

Wisconsin Law Journal

Strohbehn focused on helping clients through hard times

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Christopher Strohbehn (Staff photo by Kevin Harnack)

Christopher Strohbehn knows he works with clients at a challenging time in their lives.

"You are working with people who are at a difficult time of their lives and that can be hard, but I stay focused on helping them the best I can," said Strohbehn, a partner with Gimbel, Reilly, Guerin & Brown in Milwaukee.

Strohbehn focuses on litigation, primarily on personal injury, commercial, civil, criminal and insurance coverage litigation.

"I really enjoy all aspects of personal injury law," he said. "It's good to help someone in their time of need."

While Strohbehn enjoys his work, he admitted it can be challenging since many of his clients are upset and emotional because of their circumstances.

"I really believe in honesty and am open with my clients even when I have to tell them something they don't want to hear," he said. "Every client is an individual; he or she is not just a number. I always remember that these are real people and their real lives that we are working with on each case. That causes me to do my best."

Strohbehn became interested in pursuing a legal career after watching the TV show "LA Law" growing up.

"I loved how they fought for their clients and since I was always an arguer or the negotiator at home and school it just felt like the best fit," he said.

While TV shows, including "LA Law," often depict dramatic courtroom trials, Strohbehn said only a minority of his cases go to trial.

"There's a lot of cases that settle or go into remediation and I'm fine with that as long as my client is having their needs met," he said. "I do enjoy taking on challenging cases and working on difficult liability cases. It all depends on the insurance companies if a case goes on to trial, but no matter what I'm always fighting for my client."

Wisconsin Law Journal: What makes your work important to you?

Christopher Strohbehn: It upsets me when the big guys take advantage of the little guys. I try to make sure that people get treated fairly. The justice system is neither perfect nor fair. Both the civil and criminal justice systems

need to work in order to improve both their processes and the public's perception. Sadly, the political system that guides improvement of those systems both at the national and local level has been broken into a divide the likes of which I cannot recall. But that is the hand my clients are dealt and they need someone more now than ever to fight on their behalf.

WLJ: Who is your hero in the legal field?

Strohbehn: I am not sure I have one in the 'legal' field. Lincoln is probably it. Being from Illinois I have a picture of Abraham Lincoln in my office that my aunt painted. But I am not sure he is my hero because of what he accomplished as a lawyer, but as a president. What is remarkable is that he was able to accomplish what he did after failing time and time again, in the face of a divided nation, amongst insurmountable loss and stress. Yet still he moved forward. And he was also good at hunting vampires, which obviously is key.

WLJ: What do you do outside of work to deal with stress from the office?

Strohbehn: Spending time with my family and friends is the best way to blow off steam. I like to work out in the yard and mow the lawn. I am also a gamer. But I love to have a few beers and grill for my friends and family. My Korean ribs dominate.

WLJ: What's one thing many people get wrong about what you do?

Strohbehn: The people I advocate for as a personal injury lawyer are not seeking 'jackpot justice' as people may assume from the public perception. No one shows up or makes a call and gets someone hundreds of thousands of dollars for a fender bender. Those people pay for it with actual surgeries, physical disfigurement, loss of mental functioning and lost loved ones. They never truly 'win' because of what they have lost.

WLJ: What's your favorite memory from law school?

Strohbehn: I had a lot of great memories at Marquette, so it is hard to pick a favorite not involving bar review on Thursday night. My favorite was probably my last official memory where I was sworn in at the Supreme Court with my family, friends and fellow classmates. I have a lot of great friends who were my MULS classmates.

WLJ: Is there a certain case that stands out to you?

Strohbehn: I have had many cases over the years that have stayed with me. When you work with everyday people and businesses, memories of cases do not just get filed away. Some clients and their cases have a tendency to stick with you. I have had clients who I represented on and off for probably 10-plus years for varying drug issues stemming from addiction. I have had great resolutions fail because of negative test results. Drug treatment, jail and prison, all have been in the mix to deal with them. You feel powerless to help. You want to find a fix but you can't. I cannot imagine how helpless their parents feel. Sometimes people with addiction, for whatever reason, just cannot beat the demons and stay clean. I see it often and it sticks with me.

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