone gets a fair trial. The reason he's stuck with it for more than 40 years is even more straightforward: He genuinely enjoys his work.

"In criminal defense, I've found you meet a very wide range of interesting people, and I like that," Wurtz said. "Trials require a mix of intellectual performance, strategy, and a good deal of adrenaline. It's exciting, and there were times I would come back and say, 'My goodness, they are paying me to do this.' I think that's probably what kept me in it, I enjoy what I do."

Since last fall, he has shared his enthusiasm with Washburn University School of Law students as a visiting professor and supervisor of the criminal defense section of the Washburn Law Clinic. Through the clinic, students gain real-world experience by representing actual clients in actual cases, all while receiving the guidance and support of Washburn faculty. The clinic allows students to help the Topeka community, as the clients they serve could not otherwise afford legal representation.

For Wurtz, this arrangement is ideal, as it helps students learn to become competent attorneys while also filling a shortage of trained criminal defense lawyers in the state. He believes practical experience is equally important as what students learn in the classroom.

"Until you go out and see how theories are applied in real life, they really don't click," he said. "If you can get some experience while you're still a student, it gives you a head start. I'm most proud of the students' dedication. They work hard to relate to the clients, who often come from difficult situations. They've had some great results and they've truly helped a lot of people."

Wurtz also places tremendous value on volunteerism, having served on ethics and criminal law committees for the Topeka Bar Association and investigated ethics violations for the disciplinary administrator. He encourages students to give back, and last semester they helped with the Topeka Bar Association's Clean Slate Day, a pro bono project that allows qualifying individuals to have criminal arrests, convictions, and diversions expunged.

"At some point, people who got in trouble and made bad choices outgrow it," Wurtz said. "They serve their sentence, pay their debt, and it's time to let them move forward. The expungement program helps them shake that past they have outgrown."



Ronald Wurtz, BA '70, JD '73

Wurtz's professional focus on being of service stems from his evolution as an attorney. After graduating from Washburn Law, he spent four years in the United States Air Force, where he got his first taste of criminal defense as a counselor working court-martial cases. After his service, he worked as a prosecutor for about a year and a half before becoming a public defender in Shawnee County.

While Wurtz describes his criminal defense career as enjoyable, one aspect that he found challenging was working with the Kansas Death Penalty Defense Unit, which he started in 1994. At the time, he was chief public defender in Shawnee County, and he found the high-stakes work overwhelming and emotionally draining, even as he recognized its necessity.

"You have to see what the stakes are. They are going to kill my client if I lose this case," he said. "It was extremely stressful. I am very morally opposed to the death penalty, so it was hard work."

Today as a professor, Wurtz finds this next phase of his legal career very satisfying and says he gets a kick out of working with young people and drawing on their energy and excitement. He finds the experience reminiscent of his own days in law school.

"I think I got a great education both in undergrad and law school," he said. "The friends I made then are still people I lean on and always seem to be there for me. It was an excellent experience. When you go to a great school, great people go there with you, and it helps you get through life."

In his true generous spirit, Wurtz is pleased to have a chance to serve the Topeka community and to give back to Washburn any way he can. He credits his wife of 52 years for supporting him throughout his career, and he also cites the professors at the law school and the education he received as instrumental in his success by giving him opportunities to grow and thrive as a professional. Washburn gave him scholarships to pursue his studies, which he is just as grateful for today as he was 50 years ago.

"Washburn has been very good to me. I got a scholarship to come here, and I probably couldn't have gone to college without it. I owe Washburn, I want to give back because I got lucky enough to find a profession that fit me, and I still like doing it. It's good to serve."



# Legal Legacy

## *Washburn Family has Built a 60-year Legal Legacy in Holton*

*By Lindsay Thompson*

The White Law Office/Title Abstract Co., Inc., headed by Washburn alumnus **Dennis White, '84**, is recognizing a big milestone this year. The Holton, Kansas, firm is celebrating its 60th anniversary. It's a momentous occasion made even more remarkable because three generations of the White family have practiced law there after attending Washburn University School of Law.

Dennis was a little boy when his father, **Marlin White, BBA '60, JD '63**, graduated from Washburn Law and started the practice. Marlin built a reputation as a winning attorney and a servant leader in the community.

"He was a wise person," Dennis said. "And his wit and humor were exceptional."

By high school, Dennis knew he wanted to follow in his dad's footsteps and study at Washburn to be an attorney. By law school, where he wanted to practice became clear as well.

"I didn't envision anything other than practicing with my dad, under his tutelage," Dennis said.

