

ESQUIRE

PAVING THE WAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN IN FAMILY LAW

Meighan Harmon has been with Schiller DuCanto & Fleck since 2001 and has seen vast changes in both the family law profession and in the firm itself. Harmon is deeply involved with Schiller DuCanto & Fleck's evolution, as they shift from their founding generation to the next generation.

WORDS BY CAITLIN MCCAULEY / PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN SUBAR

In her 20 years at Schiller DuCanto & Fleck, LLP, Meighan Harmon has focused her practice on both litigation and mediation while also contributing to the firm's management. Today, she is a member of the Executive Committee and the first female Managing Partner.

As a Managing Partner, Harmon's role is to oversee the day-to-day operations of the firm, as well as budget and manage the firm's finances. Harmon heads the Executive Committee, comprised of two other senior female partners and one of the firm's founding partners.

"With every decision that gets made, we try to develop a mutual vision of the future, and work to build a consensus and collaboration amongst all of our partners," says Harmon.

As one of the three women who serve on the firm's Executive Committee, Harmon develops the committee's agenda and helps guide the overall strategic vision for the firm. She also conducts the partner's and all attorneys meetings and motivates her team with a "lead by example" approach.

Although her leadership roles and duties at the firm keep her busy, Harmon still dedicates most of her time to her clients. In fact, she's tried the most cases of her career in 2021 alone.

What Harmon has come to appreciate throughout her 20 years with the firm is Schiller DuCanto & Fleck's commitment to progression and change. Although the firm was founded by men forty years ago, today the majority of the partners, as well as members of the Executive Committee, are women. This is a significant shift from when Harmon first joined the firm, and there were no female partners.

"It's a tribute to our founders," says Harmon. "While they were all men, they understood the importance of investing and nurtur-



ing the women of the firm as lawyers and as leaders."

Harmon has witnessed first-hand the rare atmosphere at Schiller DuCanto & Fleck, where there is no male-dominant culture that is typical of most mid to larger size law firms. She emphasizes that being a woman was never a barrier when it came to rising through the ranks with the firm. Harmon and her female colleagues have enjoyed the same opportunities as their male counterparts, especially early on in their careers, when many women choose to start families. Especially since Schiller DuCanto & Fleck is a family law firm, women at the firm know they will be supported when starting a family without fear of being penalized or hindered from cultivating a successful legal career.

Harmon notes the importance for young female lawyers to learn from other successful female leaders like herself. "It gives young women the professional confidence that they'll be okay and that there is a path for them to have both professional and personal success—it may not be easy, but they don't have to choose one over the other." Harmon is a perfect example of that, given that she is a working mother herself.

In terms of the future for the firm, the sky is the limit. Despite being a Chicago-area-based firm, Harmon also sees an uptick in consulting on cases nationally in the firm's future and hopes to see more traveling to try major cases in the coming years. Harmon is excited about continuing to help the next generation of lawyers grow within the firm as she has over the last 20 years. And with additional brand-new office space in Chicago, Schiller DuCanto & Fleck hopes to expand its bench of highly skilled and successful family law attorneys.

The Schiller DuCanto & Fleck, LLP Chicago office is located at 321 N. Clark Street, Suite 1200. For more information, call 312-641-5560 or visit sdflaw.com.