

2016 WOMEN IN LAW

Attorney at Law Magazine is pleased to introduce some of the prominent and successful women lawyers who set the standards for the industry in Minnesota. In addition to profiling some of the top women in the field, we had the chance to talk about the law firms that support the diversity and flexibility that promote women in the field of law.



Kathleen M. Newman



Nancy E. Murphy



Kathleen M. Newman

The Space & Dignity to Choose

By Haley Freeman

Alexandra L. Michelson



Shaina Praska



an & Associates P.A.

Few family law practitioners possess the breadth of experience or numerous accolades earned by Kathleen M. Newman in her 35-plus years in the profession. She is board certified as a family law trial advocate by the National Board of Trial Advocacy and also a skilled mediator who is adept at resolving family law matters including complex and high-asset divorce, pre-marriage considerations, child custody and appellate issues.



After clerking for a family court judge, practicing with a boutique firm and then rising to partner in a large firm, Newman made the decision to open a family law practice predicated on holistic client representation. Today, she and her team begin by asking clients to tell their story, and then provide the right balance of space and guidance to help people make the best possible choices for themselves and their families. Newman is also a certified life coach, trained at the distinguished Hudson Institute of Santa Barbara. These special skills enhance the care and compassion she and her team convey to each of the families they serve.

Newman is joined by an exceptional group of women lawyers and staff who share her passion for excellence and desire to see families through momentous life changes with confidence and grace. While her legal team is currently made up of all women, Newman says that has not always been the case, as she has previously employed men, as well. But the present band of women are a dynamic force, spanning generations and areas of experience in family law.

Nancy E. Murphy has more than three decades of experience helping Minnesota families with family law matters including divorce, child custody, child support, spousal maintenance and property division. Her caring and competent representation is further enhanced by her pro bono service to local organizations, among them, the Volunteer Lawyers Network, Chrysalis, and Harriet Tubman.

Newman has also welcomed two young women attor-

neys to her practice, Alexandra Michelson and Shaina Praska, each with impeccable credentials and the drive to offer the highest standard of representation.

“One of the reasons they are so amazing is that they both clerked for the family court for very experienced judges,” Newman said. “They bring to the firm not just knowledge about family law, but they really have an intimate knowledge of how the system works in Hennepin County. I find that is invaluable for our clients.”

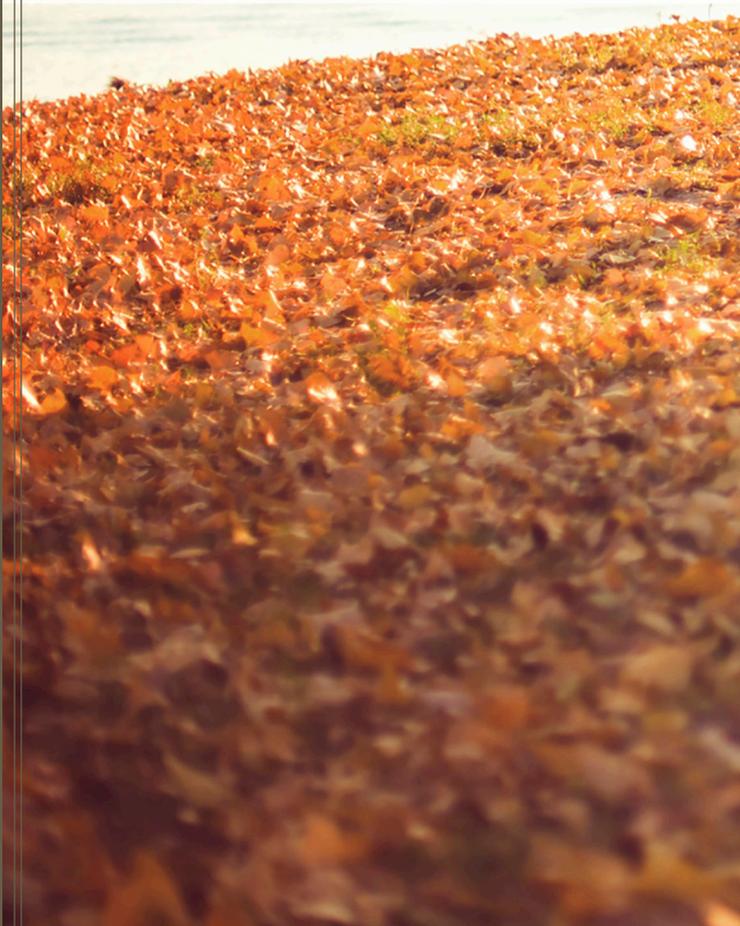
According to Newman, when people are in the throes of divorce, they don’t tend to think about the long-term, or how the decisions they are currently making will impact them in years to come. Newman and her associates are skilled at listening and helping their clients to think past their immediate concerns.