He joined his dad's practice in 1984 and worked alongside him until Marlin's passing in 2006. Dennis' wife, **Joni White, AA '84, BA '91**, worked with them as the office manager. For a time, it seemed that would be the extent of the legacy; two generations of the White family working together.

Dennis and Joni's son **Kennedy White, BBA '16, JD '19**, was drawn to a career in business. He pursued an entrepreneurial path, encouraged by the close-knit student community and nurturing faculty he found at Washburn.

The summer before his junior year, Kennedy started his own business. Motivated by a dream of helping small local businesses, he launched D18, now called SmartSave. With guidance from faculty like **Rick LeJuerrne, BBA '91**, lecturer, School of Business, he operated and grew the utility tax exemption consulting service while he finished his degree.

Even though he had a successful and growing business, Kennedy found himself led toward the law and working alongside his family.

"When I first began the SmartSave venture my junior year, I had no idea where it would lead me eight years later, into the career of my dreams," Kennedy said. "At the time, I just followed my heart where I felt God was leading me and



The White family – (from left to right) Cassidy, BA '18; Kennedy, BBA '16, JD '19; Dennis, '84; and Joni, AA '84, BA '91. Photo by Jeremy Wangler

focused on becoming a valuable resource others could look to for these complex matters. I think that same heart and mindset led me to the practice of law."

"We had no idea Kennedy would go to law school," Dennis said. "He's a business guy. It surprised us even further when he decided he wanted to come up here."

A year after Kennedy graduated from law school, SmartSave caught the eye of a diversified financial services company, B Riley Financial, that wanted to bring him on staff to expand their tax practice. He took the offer. He now splits his time between the business he launched and the family law office.

Dennis is excited about the possibilities for the future. His son-in-law, Jacob Kennedy, is on the team running Title Abstract Company, another family business. Kennedy's wife, **Cassidy, BA '18**, in addition to her work as an account manager for ComPsych, provides part-time assistance with secretarial duties for the practice. And with five grandchildren currently, and Kennedy and Cassidy expecting a baby this year, he thinks there's a possibility of a four-generation legacy at the practice.

"To think we could be celebrating the 90th anniversary of the White Law Office is exciting," Kennedy said, looking forward. "I feel very grateful to be here and excited for the future."

# Success in Spades

## *Topeka's Chapter 13 Trustee Plans for a Relaxing Retirement After a Demanding Career*

By Lindsay Thompson

After a highly successful, 24-year career as the standing Chapter 13 trustee in Topeka, one that culminated in a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the United States Supreme Court, **Jan Hamilton, BA '70, JD '73**, is turning over his stressful caseload for a more relaxing life in retirement.

### *A Career Built on Character*

Before his time as a Chapter 13 trustee, Hamilton worked in private practice for 25 years. But before that, he was “Jumpin’ Jay,” a late-night disc jockey for KEWI 1440 radio in Topeka. While not the typical full-time undergraduate and law school “gig,” this line of work falls right in line with the fun-loving personality one gets when meeting Hamilton.

After graduating from law school, Hamilton continued working for KEWI, but this time as the in-house counsel and operations manager under Midland Broadcasters.

“For the first five years of my career, I was probably the worst lawyer in the city,” Hamilton said. “I had no idea what to do, but all the other lawyers I worked with were gracious in getting me steered in the right direction.”

Accordingly, Hamilton attributes much of his success to the other attorneys who helped him along the way. One of his mentors, Judge Dale Somers, helped to ensure his success as an attorney.

“Judge Somers was the one who fed me some consumer cases back in 1975. I did a good job on them, and he gradually gave me more complex stuff,” Hamilton said. “Without his help, I’m not sure how my practice would have developed. That really formed how I treated lawyers who were new to the practice in my work as a Chapter 13 trustee.”

Working in litigation happened almost by accident for Hamilton. After discovering bankruptcy work, he eventually built a practice around bankruptcy litigation.

“I found I liked litigation, and I was good at it,” Hamilton said. “However, there was also a lot of stress that went along with it like getting prepared for trial.”

For more than two decades, Hamilton had an extensive bankruptcy – Chapters 7, 11, 12 and 13 – and trial practice including jury and bench, civil, criminal, bankruptcy, and commercial. He remembered many stressful cases, but often the stress came with sleepless nights. He even recalled once



Jan Hamilton, BA '70, JD '73

having to travel to Los Angeles, California, to meet with a client on a day that seemed to never end.

“I got on a flight at 4 a.m. in Kansas City, and I returned from L.A. at 5 a.m., Topeka time, 25 hours later,” Hamilton said. “As I was on the airplane, I thought ‘There has to be a better life than this.’”

