

Spotlight on Southwestern Illinois Woman Attorneys

Beth Boggs, Managing Partner, Boggs, Avellino, Lach & Boggs LLC, Belleville, Glen Carbon

By **KERRY L. BEISER**

Attorney Beth Boggs treasures the long-term professional relationships



Boggs

some going back nearly two decades - that she's built and maintained with her clients. The managing partner of the 29-attorney firm handles defense of various cases for a variety of companies from Springfield, Ill. to Carbondale. Boggs' firm has offices in Edwardsville, Belleville and Carbondale.

Originally a Chicago native, Boggs, 42, earned her law degree from

Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 1991; her career path began leading toward law when she worked as a bookkeeper for a law firm during her college days.

As founder of the firm in 1999, Boggs says opportunities for women practicing law in and around the Metro East these days are plentiful.

Boggs concentrates her practice in tort litigation. She has extensive experience handling a wide variety of litigation including medical negligence, general negligence, premises liability and insurance disputes. Her trial experience includes the defense of wrongful death, medical malpractice, automobile negligence, transportation defense, civil rights defense, ERISA and premises liability matters. She also routinely handles employment and labor relations matters for the management/employer

side. Boggs is a frequent speaker and author on insurance and legal/medical topics.

She has served as a vice-chairwoman of the American Bar Association's Law and Medicine Section and Corporate Counsel Committee and has published articles in the SIU Law Journal, the Illinois Bar Journal and other publications. Boggs was named one of the most distinguished alumni of Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 2008.

Boggs' staff says she is one of the most diligent, aggressive, intelligent and hard-working attorneys in the region.

Her husband, Darin Boggs, is a partner at the same law firm. Together the two are proud of two charitable organizations they've established and operate across the St. Louis region.

The first is Step it Up. The charity,

which Boggs founded in 2005, distributes free shoes and socks to underprivileged children across St. Louis including the special school district, Head Start program students, selected Catholic schools, Catholic Charities and East Side Heart & Home in East St. Louis. In 2009, the charity will distribute as many as 10,000 pairs of shoes. This year Step it Up has given away shoes to schools as far away as Africa. Information on Step it Up can be found at www.siuatl.com.

The second charity Boggs created is Another Man's Treasure, founded in 2007; the organization helps homeless people find living accommodations via rent assistance and more. A strong network of dedicated volunteers support these year-round charities, Boggs says.

Boggs is an avid sports enthusiast, particularly tennis and golf.

Rene Bassett Butler, President, Bassett Law Office P.C., Wood River

By **KATE GENO**

Rene Bassett Butler grew up watching her father, a local attorney, help people through his legal practice. She recalls



Bassett Butler

how much he assisted his clients in distress and gave them peace of mind. Those experiences inspired her to be a lawyer and reach out to her community in the same way.

At age 16, Butler began working part-time at her father's law office as a clerk and eventually worked full-time during

her summer breaks from college. Fifteen years ago, she graduated from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and began working side by side with her father, Merle Bassett, at Bassett Law Office in Wood River.

The firm, established in 1979, specializes in areas such as eminent domain, wills, trusts and estates, real estate and corporation work. Since 1996, Butler has represented land and business owners affected by highways that are built through their properties. As Illinois 255 and the pipelines changed the landscape of Southwestern Illinois, Butler worked hard to assist the landowners who were affected.

Condemnation action is not your average court case, says Butler. There are few lawyers in the region that

specialize in this area of the law because it is very different from a typical lawsuit, in both verbiage and procedure. This makes it even more important that Butler is available to her clients and community.

Butler, 39, says she enjoys her job because it allows her to help people. She interacts with her clients on a regular basis and has established close bonds with them over the years. When the state tries to take their property, people are very emotional and uncertain of how to proceed. Butler says she listens to her clients and does her best to help them cope with a difficult situation.

Butler also participates in public outreach by giving seminars on the topic of eminent domain. She educates the public and prepares people to take

action if it becomes necessary. She has also spoken to local high school students about pursuing a law career. She is a member of the Illinois State Bar, Madison County Bar and the American Bar Association.

Butler believes strongly in giving back to her community and is currently a board member for Behavioral Health Alternatives, the Alton Women's Home Association, Saint Anthony's Health Center public relations committee, the Beverly Farm Foundation Committee and the Wood River Women's Club.