“Even when people want a divorce, a lot of them are focused on the immediacy of their need to get out. People even in their 40s and 50s are not thinking about retirement or planning for the allocation of their assets. They have no idea what their Social Security income will be, or how much they can pull out of their retirement and how long it will last in terms of life expectancy. People come to us in a state I call ‘divorce crazy.’ It’s something almost everybody experiences. They are being asked to make hugely important decisions for their life and their kids’ lives at a time when they are least prepared to make them. I want to help clients get through that. On the other side, they’re not divorce crazy, and they have to live with the consequences of the decisions they made when they were not at their best.”

Although she is a seasoned trial attorney, Newman is a strong proponent of mediation, which allows people to become the architects of their own lives after divorce. “I’ve invested a lot in the firm on mediation training, including in-house training with the other lawyers. I bring them to as many of my mediations as I can to give them hands-on experience. Life coaching skills are also a real help here because it helps people to move off the win-lose mentality and focus on what is realistic. That’s what negotiation means – bringing compromise into the picture. Compromises people make for themselves are almost invariably better than decisions made by a judge who doesn’t know them. Kids can be a big motivator. Most people care enough about their kids to move off their own unhappiness or concerns about money to swallow a lot of compromise for their kids’ sake.”

Newman’s holistic culture is also felt by the people inside the firm, where she has created a supportive practice environment that allows everyone to make choices about the time they devote to their careers, families and personal pursuits.

Michaelson commented, “The firm is very supportive of me balancing my professional and personal goals. We have a marketing team that we are able to utilize for coaching and defining out our professional goals and how to achieve them. I am personally involved in many groups and volunteer work, and that work greatly supported by the firm both financially and emotionally. In



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addition, I am able to go to seminars around the world relating to family law to expand my knowledge and learn from other practitioners. For example, this fall, the firm is sending me to an American Bar Association family law conference in Quebec City, where I will be able to learn from family law practitioners from all over the world.”

Newman added, “I believe that when you're a more well-rounded person and satisfied with life, you are able put more of yourself out there for your clients. You can better listen to them and focus on what they need. It also makes you a better negotiator, because in my mind, angry people don't tend to be good negotiators.”

Early in Newman's career, she experienced a very different kind of legal culture, and she takes a passionate stand for giving women in the legal profession the space and dignity to structure their own careers. “There weren't many women litigators when I started out, and hardly any women judges. There was a lot of expectation to act like our male peers. Most of the mentoring came from men, and mentoring in the male style may not feel comfortable for a woman. As I went along, I realized there were tons of expectations set for me by other people. I feel a responsibility to share my experiences with other women and tell them that it's important to do good work, but it's also important to give attention to your health and your spiritual and intellectual development. Without balance, you burn out. There is no rule about what a young woman lawyer is supposed to be. From my perspective, having been at a large firm for a long time, it's easy to feel like a failure when you can't do the impossible. There will always be that one superstar who seems to be doing it all, but the rest of us are normal people. Avoid the expectation trap and look around and develop a style that works for you.”

**Kathleen M.
Newman
& Associates P.A.**

225 S. 6th Street, Suite 1775
Minneapolis, MN 55402
(612) 746-5525
www.kathynewmanlaw.com

Practice Areas

High-Asset Divorce
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Attorneys

Kathleen M. Newman
Nancy E. Murphy
Alexandra L. Michelson
Shaina Praska

Staff

Paralegal Adrienne Summerfield
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