

The WOMEN



of Anthony Ostlund BAER & LOUWAGIE

Photos By David Ginsberg

"WHY WE STAY"

By Katherine Bishop

Anthony Ostlund is one of the Midwest's largest law firms focused solely on business litigation. Among Anthony Ostlund's lawyers are six powerful women who have chosen the fast-paced practice of business litigation – a specialized, challenging and, most importantly, rewarding legal practice.

As many women opt out of the practice of law altogether, the six attorneys featured in this article choose to stay and in doing so, demonstrate an unparalleled passion for the practice. Learn how these women have managed to maintain and thrive in business litigation.

Mary Knoblauch

Mary Knoblauch has practiced at Anthony Ostlund for nearly her entire legal career. The collegial and team-oriented atmosphere of Anthony Ostlund continues to invigorate Knoblauch each day. “It truly can be said that everyone in the firm works together as a team,” she said. “And, that suits me just fine.”

As Knoblauch’s career developed, she made her connection to the legal community a priority. Motivated by her interest in access to justice for all, she has been active in fundraising efforts for Fund for Legal Aid. She was also appointed by the Minnesota Supreme Court to serve as a Fourth District member of the Minnesota Commission on Judicial Selection. And, as the past chapter president of the Minnesota Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, Knoblauch stays well-rounded.

Knoblauch is lucky in that her husband is also an attorney. “He understands my passion for the law,” she said. Her 11-year-old son has a broad range of interests that keeps Knoblauch on her toes and learning. An annual highlight for the family is mountain climbing and hiking in Glacier National Park in Montana.



Janel Dressen

Since second grade, Janel Dressen wanted to be a lawyer. She was drawn by her perception of law – financial success and the fun of debating in court. Fast forward 30 years – 14 of which she’s been practicing law – and it turns out that most of her perceptions were correct. Being a lawyer is fun.

Now a mother of two children, ages 10 and 8, Dressen strives to teach them that hard work can be fun and makes you feel rich in ways most second graders cannot understand.

“I had been practicing for over five years. I had two children and I’d just been diagnosed with thyroid cancer. I felt like

I needed to slow down and work the traditional 9-5 job,” Dressen said. She left Anthony

Ostlund to work as an in-house litigation counsel for a public corporation. “I soon discovered that all the things I left behind were the very things that motivated me to become a lawyer in the first place.” One year later, Dressen returned to private practice at Anthony Ostlund.

“Ever since my return to private practice, I’ve appreciated the hard work – doing what I love makes me a better, happier mom,” Dressen said. “From my viewpoint, it’s a misconception that you cannot be a mother-litigator and excellent at both.”

For Dressen, the keys to her success are working with people who value family and community and provide flexibility for her to create her own career path on her own terms. “At Anthony Ostlund, the emphasis is not about face time in the office, but on providing our clients high quality service. I can do that before and after my kids’ events and after I drop them off at school with a kiss goodbye and encouragement to have the best day they can have.”



Kristin Rowell

As the oldest of three girls, Kristin Rowell has been called bossy, type-A, the overachiever, energetic and passionate. For the most part, these character traits have served Rowell well in her legal career. Growing up in a small town in Northern Minnesota, people expected Rowell to become a dentist like her father. Although she wanted to be a professional like her dad, she opted to become a lawyer.

Rowell is at her best when speaking in front of groups and advocating for her position. She has always been the go-to for her friends when they need advice, so she thought being a lawyer may suit her perfectly. Luckily, she was right.

Rowell chose business litigation because of the fast-paced and challenging nature of the practice. "To me, business litigation requires focus, determination, hard work, creativity and an unrivaled ability to listen to what your clients have to say," she said. "It

is extremely rewarding to know that I am helping someone out of what is quite possibly the most difficult time in their life." When Rowell is not practicing law, you can usually find her running or at the gym. She enjoys the parallels between competing through exercise and competing in the courtroom.