Butler lives in Bethalto with her husband, Tracy, daughter Kathryn, age 9, and son Nathan, age 6. She participates in triathlons with her husband and is a member of the TriSmart triathlon team.

The Honorable Ann Callis, Madison County Chief Judge, Edwardsville

By **LAURA REED**

Madison County Chief Judge Ann Callis knew early on in life that she



Callis

wanted to go into law after having grown up under the wing of her father, Lance Callis, a well-known Madison County attorney. It wasn't long after she practiced law

that she developed an interest in serving the public as a judge. Callis, 45, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Saint Louis University in 1987, where she later earned her law degree in 1990. She was a law clerk for

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Horace Calvo, worked as an assistant prosecutor in both Madison and St. Clair counties from 1990 through 1994 and was appointed an Associate Judge in 1995. Callis was appointed to the position of Circuit Judge in 1999 and was elected Circuit Judge in 2000. She was the first woman Circuit Judge, and is the first woman Chief Judge in Madison County.

As Chief Judge, Callis is in a leadership position in the Third Judicial Circuit where she serves by managing the Madison County Court system, taking on administrative duties and instituting policies. Callis says her decision to become a judge occurred when it became apparent to her how important it is to serve the public.

Callis is most proud of two of the county's newest divisions: Madison County Truancy Diversion Program

and the Veteran's Court. The Truancy Diversion Program focuses on students considered at risk for truant behavior and uses video games to help kids understand the importance of staying in school. It recently received the 2009 Innovative Leadership Award from the Illinois Probation and Court Services Association and, according to Callis, is responsible for improving offender school attendance rates to 91 percent, comparable to that of the student population as a whole.

Callis is also proud of the county's new Veterans Court, a multi-disciplinary program formed to assist veterans in trouble with drug and alcohol abuse. The court is staffed by veterans who have served in all branches of the United States Armed Forces.

Callis also implemented mandatory alternative dispute resolution for civil

cases under \$50,000, one of the most successful programs of its kind in the state. These cases must first go to arbitration before they can proceed to trial. The program is designed to weed out frivolous lawsuits and expedite the resolution of these disputes.

Callis says the steps she has taken to improve the Third Judicial Courts make the system more transparent by changing the rules on closing files and requiring attorneys from out of state to fill out an application, to name just a few of the changes. The chief judge says she just wants the people of Madison County to garner a better view of the court - which is really ancillary to what her role is, and that is to serve the public.

Callis has two children: Elliot, a student at Cornell University, and Caroline, a student at Triad Senior High School.

Judy Cates, Attorney, Cates Law Firm LLC, Swansea

By **KERRY L. BEISER**

Judy Cates, 57, is a lawyer with nationwide trial experience who focuses



Cates

her practice on representing both plaintiffs and defendants throughout Illinois as a trial attorney. Cates' practice covers a number of areas of complex litigation. She also acts as an independent mediator for parties seeking to resolve litigation

through the alternative dispute resolution process. While many years earlier on in her career were devoted to personal injury litigation, the majority of Cates' practice today involves plaintiff litigation. Representing the victim - particularly representing women and children in the crimes occurring against them - is Cates' passion and provides her with the greatest sense of satisfaction.

Over the past 10 years, Cates' practice has enlarged to representing class action and corporate clients. If a case involves a courtroom, she says, she's interested. While many people may fear the experience of being in a courtroom, Cates embraces it.

The attorney received her bachelor's degree in government from Cornell University and her juris doctor from the Washington University School of Law in 1977. She is licensed to practice law in Illinois, Missouri and Florida. Cates is a past president of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association.

Cates says her biggest accomplishment, from a woman's perspective, is being president of the Illinois Trial Lawyers' Association in 2006-07 as the organization's first woman president; it's arguably the biggest honor she's been given as an attorney.

In 2008, Cates was selected to be a member of the American Trial Lawyers

Association's Top 100 lawyers. She was also honored as one of the Top Illinois Lawyers for 2007, 2008 and 2009. As a result of a class action brought on behalf of physicians, Cates was named a Kentucky Colonel in 2002.

She current teaches as an adjunct professor at both the Washington University School of Law and Saint Louis University's School of Law. She created and teaches a new course known as Complex Litigation.

Cates and her husband, St. Clair County Engineer Darrell Cates, live in Swansea. Their children are: David, an attorney; daughter Lauren, a Wash U student; and Robby, who is in high school.