

DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

A helping hand for hard times

ATTORNEY MEGAN SHERR AIDS FAMILIES FACING CHALLENGES

BY PAULA MOORE

Special to the Business Journal
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As a family law attorney, Megan Sherr often works with people during one of the worst times of their lives – when they're going through a divorce.

Sherr, her partners and the staff at Sherr Puttmann Akins Lamb PC, a law firm in the Denver Tech Center that Sherr founded in 2010, help clients deal with tough issues from child custody to post-decree matters. They also handle all types of personal partnerships, including civil unions.

Sherr's clients describe her as wise, empathetic, compassionate, extremely honest and "a firecracker," according to BestLawyers.com.

"Secondary to somebody's liberty interests, there's nothing more important than family interests," said Sherr, her firm's president and CEO. "They have a forever effect on a family. ... There's lots of emotional charge, and as lawyers, we're the counselors."

Among the latest trends Sherr and her firm face is Colorado's groundbreaking new alimony statute, enacted last year through House Bill 1058 – "Determination of Spousal Maintenance Upon Divorce" and effective in January of this year.

The measure, for the first time, provides formulas for calculating spousal maintenance (sometimes referred to as alimony) based on criteria such as each partner's gross annual income, marital property and financial need. The measure aims to add consistency and predictability to maintenance issues.

Family law attorneys are watching how judges work with the new statute – if they follow it strictly or more loosely. "This is an important trend right now, and we're in the



thick of it," Sherr said.

Another hot issue family lawyers deal with these days is civil unions, which are legal contracts between partners in a relationship that are recognized by government. Colorado passed a civil-union law last year.

Such unions provide the basic rights of a marriage, and are options for same-sex couples who can't legally marry in Colorado. There also are developing issues related to children in civil unions.

Sherr has long helped others. When she was in high school in Westchester County, New York, Sherr started her own philanthropic effort called Kids Who Care, which provided home-cooked meals to an area homeless shelter.

A child of divorce herself, Sherr grew up splitting her time between Colorado, where she was born and where her father lives, and New York, where her mother moved after remarriage.

"I grew up with giving," Sherr said. "My mom has been a philanthropist all my life. She became a professional philanthropist after

she and my dad divorced, with her own consulting firm." Sherr's mother, Vicki Agron, and stepfather currently live mostly in Miami.

Law is basically the family business, though. Sherr's father, Gary Agron, practices securities law practice in metro Denver and one brother, Adam Agron, is co-managing partner at one of Denver's largest law firms, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP. Her other brother, Noah, is a New York City investment banker. Sherr and her siblings all attended the University of Colorado Boulder for undergraduate degrees and the University of Denver for advanced degrees.

As an adult, Sherr's community efforts have varied from working with the Colorado Bar Association's family law section and being a mentor/advisor to family law students at DU's law school.

Her firm has "Denim Day," where each Friday people can wear jeans to work at a cost of \$10 for shareholders and \$5 for everyone else. Money collected over a month goes to a charitable effort, from the Susan G. Komen cancer-fighting or-

MEGAN SHERR

Title: President, CEO, founding shareholder

Age: 40

Company: Sherr Puttmann Akins Lamb PC

Location: Greenwood Village

Website: www.spalfamilylaw.com

Industry: Legal

Education: University of Colorado Boulder, University of Denver

Favorite place: Kaanapali Beach, Maui, Hawaii. "It's my happy place, and where I get to press the start-over button. It gives me the opportunity to get refreshed."

ganization to Toys for Tots, selected by an employee.

Sherr found her passion for the law when she at CU, doing an internship at the Boulder County juvenile detention center. "The internship turned into a job, and I found I loved how the court worked, which spurred me into wanting to be a DA," she said.

Right out of law school, Sherr worked for then-Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter as a deputy DA and head of a grant program for violent juvenile offenders.

From the DA's office, she went with the Gutterman Griffiths PC family law firm.

She and current partners Catherine Puttmann, David Lamb and Tanya Akins left the Gutterman firm to start their own.

The attorney's biggest challenge these days is balancing work, community involvement and her own family life.

"I run a firm – I'm a CEO – and I keep a huge case load," she said. "But I'm also a single mom of three kids, so I need to be home and present and available for them."