So, after 25 years of private practice, when his friend, **Bill Griffin, '73**, suggested he apply for the Chapter 13 trustee position, proposing it would be a nice, relaxing, “retirement-type” job, Hamilton’s interest was piqued, and he applied for the opportunity. He accepted the federally appointed position in 1998, but it didn’t take him long to realize just how wrong his friend was about the job.

“I quickly learned no, that’s not a retirement job. You may have more flexibility to do what you need to do and want to do,” Hamilton said. “And you have an assured paycheck. But it certainly is always omnipresent.”

As one of only 180 Chapter 13 trustees in the United States, there was plenty of work to go around. Administering thousands of bankruptcy cases, at some points more than 3,600 at a time, was a ton of work. But it was a challenge Hamilton took on with pride. Over the years, he also found a distinct dislike for bullies, which shaped a lot of what he did in his role and kept him motivated.

“I felt like I could help level the playing field,” Hamilton said. “I’ve helped a lot of people crawl out of a lot of holes and turn things around after they’ve been put in a tough position by bad creditors who had bullied them there.”

### *The Highest Court in the Land*

Hamilton was the first Chapter 13 trustee to take a case to the U.S. Supreme Court, in the landmark bankruptcy case *Hamilton v. Lanning*. Hamilton and his extremely competent staff attorney, **Teresa Arnold, '04**, wrote all the briefs and Hamilton personally argued the case before the court.

“The law isn’t always as black and white as it seems,” Hamilton said. “There was a problem with the Chapter 13 means test in the Bankruptcy Code. A section of it was sort of ambiguous, and I picked the case on purpose, to try to get some clarity on it.”

In Chapter 13 bankruptcy, a debtor with regular income creates a plan to repay their debts in three to five years. A means test, using an average of the debtor's monthly income during the six-month period preceding the petition's filing, is used to calculate how much disposable income a debtor has for monthly payments. However, in the case Hamilton argued before the Supreme Court, a one-time buyout from the respondent's former employer caused her average monthly income for the look-back period to appear much higher than it was normally. As a result, she was required to make monthly payments far greater than her current monthly income. Hamilton argued the means test was flawed, and other factors should be allowed to be taken into consideration when determining a debtor's payment plan.

Hamilton received the Award of Excellence from the National Association of Chapter 13 Trustees for his work on *Hamilton v. Lanning*.

"It was one of the highlights of my career to stand up in front of the nine justices and say, 'may it please the court,'" Hamilton said.

### *Never Quit Learning*

Hamilton attributes much of his success to being open to feedback and asking for help from other attorneys when he needed it.

"When you get out of law school, you're not prepared for the real world. You may have taken trial advocacy, but you don't know anything about trial advocacy," Hamilton said. "You need mentors, but you're not going to have mentors unless you're open and willing to go to another lawyer and say, 'I'm having trouble, can you help me?' Odds are, that lawyer will help you."

As a scared first-time attorney, Hamilton didn't have any reservations about asking other attorneys and judges for help.

"After my first jury trial, I went to the judge, **Judge E. Newton Vickers, BA '49, JD '50**, and asked him to critique me. He was a very kind man," Hamilton said.

Even in his work as a Chapter 13 trustee, Hamilton still solicited feedback.

"About every three or four months, I would go in to see Judge Janice Carlin and ask her if there was anything she'd like me to do differently in my Chapter 13 operation. She never had anything, but the fact that I asked was important to her."

In addition to soliciting feedback, he was good at providing guidance to others and tried to offer his mentorship along the way.

"Other lawyers had taken care of me, so I tried to take care of others," Hamilton said. "Sometimes I'd even reach out to someone who was struggling and say, 'It looked like you were having a tough time today, would you like to get together and talk that through?'"

As an adjunct professor, Hamilton taught debtor/creditor relations at Washburn University School of Law. He also taught undergraduate Washburn students in the law of mass communications and communication-related topics. He was a guest speaker in various bankruptcy-related classes at the University of Kansas and Washburn, and he was a frequent continuing legal education speaker, giving more than 200 CLE presentations over his career. In fact, through his commitment to helping other attorneys in continuing legal education, he received the 2015 Robert L. Gernon Award for Outstanding Service to continuing legal education in Kansas. The award is presented annually by the Kansas Continuing Legal Education Commission to recognize those who have demonstrated a unique commitment to legal education for lawyers in Kansas and have provided outstanding service to continuing legal education.

In addition, he is a fellow in the American College of Bankruptcy, he is "AV" rated Martindale-Hubble, and is listed in Best Lawyers in America in the field of bankruptcy, 1986-98.