Rowell has spent most of her career at Anthony Ostlund. While she left for a few years to work elsewhere, the people and the work brought her back to Anthony Ostlund. "I missed it," she said. "I honestly can't imagine working anywhere else. The work and the people are second to none. The firm is truly like a second family to me."



Brooke Anthony

When Brooke Anthony graduated from Northwestern University School of Law, she could not wait to get into court. Five years later, working as an associate at a litigation boutique in Chicago, a budding family threatened to derail her progress. After the birth of her first son in 2009, Anthony and her husband, also a practicing attorney, took stock of their options.

"Minneapolis provided the opportunity to continue doing complex work for smart, sophisticated clients but still teach my kids to ride their bikes in the street," Anthony said, "Chicago had the work I enjoyed, but not the environment that I preferred." Fortunately, it didn't require much convincing for Anthony to move north and join Anthony Ostlund. Anthony's father, Joseph Anthony, founded the firm in 1985.

Anthony knew that she would face particular challenges at Anthony Ostlund but it was a risk she was willing to take. So far, her decision has paid off. As a shareholder, Anthony continues to represent clients in courtrooms around the country, while never straying far from her second full-time job - mom.

Of course, don't ask her to make a choice between the two titles. Anthony firmly believes that women can be both excellent mothers and excellent attorneys. "Both jobs are challenging but I think they can complement one another." Anthony explained "The satisfaction I get from helping my clients develop creative solutions to complicated problems keeps me motivated and focused when I'm at work and when I'm at home with my kids." And that, Anthony says, is the best of both of her worlds.



Shannon Awsumb

Shannon Awsumb was a voracious reader as a child who could never find enough new books to read. She credits her parents for encouraging her passion for learning from an early age, as they were both educators—her dad was a school superintendent and her mom is a high school science teacher.

She is still known by her friends to finish whole books in one sitting. Her need for a challenging and stimulating career led her to practice business litigation, a field in which each case brings unique challenges and issues at an often fast and demanding pace. Awsumb's practice focuses on complex commercial litigation and insurance coverage disputes, primarily those involving fidelity and professional liability claims.

"I was honored to begin my career by clerking for the Honorable John S.W. Lim and the Honorable David G. Campbell. They both taught me valuable lessons," she said. "In particular, both judges exemplified the importance of maintaining core attributes – precision, credibility, civility, and professional and personal integrity. Both judges also

demonstrated strong commitments to their families and communities."

During her nine years at Anthony Ostlund, Awsumb has used the many lessons she learned during those two years clerking as the foundation for her practice. Awsumb balances her practice with an equally, if not more, active and fast-paced family life. Awsumb is married to Jeff Awsumb, an avid Gopher football fan who works in wealth management, and they have two children.

"While preserving a balance between work and family can be challenging, those challenges have made me a better attorney and parent," she said.



Amelia Selvig



Amelia Selvig came to Anthony Ostlund, in part, because she saw a group of talented, passionate, and driven women practicing law. "Women face unique issues in the practice of law and as a newer – and relatively young – attorney, I acknowledge that there are many important life decisions I have yet to make," she said of her career.

Ultimately, as a female attorney, Selvig will have to decide how she wants to define herself. "I expect that this definition will change as I learn and grow, but the same questions remain – what areas of the law do I want to specialize in? What are my professional goals? Do I want

children? Do I want to stay in litigation? Can I do both? These can be pretty scary questions, but I find comfort in the fact that somehow the women at Anthony Ostlund have learned to manage their time between their roles outside of the office while still being brilliant attorneys."

Selvig has asked each of them that burning question: "How do you do it?" Although their initial explanations are varied, essentially, the answer is always the same – we love the work that we do and the people that we work with.

Anthony Ostlund has been the right fit for Selvig; it provides her with five women who have become her mentors and allies. As Selvig starts to make those big life decisions that will ultimately define her and her career, she is encouraged by the fact that she has five dynamic women to help her along the way.

The six powerful women of Anthony Ostlund are an example of an unwavering commitment to the practice and the profession. Learn more about them and their firm at www.anthonystlund.com.