



WINTHROP & WEINSTINE, P.A.

Photos By David Ginsberg

MAKING A FIRM DIFFERENCE

By Haley Freeman



“A Firm Difference” is more than just a motto at Winthrop & Weinstine – it is the foundation for a philosophy about life and the practice of law. The firm was founded nearly 40 years ago, but it is far from being a stodgy law firm of the past. Since its inception, the founders envisioned a progressive, people-centered culture, where clients would come first and attorneys would work collaboratively to meet their needs. Today, with more than 100 attorneys practicing in its Minneapolis office, the success of this full-service, commercial law firm pivots on the strength of its commitment to client service and professional excellence.

Honoring individual experiences, backgrounds and personal styles are all part of the firm’s commitment to acting in the best interests of people both inside and outside the firm. Winthrop & Weinstine is aided in this effort by its diversity committee, chaired by Tammera Diehm, as a vehicle for investing in and encouraging cohesiveness and innovation among its attorneys and staff. The results speak for themselves. In 2014, and for the last eight years in a row, the *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* named Winthrop & Weinstine one of the city’s Best Places to Work.

Four of Winthrop & Weinstine’s attorneys shared their thoughts about working with the firm and their unique experiences in the practice of law.

What is your proudest accomplishment as a lawyer?

Pfeiffer: Though I have had some big wins in my career, I am most proud of the client service I provide on a day-to-day basis. In the employment consultation part of my practice, my clients call me because they are stressed out or need help with something that is going on in their workplace. I find it very rewarding to be able to help my clients through that stressful episode, provide them counsel and a plan to proceed, and have them feel more calm and better positioned after our call. I had one client say to me that every time he talks to me he feels better! That was one of the highest compliments I had ever been paid.

What has contributed most to your success as an attorney?

Pfeiffer: A strong sense of drive, attention to detail and a sense of humor. I care very much about the work that I do, and that the work product that comes out of our firm is of the very highest quality. But I also try very hard not to take myself too seriously; it can make the day much longer than it needs to be. In this profession often things do not go in a straight line, and you need enough grace and humor to get through it.

What is your proudest accomplishment outside your profession?

Pfeiffer: My friends and my family. Some of my friendships span decades, through many life changes, including marriage and kids. I'm incredibly loyal, and if you are family or a good friend of mine, I will be there



for you no matter what. I am also proud of my marriage and thankful for my husband, particularly as we walk down the path of raising young children together. I treasure all of these relationships; they sustain me, give me support, and help me maintain my sense of humor.

How do you maintain a work-life balance?

Pfeiffer: Winthrop & Weinstine does a great job of allowing flexible schedules; after 15 years of practice I decided to try a 60 percent schedule, to spend more time with my young children and family. I have a billable goal that is 60 percent of the goal for full-time lawyers at my firm, and am in the office on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The firm is incredibly supportive of my schedule, and my clients have been very supportive as well. Internally and externally they all know they can reach me if necessary, but try not to do so on the days I am out of the office.

What changes would you like to see that would improve the practice of law?

Pfeiffer: I think private law firms have to figure out how to retain their women, particularly in the senior ranks. There are still far too many women leaving the profession mid-career. It is important both to law firms and to many clients to have women represented in a firm's senior levels. Firms need to be creative and flexible in their policies and initiatives to make sure they aren't losing great talent.

What is your family background, and how did it contribute to who you are today?

Dayhoff: My parents were and continue to be such wonderful role models for me. My dad owns an agricultural business and my mom is a registered nurse with a wound care specialty practice. Both are incredibly driven and such hard workers. They put a major focus on education and told me that if I did well in school, I could write my own ticket. They fostered and encouraged my desire to go to law school.

What have you found surprising about the practice of law that you didn't anticipate when you started out?

Dayhoff: I don't have any attorneys in my family, so I had no clue what a law practice was really like. In my mind, it was a career that required strong academics, a lot of hard work and long hours, but in the end is financially rewarding. While those things remain true, the practice of law is so much more than simply finding the perfect case and winning the argument. It is about developing relationships with people. In order to be successful at this job, you need a great team of people to support and mentor you. In addition, you really have to get to know your client and their business and become their trusted adviser. I absolutely love this part of practicing law – it is all about relationships.

What has contributed most to your success as an attorney?

Dayhoff: My family and the firm. In addition to the encouragement from my parents, my husband has also been instrumental in my success. His job afforded me the ability and flexibility to attend law school full-time and focus on excelling. He is and continues to be my biggest cheerleader, and is a completely hands-on dad. Without



him and his support, this job would be that much more difficult.

Winthrop & Weinstine has been incredibly supportive of me throughout my career. I had and still have wonderful mentors. Early in my career they encouraged and allowed me to engage in substantive work. Because of the nature of the firm's litigation practice, I had the good fortune to work with a variety of personalities and litigation styles, which was invaluable in developing my skills and approach to litigation.

Can you tell me about the work you do in the community?

Dayhoff: I think it is incredibly important to give back to a community that has afforded me great opportunities. I currently serve as a trustee on the Minnesota Zoological Board. This past April, I chaired the zoo's largest fundraiser, the Beastly Ball. Having young children has made my work on the board even more meaningful.

I am also a board member for the National Association of Women Business Owners – Minnesota chapter, and a member of the Greater Twin Cities United Way Women's Giving group. These organizations have provided me a unique opportunity to connect with and promote other women in the workforce. I feel privileged and honored to work on behalf of all of these women.