### *A Well-Earned Retirement*

With an abundant caseload, Hamilton discovered it was difficult to take time off for a vacation over the years without constantly being beleaguered with thoughts about what might have been forgotten back at the office. Years of stress, and some recent health concerns, now mostly resolved, convinced him that it was a good time to retire.

"When you're down physically, it's tough. I don't want to fall over on my desk, I want to do a lot of other things," said Hamilton.

Over the years, Hamilton has remained very active running marathons, triathlons, hiking, and biking across Kansas and Iowa. He also spends significant time with his puppies, his grandchildren, and his girlfriend of six years, Barbara Greathouse. The two headed to Ireland and Scotland for a well-deserved vacation this spring.

"I loved practicing law. I enjoyed my work as a lawyer, and I took great pride in what I did," Hamilton said. "But retirement is going to be great."

# News Briefs

## *Recent Graduates Break Record*

Bar exam results from the February exam began arriving this spring. 12 of the 16 graduates from the December class of 2022 sat for the exam. Washburn University School of Law was pleased to learn that all 12 of those students passed their bar exam. This was the first time in school history that recent graduates recorded a 100% pass rate. It's an unprecedented accomplishment as the National Conference of Bar Examiners shared a 1.5 points average decrease compared to the February of 2022 results. **Dean Jeffrey D. Jackson, BBA '89, JD, '92**, shared the news first at an alumni event in Dallas in April as he was finding out the news in real time.

"We have been working diligently over the past year to improve our bar pass rate following a slump in scores," said Jackson. "But a 100% pass rate exceeded even our hopes!"



Photo by Ryan Purcell

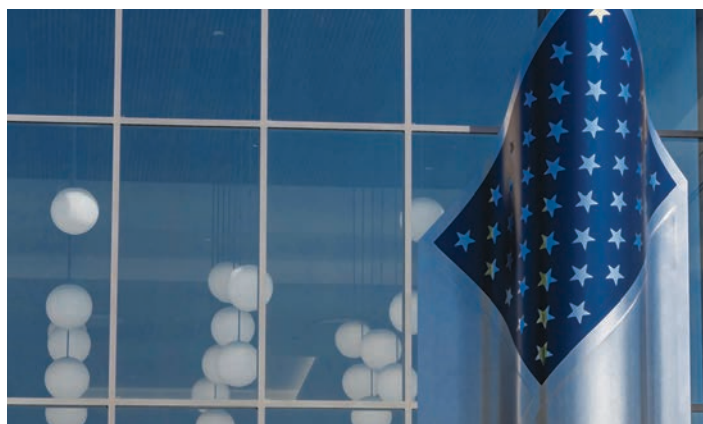
Congratulations to the students on their hard work and justly earned success."

During his time as interim dean, Jackson has worked to implement a new program that would provide BARBRI exam preparation for each student moving forward. The December class was the first to benefit from this partnership which was made possible with the support of the University administration. In the future, the cost of the exam preparation will be included as part of each student's tuition and fees.

## *Law Building Opening*

After a historic fundraising campaign, the new home to Washburn University School of Law will officially open during a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony at 3 p.m., Friday, July 21. All alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends are invited to attend the ceremony at the location of our new \$33 million, 65,000 square foot home on the southeast corner of Washburn University's campus. The opening of this magnificent, state-of-the-art facility is the beginning of a new

chapter in Washburn Law history. The new home will be the region's premier site for legal education and will serve countless Washburn Law students for generations to come. Washburn University and the School of Law would like to extend our gratitude to more than 1,000 alumni and friends of the law school whose dedication and enthusiasm helped turn the dreams of a new home into a reality.



Photos by Jeremy Wangler

# News Briefs

## *Luckert receives honorary doctor of law*

Hon. Marla Luckert, BA '77, JD '80, received an honorary doctor of law from the Washburn University School of Law on May 13, 2023. She was appointed to the Kansas Supreme Court in 2002 and became chief justice in 2019. Luckert's law career started after graduation with Topeka firm Goodell, Stratton, Edmonds and Palmer with a general litigation and health law practice. In 1992, she was appointed a judge of the 3rd Judicial District of Kansas and she became chief judge of the district in 2000. Luckert has served as president of the Kansas Bar Association, the Kansas District Judges Association, the Kansas Women Attorneys Association, the Topeka Bar Association, the Sam A. Crow Inn of Court, and the Women Attorneys Association of Topeka. She has earned several awards for achievement, service or professionalism from those and similar organizations. She has helped the School of Law as an adjunct professor, lecturer, mentor, and more.



