

Five Questions With Lori Hoffman

By Jame SchmittTully Rinckey is making its mark in the Buffalo region. What's driving the local office's growth and expansion?

Driving our growth and expansion in Buffalo (is) a strong demand for our services along with (the firm's) unique capabilities to serve clients and market its attorneys. Under the leadership of founding partner Mathew Tully, Esq., and managing partner Greg Rinckey, Esq., the firm continues to rank among America's fastest-growing private companies, having found itself on the Inc. 5000 list for five consecutive years. We continue building statewide competencies in the areas of criminal defense, Social Security law, and family and matrimonial law, allowing us to effectively serve clients as they move through the defining moments of their lives. On top of that, Tully Rinckey has an in-house marketing department that could give full-fledged public relations firms a run for their money. With this support, Tully Rinckey allows its attorneys to focus squarely on the practice of the law. That makes our clients happy, and happy clients are the foundation of our expansion efforts throughout Upstate New York. What are some of the more nontraditional practice areas offered?

Our nontraditional practice area offerings include (1) Social Security law, which is practiced by an attorney who has been helping Western New Yorkers obtain or retain Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income benefits for over two decades; (2) legal ethics and attorney discipline, which is practiced by a former longtime chief attorney for the Committee on Professional Standards for the New York State Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Third Department; (3) military law, which is practiced by a team of former Army Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG) attorneys; (4) federal employment law, which is practiced by a team of attorneys, including a former chairman of the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board; and (5) security clearance representation, which is practiced by a former administrative judge for the Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals. What prompted your deeper involvement these days in representing veterans?

I have family members and friends who are veterans. My uncle, for example, served in Vietnam, and many people I know served in the Gulf wars of the 1990s and the past decade. Additionally, both of my grandfathers served — one in WWII and one in Korea. My initial representation of veterans began about four years ago at the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court. After joining Tully Rinckey — a service-disabled, veteran-owned small business — I found even more motivation for working with veterans. Since then, I've also developed ties with Western New York Heroes, a nonprofit organization that helps veterans and their families. You also are involved in the Erie County Bar Association's Assigned Counsel Program. Why is it important to you to make the time for this?

I always enjoyed working as a public defender. The Assigned Counsel Program provides the opportunity to continue working in that vein, even though I have moved on to a law firm. I find representing indigent clients to be very fulfilling. They are usually the people who need representation the most and have no other means to obtain it. You're a Buffalo native whose career took you to Kentucky, among other places. What brought you back to WNY?

I went to law school at the University of Dayton in Ohio, and after graduating I took a job with

the Louisville Metro Public Defender's Office in Louisville, Ky. After working there for two and a half years, I decided it was time to come home to Western New York, where I have family.