What is your proudest accomplishment as a lawyer?

Dayhoff: My proudest accomplishment is winning a multimillion-dollar jury verdict in federal court, after two years of very tenacious litigation on both sides. I had a very worthy opponent, which made the experience that much more rewarding and challenging. I was fortunate to co-chair the trial with an incredibly seasoned and well-respected trial veteran. He was a true mentor – he trusted me to take the case and run with it.

What is your family background, and how did it contribute to who you are today?

Finnern: I grew up in the small town of Madelia, Minnesota. My high school class only had 32 students. Having grown up in a rural area, I learned independence from a young age; I was allowed to explore on my own and rode my bike everywhere I needed to go. I also developed a strong work ethic. I started teaching piano when I was 14, and worked during the summers as a bank teller. My parents also made sure that I had access to opportunities that were not available in Madelia, and often took me to Minneapolis to broaden my horizons, meet new people and get a sense of life in the *big city*.

Tell me what stands out to you about your firm's culture.

Finnern: We have a very collegial and open culture. We are friendly and outgoing, especially for a group of lawyers. You won't find many closed doors around our offices during the workday and senior lawyers are always happy to talk to junior lawyers, whether it be about cases or about the firm itself. We really encourage everyone at the firm to get to know each other. Every month we have "Wine Time," a social gathering that all employees are welcome to attend.

The firm also offers excellent flexibility, which is key. Many of us have young children, care for elderly parents, or are caretakers in some way. I am able to work remotely or different hours if I need to attend to my children's needs. That type of support and autonomy is invaluable.

How do you maintain a work-life balance?

Finnern: Being a working mother in any profession has its challenges, and with a



career as demanding as the law, it's really important to do what is necessary to have a life outside of work. There are three major circumstances that allow me to maintain that balance: a supportive husband who is truly a 50/50 partner, a large network of neighbors and family – it truly does take a village – and the flexibility that the firm offers. Life is definitely crazy, but I love it!

What is your proudest accomplishment as a lawyer?

Finnern: In 2008 when the Great Recession hit, my practice was very real estate focused. I recognized that the Twin Cities had a thriving health care industry, and jumped on the opportunity to develop a practice at Winthrop & Weinstine to serve that industry. I put my time and energy into building a new practice area from almost the ground up. Drawing on my background in commercial litigation, insurance coverage and regulatory issues, I have successfully transformed my practice and now co-chair the firm's health law group.

What changes would you like to see that would improve the practice of law?

Finnern: As with all of us, I would love to see more women at all levels of the legal profession, but especially in law firm senior management and equity partner positions. Those numbers have remained pretty stagnant for many years and I think it is in everyone's best interests to change that. Research has shown that women in leadership positions yield positive results for companies.

What obstacles did you have to overcome to get through law school?

Diehm: When I went to law school, I was a single mother with three children, ages 4, 6 and 8. Balancing a family with a rigorous educational program required not only great time management skills, but a sense of humor and some humility. I learned to focus on the things that really mattered – like reading a book to my kids before bed – rather than ensuring that the laundry was always done and put away. I managed to graduate summa cum laude, run and be elected to the city council and, most importantly, raise great kids!

What have you found surprising about the practice of law that you didn't anticipate when you started out?

Diehm: When I started out as a lawyer, I underestimated the importance of sales and customer service in our profession. As a lawyer, you have the opportunity to work on complex issues with smart, intelligent people, but it is also about developing relationships. Looking back at the jobs I had in high school and college, I often say that working as a waitress was the best preparation for being a lawyer. There are a shocking number of similarities – balancing the needs of various clients, having a support team (and being part of your colleagues' support team!), and handling a work flow that can change very quickly, all with poise and a positive attitude.

What is your proudest accomplishment as a lawyer?

Diehm: I have had the opportunity to work on some very complex real estate transactions with multiple layers of public and private financing. I have also had the opportunity to work on some high-profile political issues that have resulted in recognition. That being said, I think that my proudest accomplishment was when someone who had served as opposing counsel on a transaction called and asked me to represent him in a personal matter. We had each zealously represented our respective clients and it meant a lot to know that he respected my work enough to ask me to represent him personally.



Can you tell me about the work you do in the community?

Diehm: Pro bono work and community service are both very important to me. Volunteering my time reminds me how important lawyers are to the people we serve. Each year, I try to do something that I haven't done before. I serve as a volunteer attorney for LegalCorps, a legal clinic for small businesses and nonprofits. I am also a member of the organization's board of directors and I am the current board president. In addition, I often work with small, community-based organizations that need assistance with tax and regulatory issues. These groups include nonprofits that assist injured military members, an organization improving water quality for schools in the Caribbean and local foundations.

In my community, I am currently serving in my third term as an elected member of the city council for the city of Columbia Heights. I was elected the council president and I enjoy leadership roles on several other local committees and task forces.

What are your hobbies and interests?

Diehm: I love hanging out at our lake cabin and traveling to new places, near and far. Whether it is a weekend up north, a Caribbean island or a trip to Eastern Europe, I look forward to learning more about new places. I realized long ago that planning a trip was almost as much fun as the actual adventure, so I always like to have something on my calendar to look forward to. My husband and I are recent empty-nesters and I am looking forward to having the opportunity to take some new traveling adventures together.

WINTHROP & WEINSTINE, P.A.

Capella Tower

Suite 3500

225 South Sixth Street

Minneapolis, MN 55402

(612) 604 6400

www.winthrop.com