Photo by Jeremy Wangler

## *Nationwide Dean's Search Announced*

Washburn University will conduct a national search for the next dean of the Washburn University School of Law beginning this fall. A committee consisting of law school faculty, alumni, students, and university representatives will be appointed to lead the search, and the process is expected to conclude during the spring 2024 semester. Washburn University and the School of Law are committed to finding

a strong candidate to lead the distinguished law school forward. **Professor Jeffrey D. Jackson, BBA '89, JD, '92**, has passionately served as interim dean of Washburn University School of Law since June 2022 and will continue in this important role until a permanent dean is named. The law school community is grateful for Jackson's commitment and enthusiasm while serving in the interim role.

## *Third-Year-Anywhere Program Top in Innovation*

Washburn Law's Third Year Anywhere® program makes Washburn one of the top law schools in the country for student innovation and development, according to Bloomberg Law.

A leader among research platforms providing comprehensive legal information and analysis for the legal profession, Bloomberg Law this year conducted a competitive process to identify the most innovative law schools in U.S. legal education. Washburn Law's Third Year Anywhere® enrollment option was judged to be one of the top eight programs in the category of "student innovation and development," putting

Washburn Law among a group of schools that were found to be best for "pioneering student development in ways that improve the law school experience and foster career readiness."

Washburn Law's Third Year Anywhere® program allows a select group of students to spend their final year of law school anywhere in the country, or the world, working in an externship position under the supervision of a lawyer and conducting their courses online. This experience provides a head start on entering practice in the area of law and jurisdiction in which they intend to work after graduation.

# Legacy Graduates

*May Graduates are Joined by Their Family Who Received Law Degrees at Washburn*

*Photos by Nick Krug*

Commencement for the most recent law graduates was held on May 13. Among those in attendance were Washburn University School of Law alumni to congratulate their family members on receiving their degrees this year. Twelve members

of this year's graduating class were legacy graduates, those whose family members have received law degrees at Washburn before them. Some of the families had their portrait taken to commemorate the special occasion.



Lauren M. Martin, BA '20, JD '23, pictured with her family and a photo of her late father, Richard T. Martin, '71.



Evan Godderz, '23, pictured with his father (left), Judge Eric Godderz, '89, and grandfather (right), Frederick Godderz, BA '66, JD '69.



Jacob Kuckelman, '23, pictured with his uncle (left), Judge Jerry Kuckelman, BA '81, JD '85, and father (right), Mike Kuckelman, BBA '86, JD '90.



Katherine Sittenauer, '23, pictured with her mother, Judge Teresa L. Watson, BA '91, JD '94.

# Golden Reunion

*The Class of 1973 Joined Commencement to Celebrate Their Golden Reunion*

*Photos by Ryan Purcell*

Five members of the Washburn University School of Law class of 1973 participated in commencement as part of their Golden Reunion celebration. Honoring their 50th class reunion, these classmates donned golden graduation regalia to receive their commemorative medallion to mark the occasion. Prior to

participating in the commencement ceremony, they gathered for a dinner the evening before and joined the new graduates at the law celebration reception following graduation.



Pictured left to right: James Reardon, '73, Ronald Wurtz, BA '70, JD '73, James E. Martin, BA '70, JD '73, Judge Steven Hornbaker, BA '70, JD '73, David J. Heinemann, '73.



Hornbaker is congratulated by Washburn University President JuliAnn Mazachek.



Martin and Wurtz as part of the graduation procession.

# Class Actions

*The following alumni are those whose updates were reported to the school before March 31, 2023. Update your address at [alumni@washburnlaw.edu](mailto:alumni@washburnlaw.edu) and submit your news at [washburnlaw.edu/alumninews](http://washburnlaw.edu/alumninews).*

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**1975**

**Dennis D. Kirk**, Falls Church, Virginia, has been named associate director for personnel management at the Heritage Foundation.

**1976**

**The Hon. J. Thomas Marten**, Topeka, received the Judicial Recognition Award by the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers for protecting democratic principles and the fundamental rights of individuals. Martens is a retired federal district court judge who presided over the District of Kansas.

**The Hon. Bill Ossmann**, Topeka, celebrated 30 years as an adjunct professor at Washburn University School of Law. Ossmann is the longest-serving adjunct professor at the law school.

**James P. Rankin**, Topeka, was recognized in The Best Lawyers in America in 2023 in the practice area of administrative/regulatory law, employee benefits (ERISA) law, government relations practice, litigation – ERISA.

**1977**

**The Hon. John L. Weingart**, Hiawatha, Kansas, became chief judge of the 22nd Judicial District in January 2023, filling an unexpired term through the end of 2023. He has been a judge in the district since 2000.

