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LAWYERS OF THE YEAR

BETH BOGGS

Commitment to the community

BY AMANDA C. TINNIN

Beth Boggs, managing partner of Boggs, Boggs & Bates, an insurance defense firm in St. Louis, believes that there is more to being a good lawyer than just winning cases.

"If you talk to some of the lawyers in the St. Louis area, what you hear is that we are all there as officers of the court, but we have a responsibility to be involved in the community," she said. "What I have found for my own personal morale, and for the morale of other people working here, it's good to have something to focus on. To me if you can get people focused on positive things sometimes the law doesn't seem all that overwhelming."

In addition to managing her own firm and handling her own cases, Boggs is also involved in several charitable projects in the community, teaches at Webster University and still finds time to play tennis and racquetball.

"It fits together very well," Boggs said of her full schedule. And she credits the legal profession for giving her the opportunities to help those in need.

Boggs graduated in 1991 from SIU Carbondale School of Law, magna cum laude. But the choice to go to law school was not something she planned. Boggs had instead planned to be an accountant and began work as a law firm's book keeper after completing her undergraduate degree.

"Working with them and understanding what they did made me interested in being an attorney," Boggs recalled. "I got to see the people there and what they were able to do and how much they were able to help other people in the community. It really opened my eyes to what you could do as an attorney to help other people."

Boggs went to law school and never looked back. Now she owns the largest Women's Business Enterprise National Council certified firm in the country.

"It's a perfect profession for me. My personality fits the profession and the profession allows me to do things I never imagined I could do," Boggs said. "Owning my own firm and managing my own firm, as a woman going into accounting I never envisioned myself owning my own firm. As soon as I went into law I knew I could own my own firm. The playing field is fairly level. And it's opened the doors for me to do a lot of things to help others as well."

Boggs has encouraged her attorneys to change the negative perception of attorneys by helping the community.

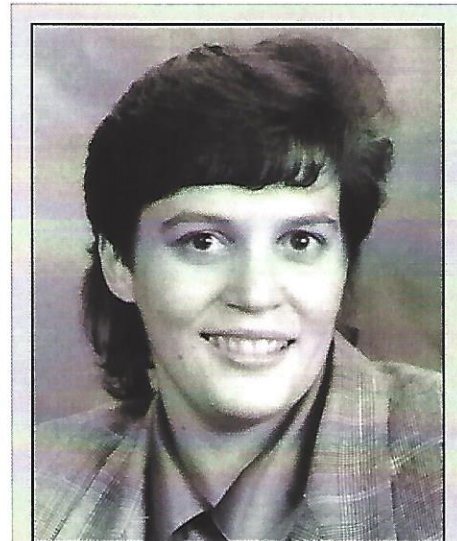
"My office has adopted 11 families for the holidays," she said. "These are single mother families from East St. Louis. We have the wish lists for these families. All of my employees are participating."

And she believes working to make someone's life better, makes the everyday routine more enjoyable.

"It's an opportunity to do something for someone other than yourself," she said. "Not only is everyone focused on doing excellent legal work, but making things better for other people in the community."

In addition to adopting families for the holidays, Boggs's firm has also started a charity called Step It Up, which hopes to make sure all children in the St. Louis public schools have shoes.

Boggs organized a clothing donation for Katrina victims this year that resulted in more than 5,000 pieces of new clothing for victims housed at Alton Memorial Health Center as well as adopted two victims from Mississippi whom she clothed, fed, fixed



AGE: 38

EDUCATION: Juris Doctor, magna cum laude, Southern Illinois University School of Law; Bachelor of Arts, Governors State University in University Park, Ill.

EXPERIENCE: Boggs 99-now; Landau, Omaha & Kopka - 1995-1999 - managing partner of St. Louis office; LaTourette, Schlueter & Byrne - 1993-1995; Sandberg Phoenix & von Gontard - 1991-1993

their car and gave them resources to return home.

She recently also helped a family from Marshall, Mo. After the father returned from the Middle East, the family of five suddenly found itself homeless. Boggs helped them find a home to rent and provided financial assistance and support.

An unsigned nomination, submitted on behalf of the employees of her firm, said: "She is the most generous and hard working person we know." But for Boggs, helping others is just an everyday value she grew up with. Boggs believes being an attorney is a way to realize the goal of reaching out to the community in a variety ways.