

From The Top: Hilary Sefton, lawyer

By David Sharos – As published in the Naperville Sun – March 10, 2013

Hilary Sefton is an attorney who really cares about her clients. As a partner with the Naperville law office of Grunyk & Associates, 200 E. 5th Ave. in Naperville, she reflects the firm's focus, which is the practice of family law.

“We don't instigate problems, but instead try to help families when there are problems,” she said. “My field of law is about helping families find solutions.”

Sefton recently was tabbed as one of Illinois' rising star attorneys by Super Lawyers magazine. According to its website, the magazine offers a rating service of lawyers representing more than 70 practice areas “who have gained high levels of professional achievement and peer recognition.” Less than 2.5 percent of young attorneys in the state are honored as “rising stars” based on “independent research, peer nominations and peer evaluations.”



Hilary Sefton, of the Naperville law office of Grunyk & Associates, P.C., was recently tabbed as one of Illinois' rising star attorneys by Super Lawyers magazine. | Submitted

Sefton, 31, said the honor was humbling and particularly rewarding since it represents the views of peers as well as an endorsements from her clients.

“It's nice that our clients are happy, and they feel I've done a good job, but it's also rewarding that peers thought of me in this way,” she said.

Sefton attended the University of Michigan and later received her law degree from John Marshall Law School in 2007. She admits that being a lawyer wasn't her first career choice, but given her family history, she was probably already hotwired to become one eventually.

“I was a pre-med major in college and worked during the summers with an orthodontist,” she said. “When I finally went to visit a dental school, I realized this wasn't for me. I did some volunteer work with a Chicago volunteer legal services group and really liked it. I took a year off after college and then enrolled in law school. My dad, brother and husband are all attorneys, and I guess for a while, I was trying to avoid being one because everyone expected me to.”

Sefton admits she's heard the criticism that "the world doesn't need another attorney" but argues that many people today have family problems and need her and others' legal expertise.

"I'm not one of these ambulance chasers, but the facts are there are families today with problems, whether it's divorce, adoptions or custody issues, as well as the need to have wills drafted and people like me have to step in," she said. "We are there for the times that are joyful as well as when things are bad. What sets me apart from other types of attorneys is that we want to help families through their problems."

The Super Lawyer distinction, Sefton said, means that she will continue to push herself professionally in hopes of furthering her skills as an attorney and broadening her expertise. Sefton only worked 3-1/2 years with her firm before being made partner, which already puts her five to 10 years ahead of the curve.

"We have a small firm with just five attorneys and five support staff, but typically people make partner after about seven to 10 years," she said. "I think clients have been happy with my work, and while most of my efforts center on divorce cases, I'm hoping to become a 'guardian ad litem,' which means I would represent children in adoption or divorce cases."

Sefton recently completed an adoption case with Wheaton resident Christina King, whose second husband adopted a daughter from her first marriage. King called Sefton a person who is "sensitive, and a real human-being."

"When I went looking for an attorney, I interviewed three of them, and I wanted someone I could bond with and feel comfortable about, as well as someone who could understand the depth of emotions my 15-year-old daughter was going through," King said. "Hilary was a real person that I connected with instantly. I trusted and bonded with her, and she helped through the process that began in September of last year and just ended on Feb. 28."

Sefton said she enjoys the diversity of Naperville and the clients it provides.

"I like the fact that Naperville includes portions of a number of counties and that it provides us families that are diverse and needing our services that address a variety of issues," she said. "It keeps the work interesting."