

Johnson Earns Spot on Reuters' "Super Lawyers" List

Micheline Kelly Johnson, an intellectual property attorney at Baker Donelson and Lookout Mountain resident, was listed among the top 50 female attorneys in the mid-South and among the top 100 attorneys in Tennessee. She was also one of seven Baker Donelson lawyers to be named in Reuters' 2017 edition of "Mid-South Super Lawyers."

Johnson grew up in Huntsville, Ala., where her mother was a principal in the public school system, and her father was a NASA aerospace engineer. There was a plethora of interest in math and science and many astute students in her school; almost half of her high school classmates were National Merit Scholars and one was a Presidential Scholar. "My school and town were very academic and science-minded. So was I. I ended up majoring in chemistry at Spring Hill College in Mobile. I wanted to become an environmental lawyer, but by the

time I was in law school, political changes had eviscerated regulations protecting the environment, and I realized there weren't many jobs in the field," says Johnson.

While in law school at Vanderbilt, Johnson had an opportunity to combine her law studies with those in finance at Vanderbilt's Owen School of Business. As a result, she graduated with both a JD and an MBA, which she feels enabled her to both better understand and represent her clients in business. Upon graduation, Micheline joined a law firm in Atlanta to use her chemistry degree in patent law. Six months later, the intellectual property group of that firm left for a small IP boutique, taking her with them.

After leaving the larger Atlanta firm, Johnson accepted a blind date with a fellow



Micheline Johnson

from Chattanooga. His name was **Doug**, and within the year they were engaged, made the decision to move to Chattanooga and then married. They chose Chattanooga because of the community's emphasis on citizen-led improvement and the resulting close, personal civic engagement of Chattanoogaans. This was the model in which they hoped to raise their future children.

Johnson credits Doug as the biggest influence in her life. "He is the one that got me to move to Lookout Mountain," says Johnson. "He is the reason we are still here. We love it here. The schools, churches, and community programs are great. It is also a great place to raise children." The Johnsons have three grown children. **Mary Lillian**, 26, lives in Chicago and works at Price Waterhouse as a mergers and acquisitions consultant. **Aileen**, 24, is finishing medical school at Emory this year, and **Matthew**, 22, is a marketing and finance specialist at Berkshire Hathaway Homestake Companies in Atlanta.

Johnson's career expertise is extensive, but she is known for helping clients identify and monetize their IP portfolios, as well as for strategizing the global protection of the portfolios as they expand internationally. A vast majority of the clients that Johnson represents are in the Northeast. Her largest client is Avis Budget Group, a car rental company that is reinventing itself as a tech company by strategizing the monetization of its fleet management know-how, and preparing for automated vehicles. She also has long experience with OTC (over-the-counter) pharmaceuticals' IP and through this experience has developed efficiencies and skills that led her to currently manage the largest OTC IP portfolio in the country. Furthermore, she has been

recognized in the "Best Lawyers of America" for her work in copyright law, entertainment law, patent law and trademark law.

Having a flexible schedule is one of the most favorable aspects of her career. "As a new and young mother, I benefitted from having a science background and specialty in IP law when there were very few such attorneys, particularly in smaller cities such as Chattanooga. As a result, I was able to work part-time for years and spend more time with our children," says Johnson. "I also love the new ideas, new issues, and new products that are always emerging in my career. However, being an attorney has also brought a fair amount of stress, but through it all there have been some valuable lessons to be learned. For example, setting artificial deadlines is one of those lessons. It is best for me to not have to worry about the stress of deadlines. Preparing ahead of time is key for me."

Johnson has great advice for college graduates: "Look for change. Anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to it," Johnson says.

Whether inside or outside of her career, Johnson has many interests, hopes and dreams. "I would love to once again ride horses, snow ski or even just bicycle, but having had both hips replaced, in view of gravity, these maybe aren't such good ideas. However, I would love to ride in a hot air balloon and drive a Formula One race car in the Monaco Grand Prix," says Johnson. "I would also love to know more about space, having grown up in a city that was all about space. I love people, so mentoring young men and women is also most interesting and valuable to me. People fascinate and delight me."

Johnson says, "Life is too short. Enjoy who you are with and what you are doing. Always make it fun and do not take yourself too seriously!"

by Hannah Baker

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