

Cynthia Ullem Christy

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DES MOINES OFFICE

An attorney or a counselor.

At an educational crossroads, Cynthia Ullem Christy participated in aptitude testing to help her with next steps. “The company uses a research-based protocol for determining people’s innate skills and how their brains naturally process information,” she says. “They told me that I should be a lawyer or a counselor. I tucked that in my back pocket and went along with my life.”

It didn’t stay tucked away. A few years later, Cynthia took the LSAT—she says the logic games and puzzles made studying fun. She scored well and started law school at Drake University Law School, her father’s and grandfather’s alma mater. Both also practiced law in Des Moines.

Now, working primarily on workers’ compensation litigation, Cynthia handles argument summaries, discovery responses, research, and legal analysis. “It’s a field with a lot of nuance,” Cynthia says. “Because of the nature of different workplaces and different injuries, every case is unique. That is fun and interesting and also challenging.”

Counseling wasn’t discarded, though. As an attorney and in volunteer work, Cynthia applies her mediation training. “Mediation is a combination of lawyering and counseling,” she says. “Sometimes what people think they want, what they say they want, isn’t what’s actually important to them. If you ask the right questions and take time to listen, you can often figure out the reasoning or motivation behind what they say they want. Once you know that, it’s easier to create an alternative solution that accomplishes their real goals and is acceptable to the other party too.”

When she started her law career, Cynthia practiced in a large Denver-based firm and thrived on working on big deals. Her practice focused on business transactions including real estate, mergers and acquisitions, employment agreements, estates, securities, and tax.

Then she turned her focus to family. During her children’s growing-up years, Cynthia applied her legal and counseling skills to volunteer projects. “I love volunteer work, and I think it’s really, really important for everyone in our community to be involved in volunteering,” she says. “It was ingrained in me from a very young age and modeled

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PRACTICE AREAS

- Litigation
- Workers’ Compensation

EDUCATION

- DePauw University (B.A., magna cum laude)
- Drake University Law School (J.D., with highest honors)
- Family Law Mediator certification through Polk County Bar Association

BAR ADMISSIONS

- Iowa
- Colorado

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Clerk, State Sen. Tom Shipley, Iowa Senate
- Associate, Holland & Hart, LLP
- Law Clerk, Bradshaw, Fowler, Proctor & Fairgrave, P.C.
- Summer Law Clerk, Ahlers & Cooney P.C.
- Legislative Correspondent, U.S. Sen. Charles E. Grassley

to me by my parents that volunteering is part of our duty as a community member and as a citizen. It is a key part of who I am.”

Her volunteer experiences also contribute to her tactful approach to the law. “I have learned to communicate with and deal with all kinds of people in a positive way,” she says. “People have a lot of different views and ideas. Navigating through them successfully isn’t always easy.”

PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Iowa State Bar Association

Polk County Bar Association

Des Moines Christian School, Urbandale, Iowa, 2013–2021

- Board of Trustees, 2016–2021
- Governance Committee, 2016–2021
- Development Committee, 2016–2017
- Spiritwear Coordinator, 2014–2019
- Athletic Booster Club, 2013–2019

Webster Elementary School, 2006–2017

- Parent Teacher Organization, 2006–2017
- Science Supplies Chair, 2012–2016
- Race Around Webster 5K Volunteer, 2014–2016
- Secretary, 2006–2008
- Classroom Volunteer, 2006–2016

Junior League of Des Moines, 2000–2012

- Board of Directors, 2007–2008
- Mary Louise Smith Women’s Leadership Initiative Graduate
- Gift Mart Holiday Boutique Co-Chair, 2004, 2005
- Gift Mart Holiday Boutique Vendor Chair, 2002, 2003

Plymouth Nursery School, 2002–2009

- Classroom Volunteer

Westminster Preschool, 2002–2006

- Classroom Volunteer

Junior League of Denver, 1998–2001

Junior League of Washington, D.C., 1991–1995

RECOGNITION

Order of the Coif

Drake Law Review

Three American Jurisprudence Awards