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Long-term Guidance

Hahn & Hahn LLP has been practicing in Pasadena for more than a century.

By Shane Nelson

Special to the Daily Journal

Founded by two brothers in Pasadena when the city was just 13, Hahn & Hahn LLP will celebrate its 125th anniversary in September.

“A lot of firms don’t make it that long,” partner Lucy A. Vartanian said with a chuckle. “It’s a really big deal.”

Home to 20 attorneys these days, Hahn & Hahn handles everything from transactional business and real estate matters to general litigation, trust and estates, bankruptcy, employment and family law.

“We represent clients that are individuals; we represent families,” Vartanian said. “We also represent business owners and institutional clients, so it’s really all across the board.”

A 2013 Southwestern School of Law graduate, Vartanian said she joined Hahn & Hahn in 2019 because she was looking for a home.

“Hahn & Hahn - it’s a Pasadena institution. Everyone knows the firm,” she said. “And I always regarded the attorneys at Hahn & Hahn as so professional. I think professionalism is an attribute that we’re not seeing in a lot of attorneys these days. And I just really admired the way the attorneys here carried themselves with such integrity.”

The firm’s youngest partner, Vartanian has been practicing family law for 11 years, but she said that wasn’t exactly what she had in mind when she enrolled at Southwestern.

“I went to law school thinking I was going to be an entertainment lawyer like everybody else in Los Angeles,” she recalled, chuckling again. “I took trademark and copyright, and I loved the classes, but I never thought I would enjoy litigating.”



Justin L. Stewart / Special to the LA Daily Journal

After her first taste of litigation in law school, Vartanian said she was hooked, and she noted that’s an element of her family law practice she continues to thoroughly enjoy. Still, her outlook has shifted some.

“I love it when I’m able to take a case from A to Z, and we never see the light of a courtroom,” Vartanian said. “That means we’re all collaborating, and we’re getting along and we’re not wasting money litigating.”

Hahn & Hahn managing partner Christianne F. Kerns said the boutique’s clients love Vartanian.

“Lucy’s fabulous,” Kerns said. “She does such good work, and on top of that, she’s really becoming a leader in the firm.”

A 1985 USC Gould School of Law graduate, Kerns started out

as a finance lawyer at Sheppard Mullin and later honed her general business and real estate skills at a smaller firm before joining Hahn & Hahn in 2003. Early in her career, Kerns said she regularly represented large banks and financial institutions.

“Call it what you will in fancy terms, but ultimately, it’s loaning money and expecting to get repaid,” Kerns explained. “Dealing with clients like that - while the work was fascinating and sophisticated - I didn’t feel like it was particularly helpful to society, so I wanted to branch out.”

Kerns joined Hahn & Hahn because she felt the move would allow her to broaden her business practice.

“Most firms are very narrow. Everybody’s very narrow, and they’ve got their specialty,” she explained. “That’s great, and there are definitely times when I need to bring in specialists, but I feel like I’m adding much better value to our clients in this way because I have a much more strategic perspective.”

Kerns said one of the most fulfilling parts of her practice these days is helping clients in ways she feels make a difference.

“I can actually help people in arenas that matter,” she said. “For me, it’s all about adding value. It’s helping people; it’s working with people who really care about what I’m doing. That’s what it’s about. I don’t see any point to be working this hard if it didn’t matter.”

Kerns has been the Hahn & Hahn managing partner for more than four years, and she is the first woman to hold that position at the firm, which is now majority women owned.

“We are proud of that - if nothing else because it speaks to how far the firm has come from its origins,” Kerns explained. “People like me would not have been hired 60 years ago. We just wouldn’t have been.”

Some of Kerns’ oldest clients include the Pasadena Tournament of Roses and the Huntington Hospital Trust - which owns, manages and operates real property for the benefit of Huntington Hospital in Pasadena. Kerns is also general counsel for the Rose Bowl Game.

“I can’t wear my [USC] Trojan hat; I’m very unbiased” Kerns said with a chuckle about her Rose Bowl work, noting she is a longtime college

football fan. “There are a lot of different legal challenges, which makes the work very interesting and fun.”

Westlake Village trust and estates attorney John C. Lansing has worked on several cases with Hahn & Hahn over the past decade, and said the firm is full of smart attorneys.

“You can expect consistently good work from them,” Lansing said. “They’re all sharp, ethical lawyers and that’s a big deal.”

Lansing also said he’s seen the firm routinely put Vartanian’s philosophy about avoiding unnecessary litigation into practice.

“Even in cases where there’s disagreement in families, I like that they really work to solve it wherever settlement is possible,” Lansing said, “rather than allowing the conflict to continue unnecessarily.”

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