

TOP Women IN FINANCE 2012

MICHELE VAILLANCOURT

For Michele Vaillancourt, corporate law brings new educational opportunities with every client. From representing a manufacturer of robotic systems to understanding the nuances of electronic scoreboard regulation, Vaillancourt has to be up for anything — and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"The wide variety of questions you get with every situation makes my position exciting," she says, adding that a situation may involve employment law, securities issues, leasing challenges or banking documents. "That kind of variety allows me to become a collaborator in the positive sense of that word. I can be involved in a client's business and help it accomplish its goals, and that's very satisfying."

As a senior shareholder at Winthrop & Weinstine and the first female partner at the firm, Vaillancourt believes that she's learned to grow into her leadership role through the ability to identify business and legal issues accurately and assess situations with an objective view.

In three decades of practice she also has mentored numerous associates, paying particular attention to helping them communicate with clients more effectively. Since being recognized in 2008 as a Top Women in Finance honoree, Vaillancourt has expanded her pro bono and volunteer work, creating even more variety in her life.

Her pro bono work ranges from providing education and advice for the Working Family Resource Center, an organization that assists and educates working families, to assisting the National Council on Family Relations. She even makes time to act as a ski official for the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association, which she has been doing since her children were alpine ski racers in high school.

Not surprisingly, Vaillancourt is interested in adding even more variation to the mix in the years ahead, particularly by involving herself with more nonprofit organizations.

"I feel like there's so much work to do and so much that intrigues me," she says.

—Elizabeth Millard



Name: Michele Vaillancourt

Current title/employer: Senior shareholder, Winthrop & Weinstine (since 1981)

Community involvement and/or mentoring: Pro bono work for Working Family Resource Center, the National Council on Family Relations and the Buck Hill Ski Racing Club

Education: B.A., English, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, (1977); J.D., law, William Mitchell College of Law (1981)

Family: Husband; two children