

Defining Real Success

By Michael Bohn



Mary Beth Crawford



Deborah Russell

How do you define success? For many companies, success is determined solely by monetary return, but for some progressive organizations, helping others is a critical factor when gauging the organization's success. Science has recently backed up that claim. According to smartbusinessonline.com, two-thirds of Americans say they are more likely to trust businesses that are aligned with social issues.

Cummings & Lockwood, a Connecticut-based law firm with satellite offices in both Bonita Springs and Naples, is a firm where profitability is not the sole determination of success. Year after year, these generous attorneys have taken it upon themselves to provide meaningful contributions to their community, and they say that is a huge part of what has made them successful over the years.

The company was founded in 1909 and has one of the largest trusts and estates planning practices in the United States, providing legal counsel to private clients as well as commercial enterprises and national foundations. Among its specialties are organizing charitable giving and establishing legacy planning for private clients. Many people choose to make monetary contributions to charity groups or foundations, and many elicit guidance from an attorney to help coach them through their various options.

Becoming knowledgeable about the various charities and foundations in and around the community is important for these specialized attorneys. Mary Beth Crawford of the Bonita Springs office says the best way to get to know these charities is by getting involved.

"When I first joined the firm in 1998, I was encouraged to become involved within my community," says Mary Beth. "Personally getting involved with these organizations not only helps us connect clients with organizations that are aligned with their values, but it helps us build a deeper connection to our community and its members."

She is far from the exception amongst the men and women of Cummings & Lockwood. Many are board members for some of Collier County's most beloved charities, such as The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, The David Lawrence Center, United Way of Collier County, Angels Undercover, Center of the Arts of Bonita Springs, Community Foundation of Collier County, Planned Giving Committee of Naples Botanical Garden, Immokalee Foundation, Friends of Foster Children, Florida Gulf Coast University Foundation, Drug-Free Col-

lier County and Baby Basics, to name just a few.

Mary Beth says there is one thing all the attorneys agree on: No matter how busy they are with work and their personal lives, if they left out this special part of their lives, they wouldn't be the well-rounded people they are today.

Deborah Russell, Cummings & Lockwood-Naples, has also donated significant time to various non-profits over her 14-year career.

Russell says the personal satisfaction volunteer work produces is immeasurable and well worth the long days. Russell was honored for her many contributions to area charities with the Legacy Award from the American Red Cross in 2012.

"Whatever you give up, whether it's your time or talents, you get back more than you give," says Russell. "Each of us gets personal satisfac-

tion from the time we donate to the non-profits we're working with. Particularly when we see the good that's been done in the community by that particular organization."

Russell says when looking for an organization to donate your time or money to, it is important to find a cause that you are passionate about. These men and women are involved in many different charities and can offer real insight into the inner workings of area non-profits and their various foundations. If you would like to discuss your financial future or receive guidance about donating to area charities, contact the law offices of Cummings & Lockwood today

Eighteen attorneys from Cummings & Lockwood in Connecticut and Florida were listed in The Best Lawyers in America 2016.

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