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Top vote recipients of 2007 win peer approval

Orlando Business Journal

When you need a lawyer, it's important to find one who's right for your case.

On these pages, you'll find the results of Orlando Business Journal's fourth annual Best of the Bar survey, in which Central Florida attorneys recognize others in their profession.

This special report honors the achievements of local lawyers, whether they represent corporate clients or individuals, in civil or criminal cases, inside companies, government agencies or in private firms.

This year, local lawyers nominated hundreds of their peers, many of whom made warm comments and expressed appreciation for the great legal talent in our community.

The nomination rules were designed to ensure that those listed in the report had broad support. Nominations were only accepted from Florida licensed attorneys, so the result truly is a group of folks being honored by their legal peers.

To keep the process fair, we set up a point system. Each out-of-firm nomination was worth one point, while an in-firm nomination was worth half a point. Participants nominating a lawyer in their firm were required to also nominate an equal or greater number of lawyers from outside their own firm. Further, attorneys could not make the list based on self-nominations or solely from in-firm votes.

You may want to keep a copy of this Best of the Bar report on hand, just in case you find yourself in need of a great attorney.

Here are the top 5 percent of the Best of the Bar vote recipients in alphabetical order:

William B. Barnett

Firm: Barnett & Barclay PA

Area of practice: Family law and criminal defense

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Inclusion in The Bar Register of Pre-eminent Lawyers; winner of the Orange County Bar Pro Bono Service award

Todd E. Copeland

Firm: Todd E. Copeland & Associates PA

Area of practice: Products liability, personal injury and wrongful death

Law school: Mercer University School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: The friendships and lifelong bonds we build with our clients from our personal and passionate legal representation during their time of greatest need

Terry Delahunty

Firm: Foley & Lardner LLP

Area of practice: Real estate and land use

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Being able to use my legal skills in connection with my involvement in the community, including serving as a guardian ad litem

Henry "Hank" N. Didier Jr.

Firm: Didier Law Firm PA

Area of practice: Product liability

Law school: Duke University School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Prompting a safety recall of more than 500,000 cars as a direct result of a case, and building a practice dedicated to helping make consumer products safer

John E. Fisher

Firm: Fisher, Rushmer, Werrenrath, Dickson, Talley & Dunlap PA

Area of practice: Commercial and personal injury litigation

Law school: Yale Law School

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Being selected Florida Trial Lawyer of the Year in 2004 by the 11 Florida chapters of the American Board of Trial Advocates

Joseph A. Frein

Firm: Joseph A. Frein PA

Area of practice: Civil litigation

Law school: Stetson University College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Building a successful civil trial practice with a strong emphasis on complex trust and estate litigation

Bruce M. Harris

Firm: Harris, Harris, Bauerle & Sharma

Area of practice: Eminent domain

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Practicing law with my dad and three of my best friends

Gordon H. "Stumpy" Harris

Firm: Harris, Harris, Bauerle & Sharma

Area of practice: Eminent domain and trial law

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Leading a 10-year successful fight to require the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore sand erosion on Brevard County's beaches south of Port Canaveral caused by the corps' digging of the port in the 1950s; successfully defending a first-degree murder case as a court-appointed pro bono lawyer; protecting property owners' constitutional rights to full compensation in taking cases for over 40 years; and assembling outstanding eminent domain talent with my son Bruce to form Harris, Harris, Bauerle & Sharma.

Richard E. Hornsby

Firm: Richard E. Hornsby PA

Area of practice: Criminal defense

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Continuing a family legacy that was begun in 1949 by my father, J. Russell Hornsby, who was also an Orlando criminal defense lawyer.

J. Gregory Humphries

Firm: Shutts & Bowen LLP

Area of practice: Corporate mergers and acquisitions and related corporate, securities and tax work, as well as estate planning matters

Law school: College of William & Mary Marshall Wythe School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Helping my clients achieve their business goals and success

Glenn Klausman

Firm: Jacobs & Goodman PA

Area of practice: Plaintiff's personal injury and insurance law

Law school: Stetson University College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: The gratitude received from multiple clients whom I've helped obtain fair compensation from insurance companies surpasses the individual case accomplishments. Receiving recognition from other attorneys as being among the Best of the Bar for the past three years is also gratifying.

William R. Lowman Jr.

Firm: ShuffieldLowman

Area of practice: Corporate, tax and estate planning

Law school: University of Miami School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Helping clients achieve their goals, both personally and professionally

Scott G. Miller

Firm: Broad and Cassel

Area of practice: Estate planning, estate administration and tax matters

Law school: Boston University School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Helping clients put their mind at ease when dealing with sensitive planning issues

Nick Nanton

Firm: Dicks & Nanton PA; Enterprise & Entertainment Law

Area of practice: Entertainment and business growth

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Being awarded a vote on the Annual Grammy Awards by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences

David S. Oliver

Firm: Baker & Hostetler LLP

Area of practice: Complex commercial litigation

Law school: Florida State University College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Pro bono service to children through the Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association

Anthony W. Palma

Firm: Broad and Cassel

Area of practice: Wills, trust and estates

Law school: Stetson University College of Law

My greatest achievement as lawyer: Starting, developing and growing wills, trusts and estates department in the Broad and Cassel Orlando office

Thomas Andrew Player

Firm: Weiss Legal Group PA

Area of practice: Entertainment law

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Helping musicians navigate the myriad complexities of the rapidly evolving music business while simultaneously educating them to be vigilant guardians of their careers

Paul E. Rosenthal

Firm: Foley & Lardner LLP

Area of practice: Real estate and local government law

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Providing advice and counsel to clients which have helped them avoid litigation

Stefan A. Rubin

Firm: Ruden, McClosky, Smith, Schuster & Russell PA

Area of practice: Corporate, securities, mergers and acquisitions, employment, intellectual property, health

Law school: University of Florida College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Serving on the executive council of the Florida Bar's business law section, and previously serving as chairman of its corporations, securities and financial services committee, which has allowed me to contribute to Florida's business climate by working on and sometimes leading projects to revise Florida's corporate, LLC and partnership laws over the years

Ronald M. Schirtzer

Firm: Foley & Lardner LLP

Area of practice: Commercial litigation

Law school: University of Michigan Law School

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Obtaining defense verdicts in a series of related discrimination cases filed against a major Central Florida employer

Prineet D. Sharma

Firm: Harris, Harris, Bauerle & Sharma

Area of practice: Eminent domain

Law school: Stetson University College of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Representing property owners in multimillion-dollar eminent domain cases

W. Charles Shuffield

Firm: ShuffieldLowman

Area of practice: Business law and estate planning

Law school: University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Developing lifelong relationships with clients

Kevin B. Weiss

Firm: Weiss Legal Group PA

Area of practice: Insurance litigation, appeals and collections

Law school: University of Florida College of Law and Widener University School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Obtaining a significant settlement for the family of a single mother who died as a result of gross negligence. After prevailing at trial against a major corporation, then upholding the decision on appeal before the District Court of Appeal, I was able to obtain financial and educational security for the upbringing of the children.

Lynne R. Wilson

Firm: ShuffieldLowman

Area of practice: Real estate

Law school: Western New England College School of Law

My greatest achievement as a lawyer: Having the opportunity to be a founding shareholder of a successful law firm

Compiled by: Jennifer Alvira, Nicole Blake and Chandni Khatri

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