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95 years of success – one client, one community, at a time

The law firm of Archer & Greiner, P.C. (Archer) celebrated its 95th anniversary, recognizing a history that demonstrates a proven commitment to its clients, community and team members. Year by year, the firm has changed with the times, evolving into an organization that understands the benefits of committed and purposeful action in all aspects of business.

"We have been longtime advocates, business partners and trusted advisors to many of the area's businesses, enjoying long-standing relationships that often extend beyond working together," says Archer President Christopher Gibson, who also chairs the firm's Litigation Department. "Our attorneys and staff live where many of our clients are located and are often involved in community and civic activities together. We are first and foremost a South Jersey firm."

Archer Partner Deborah Hays stresses the importance of the firm's community-focused culture. "We see the value in looking at the bigger picture, not just the immediate legal problem, but how it fits into the larger structure and future of both our firm and our clients' organizations," says Hays, business counsel attorney and Chair of the firm's Board of Directors.

When Hays joined the firm more than 30 years ago, it had 60 attorneys in one Haddonfield office, focusing mainly on litigation and corporate practice. Today the firm has over 175 attorneys spread across New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware and Texas plus their new headquarters in Voorhees.

"When Fred Greiner and Morris Archer founded the firm in the 1920s, they were committed to supporting the business and nonprofits in the region," says Hays. "That commitment is a cornerstone of the firm's culture, because those organizations are on the front lines of improving the wellbeing of the communities we serve."

The firm supports a wide range of nonprofits, including United Way, Habitat for Humanity, Boy Scouts of America, the Alice Paul Institute, The American Red Cross and HopeWorks, as well as business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey and the National Association of Women Business Owners - South Jersey Chapter.

"From someone's very first day as an employee, we make it clear that we as a firm are willing to support whatever causes they feel close to," says Hays. "Everyone is aligned on the same overall mission. We want to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our clients."

In addition to support for local nonprofits, Archer's culture also includes an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, Hays adds.

"It's not just because it's the right thing to do," she says. "We serve a diverse population with diverse perspectives on a lot of different issues, and this is fundamental to our efforts to



approach these problems in a way that brings client success and builds long-term relationships with our clients.”

Archer has also established a formal pro bono committee that goes above and beyond state requirements, including running expungement clinics to erase court records that can hamper a person’s ability to get a job or lease an apartment, partnering with employees on their worker’s rights, helping organizations rework contracts and supporting organizations in landlord-tenant disputes.

“We want to feel like we’re working with clients as opposed to working for them,” says Debra Rosen, an Archer partner and environmental law attorney. “The more you understand about people who are different from you, the better you can serve them.”

The firm has brought those efforts in-house as well, through the efforts of their Diversity Committee.

“We love the people we work with, and we want to make it the best working environment we can,” says Rosen.

Archer’s Diversity Committee was established 15 years ago when the firm launched one of the first diversity scholarships in the nation at Rutgers Law School in Camden. Since then, the firm has added a similar scholarship at Temple and Seton Hall Law Schools and increased recruitment in schools that historically serve minority populations.

The firm’s Diversity Advocates enhance these efforts by setting up volunteer opportunities and planning events promoting topics like mental health awareness.

One of the most prominent efforts is the firm’s Women Lawyers’ Network, which offers mentorship opportunities, panel discussions and educational lunch-and-learns for women (and men, if they’d like to attend).

“These events become a sounding board where women can talk freely about the issues they may be facing personally or professionally and get advice from those who have been there before,” says Rosen.

The Women Lawyers’ Network also helped established policies that better support its employees, such as the firm’s parental leave policy that includes leave for adoptive parents and a 12-week leave for new fathers.

And while the women’s group is a strong mentorship opportunity, it is not the only one offered at the firm. Mentorship has always been a part of the firm’s culture, but it was formalized in the early 2000s with an official program.

“When you’re fresh out of law school, it’s essential to have someone to turn to who you feel comfortable with,” says Tom Muccifori, an Archer partner and business litigation attorney. “You

need to be able to ask questions or work through problems with someone who can help guide you.”

Newly hired attorneys attend mentoring and training sessions throughout their first year as part of their onboarding.

“Law school doesn’t necessarily prepare you for private practice,” he says. “Law school does a very good job in teaching students substantive law and how to think and write like lawyers. We help our new associates to understand the difference between the application of the law in theory and how to put that theory into practice.”

The mentorship program has evolved over the years to better fit the needs of all attorneys. The latest version is a dual-approach incorporating one-on-one mentors with an added 360 Cohort program comprised of Cohort Mentor Groups of six to seven attorneys – from first-year attorneys to firm partners – who can turn to each other for advice.

“We want our new attorneys to find success and gratification in their career,” he says. “The transition to our dual approach has allowed for more comprehensive mentoring, training, and supervision and provides more opportunities for feedback. New associates also benefit from the social aspect that comes with the Cohort Mentor Groups.”

Muccifori says the cohort format has been mutually beneficial for all and has enhanced the firm’s quality of work. “Our senior attorneys gain just as much from the newer attorneys, creating the dynamic we were hoping for,” he says.

“We’re seeing our new lawyers progress much more rapidly under this program than in prior years,” adds Muccifori. “As a result, our attorneys are substantially more prepared to deal with the complexities of the practice of law earlier in their careers.”

Many of the firm’s current partners have been with the firm for decades, and the hope is that today’s first-year attorneys will be at the firm 30 years from now, so they can continue a mission that has been strengthened over the past 95 years: To support the community as best they can, through legal work or otherwise.

“We’re not just here for one-off legal needs,” says Hays. “We really are a partner throughout the lifespan of your business organization. Watching people – clients or community members – achieve their goals is how we measure success. We’re passionate about what we do. That’s what keeps us here.” ■



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