

## Shumaker Law appoints first woman as managing partner of its Toledo office

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BY SHEILA HOWARD / THE BLADE



Sharon M. Fulop, who is the first woman to be appointed as the Managing Partner of the Toledo offices, poses for a photo at Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick - Law in downtown Toledo on March 27.

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For the first time in its nearly 100-year history, Shumaker has appointed a woman, Sharon M. Fulop, as managing partner of its Toledo office.

Ms. Fulop, 51, will now take on two significant roles as a partner and manager. While still serving her clients, the position involves overseeing day-to-day operations, ensuring that the business meets goals and operates smoothly, and implementing strategies that promote the firm's mission and vision.

"I'm thrilled that my colleagues have confidence in me, and I know that they believe in me," said the real estate and development attorney.

A trailblazer and inspiration for other women in law, Ms. Fulop began her rise in leadership as a clerk at Shumaker, then an associate right out of college. She reached the coveted status of partner nearly 20 years ago, after about 7 years at the firm.

With initial thoughts of venturing outside of her home city after law school, her clerking experience at Shumaker sealed the deal to stay in Toledo.

“I have been at Shumaker all my life,” she said. “I just really enjoyed the firm, the culture, the friendliness, and the enthusiasm for the practice of law and for mentoring and training.

“It was kind of fun to see what it might be like to be a partner at a law firm like this someday,” she said.

A lifelong resident of Toledo, the firm describes Ms. Fulop as having emerged as a prominent leader and that her appointment reflects a strategic decision to entrust leadership to someone deeply rooted in the community.

“I credit my colleagues who have shown trust in me, who allow me to communicate with them and bend their ear, get their advice, see how they’re feeling,” she said. “I like to collaborate a lot, so I feel like it’s a joint effort.”

While she is the first woman bestowed this position in the Toledo office, Ms. Fulop credits great mentorship for inspiring and fostering her growth.

“I’ve seen so many women in our firm who have been leaders — so to speak, without necessarily having the titles,” she said. “I have had the pleasure of having many different mentors, and they’ve been male and female. They’ve been way older and close to my age.”

She emphasized her gratefulness for being a part of a firm that has afforded her the opportunity to be connected with people willing to set aside time to help guide her in her practice as well as help navigate the journey of how to be a leader.

“I don’t think you get here without having people before you that are willing to spend their time to share with you,” she said.

Founded in 1925, Shumaker provides legal and legislative services with a team of more than 300 lawyers and advisers throughout 12 offices in four states. Ms. Fulop’s extensive legal experience and dedication to the firm positioned her as “a key figure in steering Shumaker toward continued success,” the firm stated.

Ms. Fulop decided to become an attorney at the age of 10, inspired by her uncle, Louis Fulop, who was an attorney in Toledo and a municipal judge in Maumee.

“As a kid, I would listen to his stories secretly while he was talking to the adults, and I was just kind of mesmerized by it,” Ms. Fulop said. “And I said, ‘Well, that’s what I’m going to do,’ and I never really looked back.”

Before completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Toledo and law school at Ohio State University, Ms. Fulop recalls the impact that her high school, Notre Dame Academy, had on her preparedness for college and, ultimately, for success.

“It was an environment where I felt that women could do anything, that they could be independent,” she said. “They could become scientists, they could become doctors, lawyers, moms, teachers, professors, whatever they wanted. They could be president, like nothing could hold you back. Nobody’s dreams were held back at that school.”

Jennifer Compton, chair of Shumaker’s management committee, said she values her colleague’s ability to be both thoughtful and firm and that she possesses “extraordinary insight to things that matter to our firm.”

“Frankly, in our industry, female representation is a challenge so I’m really proud of Shumaker for being as progressive as we are and I think it says everything that Sharon is managing partner in Toledo,” Ms. Compton said.

John Siciliano, who has practiced law for more than 45 years, expressed his confidence in Ms. Fulop’s abilities and looks forward to seeing her continued contributions to the firm.

“In addition to being an excellent attorney, she’s always been willing to undertake and take responsibility and accountability on all kinds of firm projects, which has gained the respect of the other lawyers in the firm,” he said. “And I think that’s why she’s in this position.”

At the pinnacle of her career, what’s next for the trailblazing attorney is the continued effort of ensuring that her clients are happy with her representation of them, remaining ethical and authentic, as well as always working toward resolution.

“I am honored by it,” Ms. Fulop said of the appointment. “I look at all the people that came before me that were my mentors that were in the firm — that may be here still or maybe are no longer here — and I think they’d all be really proud.

“I think they’d all say ‘I knew she would do it,’” she said. “I do believe that.”