

ACC-Wisconsin | December 2021

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

CELEBRATING WISCONSIN'S NOTABLE IN-HOUSE ATTORNEYS



Name: Cynthia Alberth

Company and Title: Fairbanks Morse Defense - VP, General Counsel

Years of Service: 9 months current company, 34 years as an attorney...yikes!

College/University and Law School: Minnesota State Mankato and University of Minnesota Law School

How long have you been a member of the ACC of Wisconsin? Why did you join the ACC-WI? 1 year for ACC-WI, but I have been a member of ACC for 20+ years; first in Minnesota and then in Illinois as part of the Chicago chapter. ACC is an amazing organization so now that I live and work in Wisconsin, I joined ACC-WI. The resources available from ACC are a huge life saver, with information at your fingertips for a huge array of legal and compliance issues. Plus, the networking with other in-house lawyers is invaluable – whether it is just bouncing off an issue for their take or getting a template for a document that has just been requested of you. And, the networking with outside counsel and vendors is the best way to get a relationship with the right people that can make your job easier as quickly as possible. And, I cannot forget the CLE programs and amazing events. I encourage every in-house attorney I meet to join the ACC-WI. Seriously.

What do you love most about the legal profession?

The law is always changing and never black and white. So I am able to cultivate my creative side to represent my clients, whether in-house or out house. The best part about being an in-house attorney is that you get immersed in the business and can be a true business partner for the long term, not just a one off matter for a client.

Do you participate in any pro bono service or volunteering?

I have volunteered for many ACC projects in the past from Street Law to helping others complete their taxes to representing abused women.

How do you define success?

Checking one thing off of my 28 bullet point to do list. I know we can all relate to that. I need to have motivation in my life to feel successful and I get motivated with even little wins along the way. If I just churn, I'm not successful nor motivated. When I worked for a big firm, even if I won a lawsuit that was 3 years in the making, that wasn't success to me nor motivating. But when I partnered with my dad it was awesome. Lots of court appearances, getting new clients, being able to pay my overhead after 2 months. I felt successful! Little bits of good and happiness sprinkled through life. Long dry spells or monotony isn't success even if I had a \$10M verdict 6 years after the complaint was filed.

Who inspires you?

To this day, my mom and dad still inspire me even though my dad passed away almost 20 years ago and my mom turns 88 shortly. I was fortunate enough to partner with my dad and join my parents in the practice of law after my 5 year big law stint in Minneapolis. We worked hard but my dad ensured that we all had fun while doing it...celebrating the successes and figuring out how we could do better next time, while my mom marketed the firm as a leader of the community and made sure our clients paid their bills. My memories of walking to the courthouse with my dad arm in arm and giving each other a kiss before we walked through separate courtroom doors, are precious, inspiring moments to ensure that I continue to love the law and celebrate life.

What's one thing - industry-related or not - you learned in the last month?

I have been learning how vastly different the civil litigation system is in France compared to the US. For instance, there is no routine discovery, you need to petition the court to get an expert and then, the expert represents the court and does not opine on behalf of either party, the judges are astute in the field / industry at issue and there is no or very little witness testimony or oral argument. Truly eye opening. I am grateful for the greater transparency that discovery brings here in the US, and as a former trial lawyer, the ability to address and examine witnesses, but it will be interesting to see how each case unfolds.

What's the last book you read?

I cheat now and listen to audio books via my local library app during my commute. It is amazing...and free! I choose mostly biographies or historical fiction, like my current listening pleasure; Scott Turow's Ordinary Heroes. It recounts a young attorney's life transformation when his cushy, but monotonous JAG Corps position ended up landing him on the front line as a commanding officer during WWII.

Any Favorite Pod Cast or Series you can recommend?

I just started binging La Brea. I'm not a Sci Fi person, but my husband is, and this series satisfies my love for trying to solve mysteries and my husband's fondness for the futuristic or surreal.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

**ACC-WISCONSIN ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**

MAY 19-20, 2022

OSTHOFF RESORT, ELKHART LAKE, WI