8-1-2013

August 2013 E-newsletter Alumni Spotlight: Stephanie Stuckey Benfield, Executive Director for GreenLaw (J.D.'92)

Office of Communications and Public Relations
University of Georgia School of Law, lawcomm@uga.edu

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/profiles/33

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Archives at Digital Commons @ Georgia Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Profiles of Members of the Law School Community by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Georgia Law. Please share how you have benefited from this access. For more information, please contact tstriepe@uga.edu.
Alumni Spotlight: Stephanie Stuckey Benfield (J.D.’92)

Name: Stephanie Stuckey Benfield  
Title: Executive Director  
Employer Name: GreenLaw  
Location: Atlanta, Ga.  
Georgia Law graduation year: 1992  
Other degree(s)/institution(s): B.A. in French / University of Georgia

1. Why did you choose to attend Georgia Law? 
I'm a 3rd generation Law Dawg, so I guess it's a Stuckey family tradition to attend Georgia Law. But my grandfather had to drop out because of finances. He went on to start the Stuckey's candy store chain, so he did alright despite not finishing school.

2. What is your most memorable experience from your time at Georgia Law? 
Let me say first and foremost how much I loved Georgia Law. That’s not something I usually hear from my colleagues who went to other law schools. Georgia Law was challenging and hard, but I really loved the entire experience – from hanging out in the pit between classes, to participating in competitions, to surviving a semester of Perry Sentell. But one of my favorite experiences was studying until midnight and then hitting the 40 Watt Club to hear a good band play. I loved doing that – it was my reward for finishing my work.

3. Who was your favorite law professor? Why? 
I really can't choose because there were so many great ones. The ones I've remained in touch with over the years include Kurtz, Coenen, Love, Ellington and Eaton. And Milner Ball inspired me to pursue public service. And – even though I never took a class from him – Bertis Downs is someone I admire and respect, especially all the work he does on education reform.

4. What was your favorite thing about living in Athens? 
That’s easy – the music. I used to love going to see Love Tractor, the Barbeque Killers, Dreams So Real, the Kilkenny Cats and – of course – the hometown favorite, REM.

5. Where was your favorite place to study during law school? 
The Grit.

6. What advice would you give to current Georgia Law students? 
Pay attention in Evidence Class. I took it to pass the bar exam, not realizing that it was the most important class if you’re going to actually try cases.

7. Please give a brief description of your responsibilities as executive director of GreenLaw. 
GreenLaw’s mission is to give Georgia’s environment its day in court, so I wake up every day dedicated to making sure that Georgia citizens have the right to drink clean water, breathe clean air and enjoy Georgia’s natural places. Since we don’t charge our clients, my main job is bringing in the money to make our budget. So, I do a lot of fundraising, grant writing and overall marketing.

8. What do you enjoy most about your job? What is the most rewarding aspect? 
When I took the job at GreenLaw, Neal Herring with the Sierra Club told me that the people you meet working on environmental issues in Georgia are the best people you’ll ever know. And he’s right. I’ve gotten to know some amazing people dedicated to protecting Georgia’s natural places – from community leaders fighting a coal plant in Sandersville to fishermen in Screven County opposing a textile plant dumping flame retardant chemicals in the Ogeechee River.

9. What is one of the greatest challenges facing your field right now? 
We need to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels and focus on creating more homegrown jobs in the renewable energy sector. Georgia can be a great market for solar, and we have potential for offshore wind. We have lots of work to do to put policies and infrastructure in place to build a strong renewable energy market in our state.

10. What did the experience of being a representative to the Georgia General Assembly teach you? 
That the only way you’ll achieve real and lasting policy change is through collaboration. I’ve carried that experience over to my new role at GreenLaw – it’s through a collaborative process with other organizations that we’re able to get results. That process includes taking the time to listen to others with views often very different from your own.
11. What advice would you give to someone wanting to become a state representative? Running for office is about getting outside your comfort zone. My advice would be to accept that it’s going to be a really tough slog some days, but it’s well worth the effort.

12. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? What are your hobbies/interests? Spending time with my husband and our two children. We’ve taken a week off to paddle a Georgia river for the past two summers as part of Paddle Georgia. That’s really my favorite week of the year.

13. How do you stay up to date on legal issues and trends? I’m constantly reading. I get information from a variety of sources – print media, emails, social media posts, and exchanging information face-to-face with clients and colleagues. I also subscribe to a bunch of podcasts on the environment and listen to them while I go running in the mornings.

14. What book/resource do you find yourself referencing the most? There’s so many, it’s hard to choose. But the one I’m reading now is called “Different” about how to set you and your organization apart.

15. What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishment in life? Being a mother.

16. If you could share an afternoon with anyone, with who would you choose to spend it? Erin Brockovich. She did a fundraiser for GreenLaw last year and is just like she’s portrayed in the movie starring Julia Roberts – tough, edgy, and passionate. She told me that every great environmental case started off with a pissed off mom, and I think she’s right about that. Brockovich is my hero.

17. When you look out your office window, what do you see? The CNN Center. GreenLaw is located in the State Bar offices, so my colleagues will stop by for a visit when they’re in the building.