

PUBLICATION

Jenna Bedsole and Linda Klein Honored with 2015 Susan E. Rich Award; Caldwell Collins Receives Work-Life Warrior Award

Authors: Linda A. Klein, Caldwell G. Collins

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Each year, Baker Donelson recognizes a woman attorney for excellence in the promotion of and commitment to women in the legal profession through the Susan E. Rich Award. Baker Donelson established the Susan E. Rich Award in honor of Susan Elliot Rich, a shareholder in the Firm's Chattanooga office, who was the Firm's first woman shareholder, the first woman to be appointed as an office managing shareholder and the first woman appointed to the Firm's board of directors. This year, we presented the award to two deserving women, Jenna Bedsole and Linda Klein.

"Jenna and Linda are outstanding role models for women within the legal profession and beyond," said Christy Tosh Crider, chair of Baker Donelson's Women's Initiative. "Throughout her career, Linda has served as a champion and mentor for women and has influenced and encouraged women to become active in their profession and community. Jenna is a leader, confidante and mentor who has demonstrated an unwavering and tireless commitment to the advancement of women. We're very proud to recognize both of them with this honor."

Managing shareholder of the Firm's Georgia offices, Linda is the American Bar Association's president-elect. In June 1997, she became the first woman to serve as president of the State Bar of Georgia. During her term, she developed and executed a plan to benefit indigent victims of domestic violence through the state's first legislative appropriation for legal services, which resulted in annual state funding for legal services for victims of domestic violence. She is a past president of the Board of Directors' Network, a member of the board of directors of the Southface Energy Institute, and currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Buckhead Coalition. She has held numerous leadership positions for the ABA, including serving as chair of the American Bar Association's House of Delegates (the Association's second ranking officer), as chair of the Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section and as chair of ABA Day, the association's Congressional outreach effort.

Linda is a recipient of the American Bar Association's prestigious Margaret Brent Achievement Award and the State Bar of Georgia's Randolph Thrower Award for Lifetime Achievement in Diversity. She has been recognized with the Sol H. Clark Pro Bono Award and was named to the YWCA Academy of Women Achievers.

A shareholder in the Firm's Birmingham office, Jenna is chair of the Firm's Labor & Employment Group. As co-chair of Baker Donelson's Women's Initiative Programming Committee, she is responsible for developing programs designed to help the Firm's women attorneys further their careers. She previously served as the 2013–2014 chair of the Birmingham Business Alliance Women's Business Council, which works to aid women in the achievement of their professional goals while encouraging a prosperous business community, and is currently serving as chair of the Birmingham Regional Economic Council, the coordinating body for all of the councils of the Birmingham Business Alliance. Jenna is a member of the board of directors for Autism 2 Ability, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that focuses on helping children with autism spectrum disorders to successfully talk, learn and live. She is working with the organization to develop an app, named TALK, designed to help give a voice to all non-verbal individuals.

Jenna is also the executive producer and director of "Stand Up, Speak Out – The Nina Miglionico Story," a feature film documentary on the life and legacy of one of Alabama's first female attorneys. What Jenna began as a short video project about Nina Miglionico – the only woman inducted into the Alabama State Bar Lawyer's Hall of Fame – quickly turned into much more after conducting just a small amount of research. This began the feature film that is "Stand Up, Speak Out," which highlights the path carved by Nina over the course of her trailblazing career.

Baker Donelson has recognized Caldwell G. Collins with the Firm's inaugural Work-Life Warrior Award. An associate in the Firm's Nashville office, Ms. Collins serves as co-chair of Baker Donelson's Women's Initiative Parental Leave Committee. In that role, she spearheaded the development and implementation of the Firm's expanded parental leave policy. Under the new policy, primary caregivers are eligible to take 16 weeks of paid leave, which can be taken consecutively or used intermittently over a 40-week period, while non-primary caregivers are eligible for three weeks of paid leave, which can be taken consecutively or used over a 20-week period. The policy applies to both male and female full-time and regular part-time attorneys.

Due in large part to this progressive parental leave policy, Baker Donelson was recently named among the 50 Best Places to Work for New Dads in a report compiled by *Fatherly*, a digital lifestyle guide for men entering parenthood. The Firm's policy has also been highlighted in numerous articles in publications across Baker Donelson's footprint.

"Caldwell was instrumental in Baker Donelson's adoption of an industry-leading parental leave policy that allows new parents to tailor their leaves to their lives and individual practices," said Christy Tosh Crider. "Her efforts ensure that our attorneys, both men and women, will have significantly greater flexibility and an increased opportunity to achieve work-life balance as new parents."

Caldwell concentrates her practice on products liability and mass tort litigation, health care litigation and business litigation. She is a member of DRI and serves as Book Chair of the ABA Section of Health Care Litigation Committee. Caldwell has been recognized as a "Rising Star" by *Mid-South Super Lawyers*, and in 2011 was named Baker Donelson's Nashville Pro Bono Attorney of the Year and was the recipient of the Firm's Lewis R. Donelson Public Service Award.

More About "Stand Up, Speak Out"

Nina Miglionico was born in Birmingham in 1913, the child of Italian immigrants. She graduated from Woodlawn High School and attended law school at the University of Alabama – one of five women in her graduating class. Nina graduated from law school at age 22, in the middle of the Great Depression, and started her own law firm.

Nina was an early advocate for allowing women to serve on juries in Alabama as well as revising the probate laws of descent and distribution to guarantee women the same rights as men. She fought to eliminate the poll tax, which prevented African-Americans and poor, uneducated whites from exercising their right to vote. What is less known, however, is that the poll tax adversely affected women as well – especially married women. When Nina first reached voting age, her father paid her first poll tax and expressed to her the importance of voting. However, many working men could only afford to pay their own poll tax and women were left disenfranchised.

Nina also represented the state, nationally, as a presidential appointee to the President's Commission on the Status of Women. In that capacity, she recommended passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1964 and

worked to reduce gender bias in the workplace.

In 1963, amidst racial strife and turmoil, Birmingham shifted from a commissioner-based government (exemplified by Police Commissioner Bull Connor, who dominated the system for 20 years) to a mayor-council form of government. Nina Miglionico was elected as one of the nine original city council members. Because of her support for racial reconciliation in the city and her biracial political support, Nina received constant hate mail, death threats and angry phone calls. After Nina worked with the council to revoke Birmingham's segregation ordinances in 1963, a bomb was delivered to her doorstep. Her father, 80 years old at the time, dismantled the bomb with his bare hands.

Nina was undeterred. She served on the city council until 1985, retiring after nearly 23 years. She also served as president of the city council from 1978 to 1981.

In the face of bomb threats, sexism and poverty, Nina lived a life that should be remembered and honored by Alabama.

"As a law student at the University of Alabama, I would walk past the composite photographs of law students from years gone by, not focusing on the fact that as the decades went by the number of women and people of color represented declined until there was only a sea of white men," Jenna Bedsole said. "Miss Nina and those who came after her have paved the way for women and minorities to access the courtroom as lawyers, judges and jurors."