**1983**

**The Hon. Tracy E. (Loiacono) Mitchell**, Olympia, Washington, retired in December 2022 as constitutional court commissioner in Lewis County, Washington. She served for over 24 years, overseeing child dependency, divorce, and family law proceedings.

**1984**

**Kyle K. Rank**, San Antonio, Texas, joined CATIC as senior vice president – national accounts manager. He has more than 30 years of experience in the title insurance industry.

**1985**

**The Hon. Alison K. (Lindsay) Brookins**, Wichita, retired in December 2022 as chief administrative law judge from the Wichita, Kansas, Social Security Administration Office of Hearings Operations. She started in that office in 1991 as an attorney advisor and became chief judge in 2019.

**The Hon. James R. Kepple**, Manhattan, Kansas, has been reappointed by the Kansas Supreme Court as district magistrate to the District Magistrate Judges Certification Committee.

**1986**

**The Hon. Jeffry J. Larson**, Emporia, Kansas, has been appointed by the Kansas Supreme Court as chief judge in the 5th Judicial District.

**1987**

**Kimberly K. (Mahan) Moore**, Wichita, was recently presented a 2022 EDTECH Higher Education Leadership Award in Nashville, Tennessee. She was recognized as an outstanding leader in moving forward digital credentials and badging in higher education. She is a nationally recognized subject matter expert, speaker, and consultant in this discipline.

**1988**

**The Hon. Quintress J. Gilbert**, Macon, Georgia, was appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp to the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice board. She is a juvenile court judge in Bibb County.

**1991**

**The Hon. Anthony J. Powell**, Wichita, formerly retired, was appointed in December by Kansas attorney general-elect, Kris Kobach, to serve as solicitor general.

**1992**

**The Hon. John W. Fresh**, Atchison, Kansas, was appointed in March by Gov. Laura Kelly to a judgeship position in the 1st Judicial District.

**1993**

**Bart M. Botta**, Irvine, California, has been named director of the Irvine office at Fennemore.

**The Hon. Paula D. Hofaker**, Logan, Kansas, has been appointed by Gov. Laura Kelly to the newly created 17th Judicial District judge position.

**1994**

**Tony W. Mattivi**, Topeka, was appointed and confirmed as director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation in February 2023. He spent 20 years as a federal prosecutor and an assistant U.S. attorney.

**1996**

**Joseph E. Donovan**, Severna Park, Maryland, is now partner at Pierce Atwood LLP.

**Scott C. Palecki**, Stilwell, Kansas, is now healthcare partner at Foulston Siefkin LLP.

**1998**

**David A. Bohm**, Apex, North Carolina, has been named executive director of Apex Chamber of Commerce.



## 2000

**The Hon. Jared E. Smith**, Lakeland, Florida, was appointed to the 6th District Court of Appeal in Florida by Gov. Ron DeSantis. He previously served as a judge on the 13th Judicial District Court.

## 2001

**Rachael A. (Christensen) Hamilton**, Kearney, Missouri, is now corporate counsel at Global Payments.

## 2006

**Charles F. Kitt**, Topeka, has been appointed by Shawnee County district attorney, Mike Kagay, to chief deputy district attorney of Shawnee County.

**The Hon. Dominic L. Kujawa**, Belleville, Illinois, is now an associate judge on the 20th Judicial Circuit of Illinois. He was previously a circuit judge on the same circuit.

## 2007

**Daniel Z. Swank**, Bloomfield, New Mexico, has joined Raytheon Missiles & Defense.

**The Hon. Joann M. (Burgener) Woltman**, Overland Park, Kansas, has been appointed by Gov. Laura Kelly to a judgeship in the 10th Judicial District.

## 2008

**Lisa K. (Shore) Garza**, Kansas City, Missouri, is now an attorney at Watton Law Group.

**The Hon. Blake A. Gibson**, Enid, Oklahoma, is now a special judge for the 4th Judicial District of Oklahoma.

**Amber R. Smith**, Topeka, was recognized as one of 2022's "Topeka's Top 20 Under 40."

## 2009

**Lara D. Crow**, Hutchinson, Kansas, recently started with Lonza, a global pharmaceutical manufacturing company, as director, associate general counsel, focusing primarily on its U.S.-based small molecule manufacturing divisions.

## 2010

**Jodi E. Liffin**, Topeka, was recognized as one of 2022's "Topeka's Top 20 Under 40."

**Sean T. Pribyl**, Washington, D.C., has been promoted to partner at Holland & Knight LLP.

**The Hon. Daniel M. Reynolds**, Independence, Kansas, has been elected judge in the 14th Judicial District of Kansas for Montgomery and Chautauqua Counties.

