

Rachel Schromen

Preparing for Life's Milestones

By Haley Freeman

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achel Schromen, managing attorney at Schromen Law LLC, remembers well a grocery shopping trip with her mother when she was

only 8 years old. "When we were walking in, my mom said, 'Rachel, when you see an elder individual, make sure you smile and say hello and ask how their day is.' She explained that in our society, when people get older, we start walking around them like they're in the way. We ignore them, or treat them like children. So I started walking down the aisles looking for my 'elder.' I found an older gentleman shuffling along, pushing a cart and looking at the floor. I said hello, and he stood up, and we had a conversation. Later, I saw him standing up straight, and walking out of the store smiling. It made me feel good and also sad. I realized my mom was right."

Raised by entrepreneurial parents, Schromen knew early that she would be a business owner in a profession where she could be of service to others. A trusted college professor and mentor suggested

that she had both the drive and aptitude for law school, and Schromen shifted her educational focus from social work to law. While earning her degree at William Mitchell College of Law, she worked as a research assistant to the head of the elder law program.

"I went to high school across the street from a nursing home where I did a lot of volunteer work," she recalled, "but I hadn't really thought about estate planning and elder law until law school. As I started learning about elder abuse and financial exploitation, it drew me in quickly. One of my first reactions was, 'Why don't I know about this?' I was extremely active in women's rights and LGBT issues, but all of my experience was entirely lacking in talking about the elder demographic."

A woman with a plan, Schromen sought out strong mentors throughout law school and during her early practice experience, all in preparation for opening her own firm. By the time she opened her doors, she possessed the experience, confidence and connections to make her firm a success.



“When I said I had a plan to go out on my own, my mentors and colleagues said, ‘We absolutely support you.’ I’ve never really felt like I had to do anything alone. I met six solo estate planning attorneys before I started my practice. One showed up with an outline for me and said, ‘This is what you need to do to start, and these are the mistakes I first made.’ I know if I ever have questions, I can pick up the phone and call any attorney I’ve met. The network of estate planning attorneys in my area is so supportive of one another. I feel even more supported in my practice than I did when working for a firm.”

She has also been savvy about networking. “I did a lot of intense work up front meeting with numerous financial planners and getting to know people in the industry, doing free presentations and taking a lot of phone calls. I have also offered a lot of valuable information through blogs and articles.”

With a practice focused in the areas of estate planning, probate and elder law, Schromen set out to develop a people-centered culture, where affordable, expert legal counseling is rendered with consideration and care.

“One of my favorite things about having my own firm is that I have total control over how my clients are treated, and what I do or do not bill them for. I’ve come to realize how scared people are to call attorneys. They don’t even feel they can call and ask a question without getting a bill. I offer a free initial consultation, and I have designed my practice so I am able to offer free in-home visits to elder clients. This is also helpful to people with physical or cognitive challenges, or those with young children or children with special needs.”

Schromen’s down-to-earth approach puts her clients at ease from their first meeting.

“I think it’s important to be human when practicing law. The days are gone when being an attorney meant acting like a stoic rock pillar. It’s hard sometimes to explain something in plain English, since the law was written for attorneys. Often my clients are afraid to admit when they don’t understand something. I don’t ever want them to feel I’m talking down to them. I work with all kinds of people, and I was raised to realize that I don’t know more things than anybody else, just different things. It’s important to be approachable so people will feel comfortable telling me what I need to know to help them.”

Schromen is committed to providing education to elders and the professionals who care for them, in order to raise awareness and prevent abuse before it happens. She

is also passionate about assisting victims of domestic violence. She is the co-founder of Domestic Abuse Legal Advocacy Center PSC, a nonprofit organization that collaborates with domestic violence shelters to provide pro bono legal clinics to clients staying in or receiving services from the shelters. Schromen and other volunteer attorneys counsel on matters including landlord and tenant, orders for protection and divorce.

“Currently, we collaborate with a shelter in Ramsey County, Minnesota, and one in Hubbard County, Minnesota. In January, we plan on collaborating with another shelter in the Twin Cities and expanding our services in the Twin Cities to include in-court representation for orders for protection and eviction expungements to the shelter’s clients. We also provide training to shelter staff to increase staff’s understanding of the legal system. I am dedicated to this cause as studies show that legal advocacy is one of the best ways to be sure that someone will safely exit an abusive relationship.”

A hard-working, compassionate professional, Schromen helps Minnesota families to prepare for and cope with some of life’s most challenging milestones, and she does it with extraordinary skill and grace.

“So much pain can be prevented with an estate plan or an arrangement for long-term care costs. I work with families with many different dynamics and budgets, and my goal is always to give them peace of mind while helping them protect their legacy.”



**Evon Spangler and Rachel Schromen,
co-founders of the Domestic Abuse
Legal Advocacy Center PSC**

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