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Baker Donelson Launches Drug And Device Group

By **Abigail Rubenstein**

Law360, New York (March 19, 2009) -- Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz PC has established a multidisciplinary drug, device and life sciences industry service team to combine expertise across practice groups.

The 90 member team consists of attorneys who hail from Baker Donelson's health law, product liability, business, intellectual property, and labor and employment practices.

Attorneys from the group will counsel medical device makers, durable medical equipment and supply companies, pharmaceutical and bioscience companies on interaction with the U.S. Food & Drug Administration, mergers and acquisitions, intellectual property disputes, customs, labor and employment issues, government investigations, product liability issues and other litigation matters.

"A balanced complement to our nationally top-ranked health law and product liability practices, this team harnesses our strengths from across the firm, delivering an integrated approach using multidisciplinary teams. While we have already been providing these capabilities to our clients, having a formalized drug, device and life sciences team allows us to provide a robust program that tremendously enhances our client service firmwide," Richard G. Cowart, head of the Baker Donelson's health law department said in a statement.

Baker Donelson has tapped shareholders J. Carter Thompson Jr., who also leads the firm's product liability and mass tort practice group, and Donna K. Thiel, a health care attorney, to co-chair the new group.

"The ability to handle work in this industry is not new to the firm. We've been doing work for companies in this industry for a very long time, and we are now trying to coordinate so we can share information and knowledge about the industry to better serve those clients," Thompson told Law360.

The attorneys in the group use an internal Web site to share cutting-edge information about issues affecting the industry and will meet quarterly to share their knowledge with one another through substantive presentations. This will enable lawyers in the group to “see the big picture from our clients' perspective,” Thompson said.

The firm intends for the group not only to improve service for current clients but to help attract new ones, according to Thompson. He pointed out that Baker Donelson has launched the group at a time when the economy has caused companies to look to regional firms with expertise to provide the same services as more national firms at a lower cost.

“Our location in the South really allows us to provide the same expertise for significantly lower rates,” Thompson said.

With the recent and pending court decisions as well as the new administration's policy shifts poised to dramatically alter the landscape for companies in the drug, device, and life sciences sector, Thompson believes that promoting expertise across practice groups will help the firm advise its clients as they face new challenges.

“This team demonstrates our firm's wide-ranging capabilities and substantial knowledge in the health care, medical device and life sciences industries. The new administration will yield emerging challenges in the regulatory environment, and we are well-positioned to focus on the critical issues,” Thiel said in a statement.

Baker Donelson employs more than 560 attorneys and public policy advisers in offices stretching from Washington, D.C., to Louisiana.