

A Few Things We Came Across



Kindness, One Act at a Time

Finding time for community service can be challenging for a busy attorney, especially if they're also juggling parental duties. Charleston, West Virginia, lawyer **Erica Baumgras** has a suggestion for making it manageable. Each year, she says, "I have always tried to focus on at least one organization that means a great deal to me and my community." That includes at least one major project. Along the way, Baumgras, who practices insurance coverage law at Flaherty Sensabaugh Bonasso, has found a few programs that she works with every year.

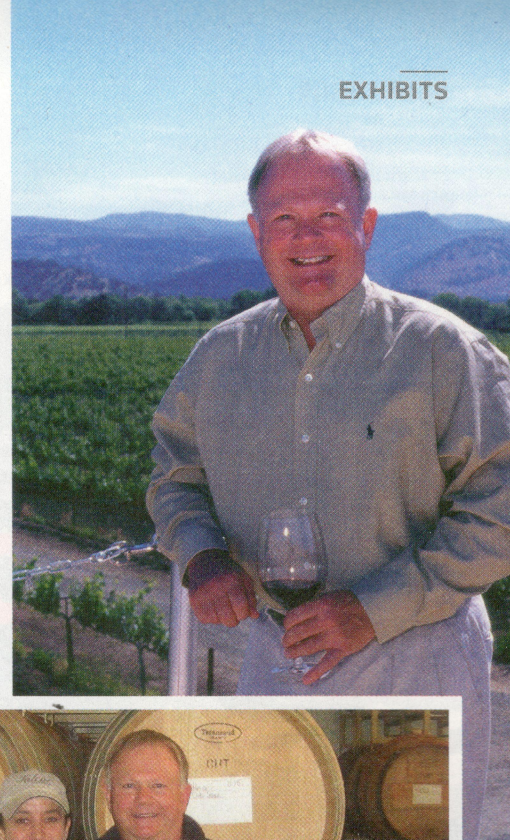
"As my children have gotten older," she adds, "I have involved them in these service projects, hoping to set an example for them, like my parents did for me." Baumgras—along with her husband, attorney Howard Moses Persinger III and their 18-year-old twins, Olivia Paige Persinger and Avery Claire Persinger—pitch in to package and deliver meals to homebound residents in low-income housing developments during the annual Frank Veltri Thanksgiving Dinner. "The dinner was started in 1966 by Charleston landlord Frank Veltri as a way of providing the city's neediest residents with a quality holiday meal," Baumgras says. "When Veltri died in 2001, he left an endowment with the Kanawha Valley Collective so that the dinner could continue." More than 2,000 meals were served last Thanksgiving, both eaten and pickup. Any leftovers go to local shelters.

Baumgras has also coordinated her firm's collection for Toys for Tots annually for the past 17 years. And she does her share of pro bono work, having taken on cases through Legal Aid of West Virginia, as well as regularly volunteering at Legal Aid's Tuesday Legal Connect, where volunteer attorneys provide free legal information and referrals.

"The work has always given me a strong sense of purpose," Baumgras says, "and the feeling of being a part of something larger than myself."

Have an idea for next year's issue?

Email beth.taylor@tr.com



Peterson and wife, Laurie Rich, at the winery.

Settling for Napa

Charleston, West Virginia, attorney **James C. Peterson** developed a taste for wine while at college—a time when he leaned toward Gallo Hearty Burgundy. "It was cheap then, about \$1.50," he says. "Bartles & Jaymes was also a favorite." His palate changed in law school, where he started doing blind tastings. "The wine was provided free of charge by my local Minneapolis wine shop, along with fruit and cheese plates," recalls Peterson, now a plaintiff's class action attorney at Hill, Peterson, Carper, Bee & Deitzler. "Tastings encouraged me to explore a wide variety of red, white and rose blends."

While clerking in district court after law school, Peterson set a personal goal of making a trip to the Burgundy region of France, but the idea turned out to be too costly. "So I settled for Napa," he says. It paid off. In 1995, Peterson hooked up with a winemaker to help make small batches of wine for himself and his friends. "The rest is history," he says. "The wine was branded Falcor, named after my daughter's cockatiel."

Falcor produces up to 12 varietals per year. Most popular? The cabernet sauvignon. It has a wine club, chef's kitchen, events and dinners in the cellar, and tasting rooms. Peterson's wife, Laurie Rich, came on board in 2012 and now runs the business, while Peterson pitches in as time allows. "Both Laurie and I actually work in the vineyards, sell wine and participate in the winemaking process," he says.

Indeed, these days, Peterson, whose legal work has focused exclusively on the opioid litigation for seven years, spends most of his time in Napa, conducting his work remotely. The winery is now 28 years old and counting. And yes, Peterson did finally make it to France.