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women in real estate 2011

FEATURING BARBARA ALESI, KATHLEEN DEEGAN DICKSON, JUDY LYNN SIMONCIC AND ANDREA TSOUKALAS

Four women attorneys of Forchelli, Curto, Deegan, Schwartz, Mineo, Cohn & Terrana LLP

ba Barbara Alesi

Partner,
Forchelli, Curto,
Deegan, Schwartz,
Mineo, Cohn
& Terrana LLP

What award or recognition has been the most meaningful to you and why?

In early 2010, I accepted the honor of being the 2010 Honoree for Education and Assistance Corp. (EAC), a New York charitable not-for-profit corporation located in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. EAC works with children who have been the victims of abuse and neglect. The 2010 Annual Golf Outing and Dinner was, primarily, focused on raising money for EAC's Child Advocacy Center, located in Islip, on which construction was almost completed. There, children and their families would have the opportunity to meet with the social workers, physicians and counselors of EAC who coordinate with the family court, Suffolk County police and child welfare to provide a safe haven and the necessary emotional and physical support to both the children and their families.

During the various committee meetings and visits to the Child Advocacy Center, I met the dedicated and hard working employees and volunteers at EAC, as well as the men and women in the business community who generously and unselfishly gave of their time and energy to support EAC's mission and to help raise the much needed funds that it needs to accomplish its goals.

The 2010 Golf Outing and Fundraiser was a success and I was honored and privileged to work, side by side, with so many kind and generous people who are doing such good things for the most needy in our community.

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I concentrate my practice in corporate and commercial matters, including mergers and acquisitions, commercial real estate transactions, private placements of securities and mortgage and asset-based financing.

I have been recognized in many Long Island listing by a including Top 50 Most Influential Women in Business (2001), Who's Who in Women in Professional Services (2007), Who's Who in Corporate Law (2009). Most recently, I was selected for the 2010 edition of *New York Super Lawyers*.

kcd Kathleen Deegan Dickson

Partner,
Forchelli, Curto,
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& Terrana LLP

How do you manage the work/life balance?

Being an active land use attorney and a partner in a large law firm, while being a wife and mother of three young children, requires a lot of flexibility and creativity in order to keep both sides of my life in balance. One of my strategies is to focus some of my business generation activities in ways that will benefit or involve my family. My advice to young lawyers has always been to get involved in community or civic activities that interest you. It puts your name and face out there for different audiences and inevitably will result in obtaining new business contacts. I have found that being a member of the school board at my children's school, a board member of the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation which benefits Catholic schools and being active in my community have provided excellent opportunities for me to spend time with my children (volunteering with them at various events and fundraisers), while benefitting my community and my career. Many of the people I've met through these activities have become clients or business referral sources. There are inevitably times when one side or the other receives more attention, but for the most part, I think I have been fairly successful.

I concentrate my practice in the areas of real estate development matters, and, in particular, land use and zoning law. I have an extensive track record of success with and before municipal boards and agencies on significant projects throughout Long Island. Perhaps more importantly, I have a reputation for effectiveness and integrity in the pre-hearing meetings and outreach to municipal planning staffs and civic groups that are now a must in Long Island's current development climate. I am former counsel to the city of Glen Cove Planning and Zoning Boards, and currently represents many developers, property owners, corporations and private individuals in all types of matters involving real property transactions, zoning and land use.

I have been awarded an "AV" legal ability and ethics rating by Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory—the very highest rating this nationally recognized publication has established. This rating is based upon extensive confidential peer review surveys.

I am a member of WEDLI (Women Economic Developers of Long Island), the Nassau County Catholic Lawyer's Guild and the New York Democratic Lawyers Council. I also serve on the Advisory Council of the North Shore University Hospital at Glen Cove, and the Board of Tomorrow's Hope Foundation. Most recently, I was appointed to the All Saints Regional School Board in Glen Cove.

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Partner,
Forchelli, Curto,
Deegan, Schwartz,
Mineo, Cohn
& Terrana LLP

What was your greatest professional accomplishment in 2010?

In the fall of 2010, I was selected by the *Long Island Business News* to be featured in its publication entitled "Who's Who in Women in Professional Services." This annual listing recognizes Long Island's top women professionals in business, education, government and the not-for-profit fields for their business acumen, mentoring and community involvement. It was an honor to be named amongst some of the most influential women in business on long island. I was proud to be named in this category by Long Island's well respected publication which is truly the premier source of business news and data within this region for more than 50 years.

How do you contribute to the industry?

The current state of the economy has affected my profession in the legal industry. As an attorney specializing in land use and zoning, the downturn in the real estate market has left its mark. The principles of supply and demand are present with an abundance of properties available and difficulty securing financing; there are fewer real estate development projects that are being pursued. The current economy also has put a tremendous amount of pressure on attorneys to save costs for clients. More than ever I find that I am aggressively pushing applications through the approval process while at the same time being mindful that the necessary steps are taken to achieve the clients' ultimate goals. Each day a project is delayed it impacts the client financially and in this economy attention to timing is everything. In this market, my goal is to have projects approved as expeditiously and economically for the client as possible. In this economy, I find my role as an advisor to my clients has expanded beyond just counseling them on land use and zoning issues but extends well beyond to financing concerns and the overall financial viability of projects. In addition, I have also actively brought clients together to assist each other in working out deals that they would have previously pursued on their own. In this economy clients are seeking more and more to partner up with other developers so that they can minimize their exposure. In these situations, it is a win-win for everyone involved.

I concentrate my practice in the areas of zoning, land use, environmental, municipal, and real estate law. I represent national franchises, Fortune 500 companies, national corporations, large real estate development companies as well as individual real estate developers in the development of both residential and commercial properties throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

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How do you contribute to your company?

My biggest contribution to the firm last year was my involvement in the formation of the firm's newest practice group—the Veterinary Practice Group (VPG). The VPG was created to focus on the special needs of our veterinarian clients and to disseminate a quarterly newsletter (*The Advocate*) which focuses on those special needs. The VPG is a multi-discipline approach to the practice of veterinary medicine and provides a legal expertise in real estate, corporate, certiorari, litigation, tax, trusts and estates, employment and labor, and land use, zoning and municipal law matters. Our goal is to provide veterinarians with legal advice for all facets of their profession and business.

As with the establishment of any business, there is a land use, zoning and municipal component to the development or expansion of veterinary hospitals, clinics and offices. I have extensive experience in all land use matters and can readily evaluate a client's goals and appear before municipal boards to obtain all requisite approvals for any type of practice group.

Another component of our practice in which I am involved will include representation at administrative hearings before the New York State Education Department's Office of the Professions which investigates and prosecutes professional misconduct for licensed professions in New York State. I, along with VPG members, will meet with officials in Albany in an effort to obtain insight on "acceptable practice standards" and the current perspectives on compliance with those standards. To maintain our broad perspective, members of the VPG participate in various governmental, private and professional organizations that are key players in the veterinary world.

I joined the firm in 2005 and became partner in 2011. I concentrate my practice in zoning, land use, environmental and municipal law matters. I represent a wide variety of clients including national corporate chains, local developers and small business owners in the development of commercial and residential properties. I also have substantial experience in appellate practice and civil litigation. I litigate contract and real estate claims, corporate and partnership disputes, and regulatory claims arising out of building and zoning code violations.

I am general counsel to the Long Island Gasoline Retailers Association, a nationally recognized non-profit trade association with over 600 members. I also serve as counsel to the Village of Kensington Board of Trustees, Zoning Board of Appeals and Architectural Review Board.