## 2011

**Abigail C. Boudewyns**, Cheyenne, Wyoming, has been named senior assistant attorney general within the Water and Natural Resources Division where she represents the Wyoming State Engineer's Office and Board of Control.

**Justin D. Hocking**, Colorado Springs, Colorado, started in January 2023 as corporate counsel for Active Release Techniques in Colorado Springs.

## 2012

**Alicia Guerrero-Chavez**, Topeka, is now internal investigator for the City of Topeka where she will investigate complaints related to all city departments, employees, and services, along with police-related matters.

**Asel T. Mukeyeva Lindsey**, San Antonio, Texas, has been elected to partner at Dykema.

**Mitchell L. Walter**, Wichita, is now director of the Wichita office of Gilmore & Bell, P.C. public finance law firm. He has been a public finance attorney since 2013.

## 2013

**Kate D. Butler**, Topeka, was recognized as one of 2022's "Topeka's Top 20 Under 40."

**Nickolas C. Templin**, Lawrence, Kansas, has joined Schmitt Law Firm, LLC.

**Amanda R. (Hubbell) Walker**, Wichita, was elected secretary/treasurer of the Kansas Society of CPAs board of directors. She is an associate at Bever Dye, L.C., Attorneys at Law.

## 2016

**John C. Reynolds**, Paola, Kansas, former assistant county attorney in Barton County, was elected as the new Miami County attorney in December.

## 2018

**Abigail L. Hoelting**, Shawnee, Kansas, has been promoted to corporate counsel at MRIGlobal.

**Dennis D. Kirk, II**, Springfield, Missouri, has joined Kutak Rock LLP as an attorney.

## 2019

**Jessica L. Barranco**, Roeland Park, Kansas, has joined Ogletree Deakins as an associate.

**Garrett S. Heath**, Haysville, Kansas, recently became an attorney at DeVaughn James Injury Lawyers in Wichita, Kansas.

**Audrey D. (Garrett) Koehler**, Wichita, has joined Stinson LLP as an associate attorney.

**Kennedy A. J. White**, Holton, Kansas, has joined B. Riley Financial, Inc. as a director.

## 2021

**Reece D. Hiebert**, Walton, Kansas, is now city attorney for Goessel, Kansas. He is also an associate attorney at Adrian and Pankratz law firm in Newton, Kansas.

**Tess E. (Ulrich) Ramirez**, Topeka, has joined Turnbull Law Group, LLC as an attorney.

## 2022

**Hunter L. Hogan**, Colwich, Kansas, has joined Hinkle Law Firm, LLC as an associate attorney.

**Ashley L. McCall**, Topeka, has joined Foulston Siefkin LLP as an associate attorney.

**Brady L. Tien**, Hays, Kansas, has joined Glassman Bird Powell, LLP as an associate.

# In Memoriam

*Washburn Law mourns the passing of the following alumni whose deaths were reported to the school from Nov. 16, 2022, to March 31, 2023.*

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**Wayne C. Hadley**, '49, New Braunfels, Texas, on Feb. 12, 2023, at age 98

**The Hon. John E. Weckel**, '53, Salina, Kansas, on Dec. 29, 2022, at age 94

**Gary J. Kershner**, '65, Tucson, Arizona, on Jan. 4, 2023, at age 82

**Stephen M. Fletcher**, '66, Shawnee, Kansas, on March 1, 2021, at age 80

**C. Mark Cole**, '68, Shenandoah, Iowa, on Jan. 23, 2023, at age 79

**Charles W. Warren**, '70, Hiawatha, Kansas, on Dec. 15, 2022, at age 77

**Otis W. Morrow**, '73, Arkansas City, Kansas, on Jan. 2, 2023, at age 74

**John Randy Mettner, Jr.**, '74, Sebring, Florida, on Dec. 14, 2022, at age 80

**Christopher L. Flattery**, '80, Onaga, Kansas, on March 24, 2023, at age 68

**Terry J. Karl**, '82, Medford, New York, on March 25, 2023, at age 67

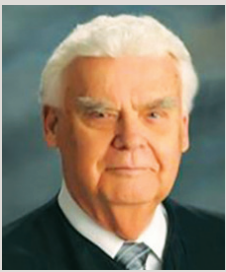
**Jon R. Wilson**, '82, Boise, Idaho, on Dec. 23, 2022, at age 67

