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NOVEMBER 2016

## Resolved

How the Family Law Group of Weber Gallagher achieves satisfying resolutions for clients

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# Resolved

The Family Law Group of Weber Gallagher uses passion, determination and experience to achieve satisfying resolutions for clients

by PINA RAHILL | photography by JEFF ANDERSON

**In 2009, as a service to its clients, the Philadelphia-based law firm Weber Gallagher started a family law practice.** Instead of building from the ground up, the 25-year-old firm, with more than 100 attorneys in nine offices along the East Coast, acquired a dissolving practice in Norristown that was brimming with well-known talent.

Partner Carolyn Mirabile, who joined Weber Gallagher's Norristown office in 2010, now serves as chair of the firm's Family Law Group. She has been practicing law for as long as Weber Gallagher has been in business, and she has successfully argued cases on appeal before both the Supreme Court and Superior Court of Pennsylvania. Described by peers as a "mover and shaker,"

Mirabile says the Family Law Group includes a "great group of lawyers who are committed to their profession and always trying to improve their practice."

Weber Gallagher's Family Law Group handles matters involving divorce, custody, support, equitable distribution and protection from abuse. Like the other three family law attorneys in the Norristown office, Mirabile drafts prenuptial and postnuptial agreements while counseling clients on avoiding the emotional and financial drains of litigation. In cases where an agreement is not possible, the lawyers draw on their extensive trial and appellate experience.

John Zurzola, who has been practicing law for 17 years, joined Weber Gallagher at the start of this year. He was drawn to the practice by the "quality of the attorneys and cases."

"We specialize in the more complex divorces—divorces that include high-asset cases," says Zurzola, a partner in the firm. "We're in a no-fault state, so the focus shifts to division of assets and debts. That's where things get complicated. If you are a client who has accumulated significant assets or has complex legal issues, you want a group of lawyers experienced with how the courts in the five-county area will decide the case."

Zurzola explains there is significant disparity in how courts look at equitable distribution and alimony. Each judge has discretion in how they can apply the facts of

law to a given case. “Each court has its own rules of thumb,” he says, pointing out that this is where his firm’s deep experience pays off.

Mirabile, for her part, has been “before just about every judge in Montgomery County.” She adds: “We know what’s going on in the five-county area. We can develop the file based on what a particular judge might be looking for. You can’t buy that kind of experience. It’s so valuable to our clients—it’s what clients are paying for.”

The veteran legal team also includes

executives, entertainers, entrepreneurs and professionals. Each attorney knows how to protect client confidentiality and help manage the unwanted publicity that often results from a divorce.

“I really feel that we can deal with so many different aspects of a case,” Mirabile says. “We have attorneys with 25 and 40 years of experience. Every day, we’re in the trenches, developing theories of our cases, preparing, going to court. We’re hands on.”

Mirabile says the one thing she hears

includes nearly 2,200 attorneys who practice in Montgomery County. Mirabile is the fourth female president in the bar’s 131-year history (terms run for one year) and the first family law attorney to hold the association’s top office in more than a decade.

Mirabile intends to advance the bar’s goals, which currently include keeping a watchful eye on legislation aimed at imposing a tax on legal services. Mirabile told *The Legal Intelligencer* that this tax could have a detrimental effect on the pro-



Partner Carolyn Mirabile



Partner John Zurzola



Partner Lynne Gold-Bikin

Lynne Gold-Bikin, a partner with 40 years of experience. Having moved to the Greater Philadelphia Area from New York in the late 1960s, Gold-Bikin has become something of an icon in the area of family law.

“We’re quality lawyers, we know our strengths and we get good results,” says Gold-Bikin, who this year appeared on CBS-Philly/KYW-TV to provide perspective on the high-profile divorce of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. “If we can negotiate it, we do. We’re always open to a fair settlement. If we can’t, we fight very hard for [our clients] in court.”

The firm’s caseload has grown almost exclusively by way of referral—from judges, as well as from past clients the firm has represented.

The firm is also known for representing high-profile clients, including corporate

the most from clients the firm has represented has to do with how they received immediate updates on their case. For a firm that serves as many clients as they do, Mirabile says this kind of turnaround time is practically unheard of.

“Whether it’s a letter from an opposing attorney or an order from the judge, [our clients] hear about it immediately; as soon as we get it, they get it,” she says. “It’s important to keep people informed about their case. It gives them a comfort level.”

This past January, Mirabile, who grew up in Plymouth Meeting and graduated from both Villanova University and Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, became president of the Montgomery Bar Association, the third-largest bar in Pennsylvania behind Philadelphia and Allegheny (Pittsburgh area). The bar association

profession and that the bar will “work with Harrisburg to monitor” the legislation, so that “the bar can quickly organize to defeat the bill.”

Practicing family law can be challenging: Each case is rife with emotion; some cases go on for years; and working with children who are forced to deal with a new reality in which their parents are no longer together is, well, just plain difficult. For Mirabile, the most fulfilling aspects of her job come from “getting [the situation] resolved and seeing the satisfaction of the client; getting to a conclusion that is good for the child, good for the family, good for everybody—a good ending.”

With the talent and deep experience of Mirabile and her colleagues at Weber Gallagher’s Family Law Group, a “good ending” is very likely. ■

**For more information on Weber Gallagher’s Family Law Practice, visit [www.webergallagherfamilylaw.com](http://www.webergallagherfamilylaw.com).**