

JANUARY, 2016



NSU Alumna Inspires Others Via Social Media

What happens when a group of like-minded female lawyers in search of opportunities to mentor young women, help each other, and give back to the community all get together online? *Ms. Esquire* is created!

The brainchild of **Rahysa Vargas**, (JD 2014) *Ms. Esquire* is a forum on Facebook in which female attorneys can support each other, guide young women in developing healthy relationships, and finding their passion. The private group is by invitation only but Vargas is happy to invite others to join. Launched on November 2, 2015, one week later it had 1,100 members and is growing rapidly across Florida and the country. Ms. Vargas explained that she and her law firm mentor, **Valerie Barnhart** (JD 2010), a partner at [Kelley Kronenberg](#) in Fort Lauderdale, were discussing how female lawyers still face so many challenges in the workplace from pay equality to promotion and social acceptance.

Vargas is excited at the thought of how her group can impact others. “To me this group has also meant that dreams are possible [and] it doesn't matter that I just graduated, that I'm new to the practice. It means that women will support you ... and we can make strides in our community and our profession by helping each other,” Vargas said. She is an associate at [Kelley Kronenberg](#) in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Originally intended to be for Broward County lawyers, the group spread across Florida and the country almost overnight. Whether seeking a lawyer to help a client, asking for litigation advice, or passing on helpful tips, *Ms. Esquire* has evolved into a platform that unites busy lawyers. Vargas believes everyone should have at least one Mentor.

“NSU Law Professor [Olympia Duhart](#) (JD 2003) inspired me so much when I was a law student,” Vargas said. She continued, “My father worked hard and was a role model for me because he showed me how to work from having nothing and become something. When I met Professor Duhart, she also reinforced this notion. She became my mentor. She encouraged me to work hard and set and achieve goals, just like she did.” Vargas said [Judge Robert Diaz](#) (JD 1984), an Adjunct Professor at NSU Law, was also an excellent mentor who taught her so much about underprivileged youth when she participated in NSU Law's street law program. Vargas realized that she needed to find a way to give back by helping others.

In fact, Vargas and Barnhart are also involved in the “[G.U.R.L.S. Rock](#)” program, which is based in California and is part of the IC Hope Program that helps women of color create a new reality. Locally, the “[HEART](#)” program helps homeless youth. Vargas and Barnhart were astonished to learn that there are approximately 2,700 homeless youths in the Broward County school system and even more in Miami-Dade. They have worked with homeless girls to teach them what a healthy relationship looks like, set boundaries, and find friends that exhibit the traits they want to have. Barnhart added, “*Ms. Esquire* is about empowering yourself by lifting others up.” Those interested in joining *Ms. Esquire* can email Rahysa Vargas at rahysa.vargas@gmail.com



Brian Abelow (JD 2009) has become a partner with [Benson, Mucci & Weiss PL](#) in Coral Springs, FL along with NSU alumnus Mark S. Mucci (JD 1989). His practice focuses on real estate law.

Kwabena Akuffo-Akoto (JD 2005) is the [Director of Legal and Consular Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) in Ghana. Akuffo-Akoto drafts agreements and treaties and other legal documents concerning missions abroad, provides legal counsel to diplomats, and handles other consular services including travel and citizenship.

C. Eric Bearden (JD 2015) has joined [Benson, Mucci & Weiss](#) in Coral Springs, FL as an associate. His colleagues include alumni Mark S. Mucci (JD 1989) and Brian Abelow (JD 2009).

Oral L. Beason (JD 2001), is chief legal officer with [Litai Assets](#) in Pompano Beach, FL and has earned his Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership from Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA.

Abigail Beebe (JD 2006) of [The Law Office of Abigail Beebe, P.A.](#) in West Palm Beach, FL was awarded the Pro Bono Attorney of the Year by Florida Children's First. FCF honors individuals, families and organizations that make a significant difference in the lives of at-risk children within their communities. Beebe was cited for her advocacy efforts on behalf of children in foster care. She is the former president of the Florida Association for Children's Counsel and the former chairwoman of the Children's Issues Committee of the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar and is also the secretary of the executive committee of the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar. Her law practice focuses on Family Law.

Genny Bernstein (JD 2000) with [The Karp Law Firm, P.A.](#) in Palm Beach Gardens, FL presented on VA Benefits at the 18th annual Elder Law Seminar in December 2015 at the Palm Beach County Bar Association. Bernstein is a Certified Elder law attorney, her practice focuses on estate planning & administration, Medicaid planning and elder law.

Lauren Capriotti (JD 2014) is corporate counsel with iCan Benefit Group, LLC in Boca Raton, FL. She wrote "Texting While...Treating? FCC Creates Exemption for Healthcare Provider-Patient Automated Communication." Her article was published in the [Fall 2015 Newsletter of The Florida Bar Health Law Section](#).

Louise Caro (JD 2002) is the managing partner in the newly launched [Napoli Shkolnik, PLLC](#) in Coconut Grove, FL. Her practice focuses on mass tort litigation.

Richard Y. Cheng (JD 2006), a partner at [Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff, & Miller, LLP](#) in its Dallas, TX office was recently made co-head of the firm's Health Care Practice Group. Cheng has an extensive healthcare law practice and focuses on skilled and assisted nursing facilities home health agencies, community hospitals, physician groups, hospices, and rehabilitation providers. He counsels clients on corporate transactions, healthcare regulatory and compliance matters, and administrative appeals. He recently earned his Certification in Healthcare Compliance (CHC) through the Compliance Certification Board (CCB). He was recognized in 2015 as a Texas Rising Star by Thomson Reuters SuperLawyers and as a D Magazine Best Lawyer, both in the healthcare law category. He has been a Street Law Program Lecturer, a volunteer for the First Presbyterian Stewpot Program since 2011, and served as a pro bono attorney for an international asylum case with the Human Rights Initiative.



Jennifer Diaz, (JD 2006), a shareholder at the Miami office of [Becker & Poliakoff](#) and chair of the firm's Customs & International Trade practice group, has been named as one of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's "40 Under 40 Outstanding Lawyers of South Florida."

Kristina Davis Forst (JD 2012) with [Roig Lawyers](#) in Deerfield Beach obtained the Florida Health Care Risk Management License from the State of Florida and has been approved by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration.

Jeff Gluck (JD 2007) opened his own law practice, Gluck Law Group (www.GluckIP.com) in Los Angeles, CA. He focuses his practice on representing artists and designers enforcing their intellectual property rights. Recent cases involved lawsuits against [Katy Perry](#) and fashion designer [Roberto Cavalli](#).

Adam Scott Goldberg, (JD 1995), partner at Krause & Goldberg, PA in Weston, FL <http://krauseandgoldberg.com/> wrote *When Charitable Gift Agreements Go Bad: Why a Morals Clause Should be Contained in Every Charitable Gift Agreement* that was published in The Florida Bar Journal's December 2015 edition ([Vol. 89 No. 10 at page 48](#)). Goldberg's practice areas include estate planning, probate, tax, and charitable organizations. He holds an LL.M. degree in Estate Planning from the University of Miami. Krause and Goldberg also handles real estate and business law transaction matters.

Chad B. Gordon (JD 2013) is an associate with [Burns White](#) in its Philadelphia, PA office. Gordon works with third-party administrators, insurance carriers and self-insured employers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey to help them achieve expeditious and favorable solutions to their workers' compensation claims. Prior to joining Burns White, Gordon was a litigation associate with a focus on consumer fraud, civil rights and employment law. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Bar and New Jersey Bar.

Leeza D. Gotkin (JD 2014) has joined [Roig Lawyers](#) in Deerfield Beach, FL as an associate focusing on personal injury protection/no-fault litigation.

Steve Graves (JD 1992), a board certified criminal trial attorney with the Public Defender's Office in Orlando, FL published the e-book "To Tell or Not To Tell: Protecting Confidential Communications" that deals with the clergy privilege; the psychotherapist privilege; and the mandatory reporting of child abuse.

Jamaal Jones (JD 2011) is an associate with [Lubell Rosen](#) in Miami, FL where he practices in the area of health law. He wrote an article that was published in The Florida Bar Health Law Section's Fall Newsletter entitled, "[Telemedicine and Its Intersection with Mobile Health Apps and Wearable Tech](#)".

Sandy Karlan (JD 1978) formerly a Circuit Judge in Miami-Dade County, FL and now with the [Center for Conflict Resolution](#) in Miami, has been appointed to the executive council of The First Family Law American Inn of Court.

Kristen M. Lynch (JD 2000) has joined [Lubell Rosen](#) in Ft. Lauderdale, FL as a partner, handling probates, guardianships, and estate and retirement planning.

James L Martz, III (JD 1995), a Circuit Judge in the 15th Judicial Circuit Juvenile Division in Palm Beach County, FL was the subject of The Florida Bar News article, "[Florida Judge Assists Emerging Democracies](#)" The article describes his volunteer work in Rwanda with the U.S. Agency for International Development, fighting corruption in foreign countries with emerging democracies.



Sarahnell Murphy (JD 1995) Assistant State Attorney in the 17th Judicial Circuit, Broward County, FL is the ASA in Charge (ASAC), County Court Division Chief. She is also co-presenting “*The Balancing Act: Managing Work & Life in a 24/7/365 World*” on January 22, 2016 as part of the monthly Law Center Plus: Continuing Your Legal Education seminar series.

Stephen G. Mellor (JD 2007) with [Roig Lawyers](#) in Deerfield Beach, FL has become a mentor with the Nova Southeastern University (NSU), Shepard Broad College of Law Mentoring Program. He is also co-presenting “*The Balancing Act: Managing Work & Life in a 24/7/365 World*” on January 22, 2016 as part of the monthly Law Center Plus: Continuing Your Legal Education seminar series.

Maria T. Santi (JD 2015) joined the Fort Lauderdale, FL office of [Kelley Kronenberg](#). Her practice focuses on Third Party Insurance Defense, General Liability, and Workers’ Compensation matters. She is fluent in Spanish and conversational in French and Portuguese.

David W. Singer (JD 1980) with [David W. Singer & Associates, P.A.](#) in Hollywood, FL has been awarded the 2015 Community Service Award in Broward County from the Broward American Federation of Labor — Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) for service to nonprofits.

Justin Seekamp (JD 2011) joined [Cole, Scott and Kissane, PA](#) in Orlando, FL as an associate. His areas of practice are primarily focused on general civil litigation, insurance representation, catastrophic and personal injury, vehicle negligence, personal injury protection (PIP), and SIU fraud litigation.

Nalini Singh (JD 2007) and has opened [Jackson Singh](#) in Boca Raton, FL focusing on real estate law.

Sorrya M. Solages-Jones (JD 2002) has opened [SMS|JONES LAW, PLLC](#) in Wellington, FL with a focus on appellate and trial support, civil litigation, and veterans’ affairs.

Richard A. St. Denis (JD 1983) of Boulder, Colorado, was named a [CNN Hero](#) for his work with the [World Access Project](#) in Mexico. A retired attorney, and a disabled veteran of the US Air Force, he has worked since 1997 to help provide wheelchairs worldwide to persons with disabilities. His inspiration came when he was invited to speak in Mexico and observed a 17-year-old girl being carried by her mother because they could not afford a wheelchair. From 1997 until 2004, St. Denis would drive a van with about a dozen donated wheelchairs to Mexico and distribute them to people with disabilities. He now runs a nonprofit, World Access Project, which provides refurbished mobility equipment to people in Rural Mexican towns.

Matthew Thibaut (JD 2001) a partner with [Ciklin, Lubitz & O’Connell](#) in West Palm Beach, FL presented on Securities Law and Exploitation of the Elderly at the 18th annual Elder Law Seminar in December 2015 at the Palm Beach County Bar Association. Thibaut’s practice focuses on securities, litigation and employment law.

Daisy B. Thurbin (JD 1983) is the author of a number of books in a series entitled, “[Samantha Duncun Mysteries](#).” She lives just outside London, England.

Daniel A. Velasquez (JD 2010) has joined [Latham, Shuker, Eden & Beaudine](#) in Orlando, FL as an associate in the bankruptcy department.



Tova N. Verchow (JD 2015) has joined [Gladstone & Weissman](#) as an associate attorney. Verchow will dedicate her practice to family law.

Ethan Wall (JD 2007) has opened [The Social Media Law Firm](#) in Miami, FL dedicated exclusively to providing solutions to social media legal issues. Wall serves as a Director on the NSU Law Alumni Association Board of Directors and he is an Adjunct Professor of Law at NSU.

Jane West (JD 1998) is managing partner with [Jane West Law, P.L.](#), in St. Augustine, FL. Her practice focuses on environmental, land use and real estate issues. She became the founding member of the St. Johns County Association for Women Lawyers and is serving as president.

In Memoriam

Robert Elder (JD 1996) passed away on December 4, 2015. ([Obituary](#)) He was of counsel to [Crary Buchanan](#) in Stuart, FL. His practice included civil litigation, including construction lien law and construction defects, commercial disputes, real property disputes, probate, wills and trust litigation, creditors' rights and UCC-1 matters as adopted by the Florida Statutes. He was married to Elyse (Rispoli) Elder, Esq. (JD 1996) and lived in Sewalls's Point, FL with Elyse and their three children.

Tegan Slaton (JD 1990) passed away December 27, 2015 in Key West, FL. He was a retired Circuit Judge in the 16th Judicial Circuit (Monroe County, FL). Judge Slaton had a long career of service as a public defender, traffic magistrate, family court mediator, hearing officer, special magistrate, and circuit judge. Through the years, his passion for protecting children was foremost in his work as he handled dependency, dissolution of marriage, and child support cases as a lawyer and while on the bench. He is survived by his wife, Rosemary Enright, a public defender in Monroe County, FL.

