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Beth Wiberg Barbosa

Attorney of the Month



Attorney of the Month



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ilbert Alden PLLC is a small firm of award-winning attorneys dedicated to providing reliable, strategic and aggressive advocacy in business, employment and family law matters. With nearly 20 years of experience as a family law practitioner, Beth Barbosa is a firm partner representing clients in complex, high-asset divorce matters, leading them in a dance that demands artistry, empathy and precision.

Beth Wiberg Barbosa

Leading the Dance

By Haley Freeman

Family law is not an afterthought at Gilbert Alden – it is a core part of the firm’s practice. This collaborative group of four attorneys sets aside the formalities common to larger firms, allowing clients to experience the benefit of their collective knowledge and more personal service. “Being able to pull from the experience of my partners is a tremendous advantage for me – and for my clients,” said partner Beth Wiberg Barbosa. “Charlie Alden has a lot of business clients, and it’s helpful to have that piece of law in our practice when I’m dealing with business owners. Matt Gilbert and I have practiced together in the past, and he has a lot of experience with high-asset divorce, as well. Coming here was like coming home for me. I feel most comfortable in a small firm. This is where I can best deliver services to my clients. ... My best work can be done when I have direct, daily contact with my clients. When they call me, I answer! We are simply nimbler and respond more quickly.”

Barbosa began her professional journey with a focus on international human rights and political science, which were her majors at Gustavus Adolphus College. With an emphasis on Latin America politics, she both studied abroad and completed an internship in Mexico. Law school was the next logical step for this natural-born advocate, but after graduating from William Mitchell College of Law, she found few paid opportunities to practice in the area of human rights. She said, “I began working with the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office in the child support division during law school, and while I wasn’t working in human rights, I found another path to fulfill that part of me that tends to want to help people in crisis.”

As a solo practitioner, big-firm associate and small-firm partner, Barbosa has acquired a repertoire of skills that enable her to step into high-asset divorce cases and create solutions with notable dexterity. “I practiced for a while in a smaller firm where we only did family law, and we handled cases for a lot of high net worth individuals and business owners. I found that I loved working with business owners and corporate executives or their spouses because of the financial knowledge I have amassed over the years. I enjoy getting to know their businesses and working

with financial planners, business evaluators and other financial experts to understand the full scope of their income and assets.”

Barbosa’s grasp of financial instruments like profit and loss statements, buy-sell agreements, employment agreements, business tax returns, deferred compensation plans, vesting schedules and stock option plans help her craft a lawful and enduring agreements that are less likely to be disputed later. She has the savvy and experience to advise clients across the business spectrum, from sole proprietors to executives of publicly traded companies. She knows which questions to ask, cutting to the core of what is financially and legally relevant, and she is a good listener.

Recently, Barbosa represented an over-the-road (OTR) truck driver who owns two trucks. His business is complex, but profitable, and she was able to ask the right questions and quickly establish rapport. “His response was, ‘It’s great to see you really know how my business works.’ I have represented other OTR operators and understand how income flows in and out of these businesses. Because I asked specific questions that were unique to his business, including how income flowed from his business into personal accounts, he signed my retainer and hired me.”

Barbosa is a voice for peace and civility in emotionally charged proceedings. “When I decided to practice law, I took a path of helping people in a crisis get on the other side. People often ask me if I get tired of dealing with everybody else’s problems. There are days where I would say yes. But overall, I can advocate without making it personal, which is so much better. I remind myself that my client and their opponent are in the biggest crisis they’ve probably ever faced, and I try to keep perspective. Counsel can make a situation so much worse when they take on the client’s emotions and become adversarial and toxic. At the end of the day, I feel good knowing I’m helping somebody solve a problem. I just had a case where my client was thrilled with the trial results and told me they couldn’t have asked for a better outcome. It feels good to receive that acknowledgement and know I’ve helped them move on to a better place in life.”



**Gilbert Alden PLLC Partners:
Charlie Alden, Beth Wiberg Barbosa
and Matthew Gilbert**

Barbosa expressed that having gone through her own divorce helps her to be a more compassionate advocate. “I know how hard it is to go through the process. I empathize with my clients because I’ve been there. It really helps clients who have never been divorced feel more confident in selecting me as their lawyer because I made it through.”

One lesson she learned from her personal divorce experience is to caution clients against hasty decisions to negotiate away their interests. “Sometimes people just want to get it over with and compromise on certain things. I think I did some of that myself, so I understand how that feels. I’m here to help clients make the right business decisions at a time when emotion can easily cloud the judgment of very smart people. I encourage business owners to look at divorce as a business transaction. I tell them, ‘Let me be your voice of reason. You can be as emotional as you want to be, but when you need to make a decision, would you make it the same way if you were faced with a similar issue in business?’”

Barbosa gives back to the legal profession through service to the Hennepin County Bar Association fourth district ethics committee. Observing the mistakes of her colleagues is a constant reminder to be diligent in her own practice. “I feel like it’s been a great experience for me as a professional, and I’ve learned a lot. Probably the two biggest issues that consistently come before the board involve communication and diligence. I frequently come back to my team and remind them to write things down and take notes. Note taking in client meetings is the only way to show clients you are truly and actively listening to them.

“I just gave a CLE for the MSBA and gave this example: I came back from a mediation where a client was offered, but declined, part of his wife’s retirement. That was fine, but after I got back to the office, I wrote a letter outlining that in mediation he turned down a portion of her retirement, even though he was entitled to it. This way, if he loses his own job and retirement three years later and comes back and says, ‘Why

didn’t you tell me?’ I have a record of my counsel.”

A few years ago, Barbosa began learning Argentine tango and salsa, and she discovered that the skills required to master the dances are not unlike those required to be a good attorney. “Argentine tango is a beautiful and very technical dance. You must do the moves correctly and stay focused. In both Argentine tango and salsa, it is most important to really listen to the music and count the beats. I’m not musically inclined at all, so it took a lot of effort for me to find the heartbeat.”

In social dance situations, Barbosa practices by picking up the dance steps each time with someone new. “I have to trust the person and automatically adjust to their skill level.”

How has this made her a better attorney? “I’ve come to realize that a lot of this is how clients come to me. They are in a very vulnerable state in life, and when they hire me, they must immediately trust me to advocate for them. They allow me to lead the dance because I know the steps that must be taken in the law.”

At a Glance

Gilbert Alden PLLC

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Practice Area

Family Law

Education

Juris Doctor, William Mitchell College
of Law, 1998
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science,
Gustavus Adolphus College, 1995

Professional Memberships

Minnesota State Bar Association
Ramsey County Bar Association
Minnesota Asian Pacific American Bar
Association
Hennepin County Bar Association,
Fourth District Ethics Committee
Minnesota State Bar Association,
Family Law Form Committee

Bar Admissions and Certifications

Minnesota Bar Association, 2002
United States District Court for the
District of Minnesota, 2011
Connecticut Bar Association, 1999
United States District Court for the
District of Minnesota
Certified as a Qualified Neutral under
Rule 114 of the Minnesota General
Rules of Practice

