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Children's Representation Spotlight.

Katie Maucione recently caught up with Shannon Murphey Gomez, an OCLA contractor in Spokane, Washington, and took the opportunity to spotlight her practice and career.

Katie. Where did you attend undergrad and law school?

Shannon. University of California Berkeley, undergrad, then John F Kennedy University School of Law at night. I was a paralegal with a 3-year-old, so night school was my best option.

Katie. What brought you to Spokane?

Shannon. In 2016, I accidentally bought a house in Coeur d Alene, Idaho. At the time, I was visiting my father in Coeur d Alene and looking for a house for my aunt, as she could no longer live by herself in California. On a walk in the area, my husband and I saw a house for sale. I told my husband that there was "no way we would ever live in a house like this." But somehow, we went from "hey let's look at this house for Aunt Kathy" to "lets buy this house for us."

With the house purchased, I started the search for employment opportunities. A very dear friend, who knows the OPD folks, introduced me to Brett Ballew, Jana Hyde, and Jill Malat. From there, I started the process of becoming licensed in Washington, interviewed, and in 2018, we pointed the car in this direction and never looked back.

It was scary and exciting. I had appeared in front of the same two Superior Court Judges for 12 years in Stockton. And it was hard to restart my professional

reputation all over, meeting new people, and trying to figure out how things were done in Spokane. But there are great people here and amazing people in OPD and OCLA that made this journey a great one.

Katie. Can you provide an overview of your professional background prior to becoming an attorney for youth?

Shannon. I was a paralegal in a small boutique firm prior to going to law school. I initially thought I would get into immigration law. Once I became an attorney, an acquaintance told me his wife was involved in the "DRAFT Program" with the Administrative Office of the Courts, California. This program was seeking to hire full-time attorneys to represent parents and children in Stockton, California. I applied. And in 2006, I started that journey. We had very high caseloads and represented both parents and children. The ability to wear both hats, I think, made me a strong advocate for children as I could see all sides and how each approach cases.

Katie. What led you to your current position?

Shannon. I bugged Jill Malat for cases when I came to Spokane and worked part time for OPD. There was overflow from the Public Defender Office and she asked me if I was interested. So, I took a few overflow cases at that time. When the full-time position opened, I applied. I enjoyed working with parents, but the kids are why I have been in this area of law for so long.

Katie. Do you have a success story that you're willing to share with us?

Shannon. Any time a past client calls and states that I made them feel important is all the success story I need. Every smile and each time I can make them feel like they matter, it is a success. I have had a youth return to a long-lost father in another state and had those rights reinstated. This kid went from group home with really no placement options, to being a

big brother to a half-sister with a family. That is not my success story, but his and his father's. I just facilitated the happy ending.

Katie. What is your favorite part about representing youth?

Shannon. My favorite part is connecting with the kids and maybe being a bright spot in their lives.

Katie. What do you find most challenging?

Shannon. The most challenging part is getting a vacation. These kiddos have a sixth sense when we want to take a day or week off. And something always happens. With my personality, I stress even if I am somewhere else. So I usually wind up trying to fix the situation. I am a "fixer" and I want to fix every situation and have happy endings for all my kids.

Katie. Anything else you'd like to share.

Shannon. I truly believe that there is no other practice of law that is as honorable and as important as Child Welfare.

LEGISLATIVE AND CASE LAW UPDATES

[In the Matter of the Dependency of BBB, No. 84266-8-I](#)

In the Matter of the Dependency of BBB, Division One of the Washington State Court of Appeals addressed whether RCW 13.34.065(7)(a)(i) requires a shelter care hearing every 30 days. The Court of Appeals held that, based on the plain language of the statute, the trial court is not required to hold monthly hearings. At issue in BBB was a local court rule in King County and RCW 13.34.065(7)(A)(i). Under local court rule, parties were entitled to a second hearing provided notice of new issues was given. The Court of Appeals examined the phrase "continued shelter care" and determined that "it must be read in the context of the chapter on juvenile

dependencies." The Court of Appeals continued: "[t]he plain language of the subsection at issue here requires that if the court authorizes shelter care for longer than thirty days, it must do so with an order, signed by the judge, authorizing continued shelter care." RCW 13.34.065(7)(a)(i)." This the Court of Appeals contrasted to language regarding the 72-hour hearing that includes notice or hearing requirements for an order authorizing shelter care. Therefore, it requires an order, but not a hearing. Yet at the same time, the Court of Appeals was also clear that "that RCW 13.34.065(7)(a)(i) ... does not prohibit courts from holding such hearings." Please find a link to the opinion [here](#).

[In the Matter of the Welfare of CWM, No. 56970-1-II](#)

In the Matter of the Welfare of CWM, a father appealed the juvenile court's order declaring his daughter dependent and the disposition order that followed. He argued that the dependency and dispositional orders should be reversed because substantial evidence did not support the court's dependency finding that his daughter had no parent that was capable of adequately caring for her; that the department made reasonable efforts to prevent her out-of-home placement; and that the Department demonstrated reasonable efforts to prevent out-of-home placement prior to a finding of dependency.

The Court of Appeals, Division II, declined to address the first two claims for relief because it issues were moot as the child was already returned home to the mother and the case dismissed. However, the Court of Appeals chose to "address whether the Department must prove its reasonable efforts prior to a dependency finding." The Court of Appeals held that the plain language of RCW 13.34.030(6) and RCW 13.34.130 do not require a showing that reasonable efforts were made prior to the court entering a dependency order. Rather, "the Department must show reasonable efforts before entering a disposition order placing the child outside of the home." Please find link to the opinion [here](#).

JOINT CONTRACTOR CONFERENCE



Our first ever, in-person Joint Contract Conference, Families Stronger Together, is September 11 – 12, 2023 at the University of Washington in Tacoma. We are excited to see you there. The landing page can be found [here](#) or by the QR Code below:

