



Ellen Gregory sees many similarities between her legal work and her research/writing efforts on behalf of the Chamber.



2006 Volunteer of the Year Ellen Gregory

In her college studies at Princeton and in law school at UCLA, it's safe to say that Ellen Gregory was not required to take a juggling class. It may have been helpful, however, as she strives to balance her current work, family and numerous volunteer responsibilities.

Gregory works part-time as an attorney at Ice Miller in Indianapolis, a position she has held since 1997. Her focus areas are environmental law and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cases.

Family includes her husband and two sons, ages 11 and seven. She is a volunteer coordinator and assistant for various school and extracurricular activities, including a tutoring program for inner-city children.

For the Indiana Chamber, Gregory has been a part of the Ice Miller team for the last three editions of the popular *Safety & Health Guide for Indiana Business*. She will serve as the primary author for the sixth edition and has agreed to write a new publication focusing on disaster planning, response and recovery.

Danielle Beck, director of publications, explains that she and the Chamber have the opportunity to work with a number of industry experts on the regulatory compliance publications. Gregory deserves special mention, in part, "because of her interest and excitement in this new project. She has dedicated countless hours to research, and her willingness to make suggestions and go beyond the basic requirements to serve our Chamber members and customers."

Earlier this year, Gregory was an enthusiastic participant in a special Chamber/Ice Miller day at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for current and past publication purchasers. She fielded legal questions from the guests and assisted them with their workplace issues and concerns.

"That was a great event. People had very interesting questions," Gregory recalls. Many (of the questions) were human resources related. When we write this book, we try to slant it toward the HR segment."

Gregory points out the broad responsibilities that often fall to HR professionals. "I like the fact that companies that get these books are going to have someplace to start. People can pick out areas they need information on and get the basics. We can tell people where to go on the OSHA web site for more information."

Perfect match

The legal work and the writing efforts go hand-in-hand in many cases. Gregory says she may have already completed work on a case that dealt with the issues she is writing about. Or, research that takes place now may be put to use in a legal matter a few months down the line.

"It works both ways. I love doing the research, and I love doing the writing," Gregory states. "I always say 'Yes,' because it is something I enjoy. A week or two after, I usually get all of these cases to work on." That's when home, the local Starbucks or even the school facilities between volunteer efforts become alternative work sites.

By Tom Schuman

S.R. "Chic" Born is the author of the original *Safety & Health Guide for Indiana Business* and a longtime advocate for the Chamber and its communications efforts with the business community. He and Gregory collaborated on legal and Chamber activities prior to his retirement earlier this year.

"Ellen is extremely well organized and very bright. She brings a creative mind and is extremely good at the details," Born offers. "Ellen not only has interest around the legal questions in the environmental and OSHA areas, but a dogged determination to find the answers and put them in lay terms. I relied on her heavily and was never disappointed."

Born credits Gregory for successfully balancing her various duties and obligations, while understanding the importance of volunteering.

"She has the heart of a volunteer," he states. "Ellen understands that an organization like the Chamber can't do everything it does without dedicated volunteers."

Taking the long road

Gregory's path to environmental law evolved from growing up in California. She says water shortages and the constant focus on conservation efforts sparked her interest. (Her identical twin sister also went the legal route, serving as a lawyer in Oregon).

Gregory took one law class at Princeton while earning her degree in the classics. When she determined that becoming a professor wasn't her preference, it was off to law school. She worked

in environmental law in Los Angeles, before her husband's school and business opportunities brought them to Chicago and then Indianapolis.

There were more differences than similarities in her previous positions compared to the work in Indiana.

"In California, my first case was a criminal one, representing the plant manager of a company accused of releasing contaminants. There are much more stringent requirements in California," she explains. "In Chicago, I worked with Fortune 500 companies that were looking to go beyond OSHA, to more than 100% compliance."

"Here, Indiana is a little less stringent in terms of enforcement. We work to get our clients to understand the basic compliance issues." Gregory maintains her emphasis on environmental and OSHA work, collaborating with the business group at times when a merger or other transaction involves environmental issues.

Gregory recognizes the number of outstanding colleges and universities in the state, but also volunteers for her alma mater, interviewing high school seniors (who are potential new students) for the Princeton admissions office. "I'm always sad that not more Indiana kids go to Ivy League schools."

After that education and maybe a few job experiences, however, those young people can come back to Indiana to raise a family and contribute their professional and personal expertise. Gregory was not a returnee, but came to Indiana for the first time and has called it home for 12 years. Her efforts are helping make it possible for others to do the same and achieve success in their business efforts.

Ice Miller congratulates Ellen Gregory

▼ for being named one of the
Indiana Chamber
of Commerce
Volunteers of the Year

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