**J. Luke Saltos**, '89, Turlock, California, on Jan. 7, 2023, at age 69

**Roger H. Stewart**, '89, Spring Creek, Nevada, on Nov. 21, 2022, at age 73

**David G. Platt**, '17, Springfield, Missouri, on Feb. 22, 2023, at age 40

## Remembering The Hon. Sam A. Crow



**Sam A. Crow, JD '52, H '06**, of Topeka, died on Dec. 2, 2022. He was 96. Crow attended Topeka High School, graduating in 1944 before enlisting in the U.S. Navy where he trained to be a frogman. After WWII, he attended the University of Kansas, where he earned his bachelor's degree. He would go on to graduate from Washburn University

School of Law in 1952. During his time as a student, he became close friends with the future Senator Robert J. Dole, BA '52, JD '52, H '69, H '85. Crow began his legal career as a private practice lawyer, eventually becoming a partner in the law firm of Rooney, Dickinson, Prager & Crow.

In 1973, he applied and was selected by judges to serve as the local United States federal magistrate judge. He served as a United States District Court judge for 41 years.

In 1992, Crow founded the Master of the Topeka American Inn of Court, serving as president from 1992–95. The goal of the Topeka Inn of Court is to improve the skills, professionalism, and ethics of the bench and bar through emphasizing excellence in litigation and legal ethics. Always one to make service a priority, Crow served on the Washburn Law School Association board of governors from 1994–98, establishing multiple endowed scholarship funds at the university, and volunteered with numerous other non-profit organizations.

## Remembering Robert T. Stephan



**Robert T. Stephan, BA '57, JD '57**, of Overland Park, Kansas, died on Jan. 3, 2023. He was 89. Stephan was Kansas' longest-serving attorney general. He served from 1979–95.

A Wichita native and first-generation college student, Stephen began his legal career in private practice

followed by the municipal court and district court bench in Sedgwick County. Throughout his career, he volunteered with numerous organizations including the Society of Attorneys General Emeritus, the Kansas Organization of Victim Assistance, and the Peace Officers Association. He focused a portion of his career on victim rights and was honored with the Allied Professional Award from the National Organization for Victim Assistance among several other accolades.

## Remembering Ronald R. Hein



**Ronald R. Hein, BA '71, JD '74**, of Topeka, died on Dec. 21, 2022. He was 73.

A lifelong resident of Kansas, Hein served southwest Topeka in the Kansas legislature, first as a member of the House of Representatives from 1975–77, then as a senator from 1977–84.

Following his time in the Kansas legislature, he established Hein Law Firm, which later became Hein Governmental Consulting. During his time as a student at Washburn, he was a member of Phi Delta Theta and Phi Alpha Delta. He served on the Washburn Alumni Association board of directors from 1983–85 and remained a regular financial supporter of Washburn throughout his life. He supported several non-profit organizations including the Kansas and Topeka chambers of commerce, the National Kidney Foundation and American Diabetes Association.

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## Remembering Jeffrey L. Ungerer



**Jeffrey L. Ungerer, BBA '79, JD '82**, of Topeka, died on Nov. 15, 2022. He was 68.

Ungerer graduated from Marysville High School prior to attending Washburn, where he graduated summa cum laude with his bachelor's degree and later magna cum laude

with his law degree. While attending the university, he was involved in Phi Kappa Phi and Sagamore Men's Honor Society.

For several years, Ungerer worked as a professor at Washburn while also becoming a partner at Davis, Wright, Unrein, Hummer & McAlister LLP. As an educator, he was honored with the Adjunct Professor of the Year award at the law school. He departed teaching in 1990 and would go on to establish his own firm, specializing in tax and estate planning, a year later. Devoted to giving back, he was involved in several non-profit organizations and served on the Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation board of trustees from 2012–18, participating in several committees. A generous supporter of education, he would also go on to establish the Jeffrey & Mary Ungerer Law Scholarship Fund.

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## Remembering Zachary P. Bealer



**Zachary P. Bealer, '21**, of Kansas City, Missouri, died on Dec. 21, 2022. He was 33.

Bealer received his bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas prior to attending Washburn University School of Law, receiving the Irvine E. Ungerman Award for Excellence in

Clinical Practice as a student intern in the Family Justice

and Immigration area of the Law Clinic. Focused on helping others, he spent time in Guatemala as a medical interpreter and as an AmeriCorps member before he went on to attend law school, becoming fluent in Spanish.

Following graduation, he recently joined the law firm of Matinez Immigration Law, focusing his practice on family-based and humanitarian visas and representing clients in immigration court.



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# SAVE THE DATE



## Swearing-In Ceremony

*Admission to the  
United States Supreme Court Bar*

Friday, Feb. 16, 2024