

MICHIGAN LAWYERS WEEKLY

A sidebar with ... Kaitlin Brown

By: Thomas Franz
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Southfield attorney Kaitlin A. Brown has found her way to quick success in her legal career, and a top accolade signifies her accomplishments.

Brown, an employment law attorney with Maddin Hauser Roth & Heller PC, has been named the recipient of the 2018 Regeana Myrick Outstanding Young Lawyer Award from the State Bar of Michigan Young Lawyers Section.



Brown

Brown, 36, spoke recently with *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* to discuss her work and what the award means for her career.

What interested you about employment law?

The employment law I'm working on right now is preventative work, which I love. I started out doing litigation and no-fault cases. I was in court arguing motions and drafting briefs, but I really liked working with clients and trying to stop those problems.

I do a lot of advice and counsel. I'm out at client locations doing training. Especially with the #MeToo movement, we've been doing a lot of sexual harassment training and work discrimination training and retaliation. We also update employee documents like employee handbooks, applications and employment agreements. I feel like this is a really powerful way to avoid the costs that come with litigation. I really enjoy my practice right now.

Why did you choose to work on the employer side?

I started out thinking that I would want to be on the employee side and I did start out on that side. I learned a lot, including that when you're on that side, usually the problem has already developed and the ability to actually resolve the problem is limited.

When I had the opportunity to work on the employer side and work with the managers and owners who were really committed to doing great things, then I think I've been able to really make a difference even more.

What are the key things to learn about each business and their industry when you begin working with them?

First we try to understand where they are right now, what documents do they have in place and what exposure have they had in the past. Then, we develop a plan to figure out how to minimize that exposure, and moving forward we may revise those documents or have training.

Sometimes it's a matter of changing management. There are some employees who have had multiple employees fired under them, and in that case it may be a management issue, so we need to evaluate if we have the right people in management.

It's about understanding where the client is now, where they want to be, and how can they create the documents and training and those structures to support that goal.

You originally went to school for studio art, what led you to switch careers?

Even when I was doing studio art, it was all about storytelling for me. I thought there may be another way to tell the stories to the broader public. Making documentaries was fun and they were a lot of hard work. I kept feeling like the end result was a 30- or 60-minute broadcast that was the snappy and entertaining moments of the story rather than the meaningful ones that I learned through the process.

I decided to go to law school to try to help people, and that was my goal. I wanted to tell stories either to a judge or opposing counsel or government agencies to show what was happening, what needed to change.

What's your top memory or project from your documentary-film career?

The top memory would've been a trip to Australia to film a show on cannibalism. It was about how people are sometimes forced to cannibalize sometimes based on their situation and not so much the cultural aspect.

Is earning this award from the State Bar a sign you made the right decision to switch careers?

I was very honored just to be nominated. I know there are a lot of wonderful attorneys in the state, so I was surprised that what I've done would make it to the top of a recognition list. I feel like I've never had the goal to receive this kind of award, but I just continually try to do what's important to me and to serve the community.

Sometimes there's a sacrifice there but I just kept trying to stay focused on what's important to me and it's amazing that could be recognized in this way.