

These heels break glass – one woman’s journey to the top

By: Melissa Pasha Guest Contributor October 13, 2021



Courtesy photo

OKLAHOMA CITY – Many would describe Amy Stipe as a trailblazer.

She’s not only a female executive attorney in a highly competitive, male-dominated industry; she’s also the first female president of GableGotwals, a firm with 100 attorneys with offices in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Additionally, she was elected to the firm’s formerly all-male, eight-member board of directors just two months after giving birth to her

third child, and with two other young children at home.

According to Law360, a legal news and analysis organization, legal firms have faced increasing calls to step up equity and inclusion efforts, but many have a long way to go in closing the gender gap, especially when it comes to filling leadership roles. Based on its Glass Ceiling Report, statistics show that “having a female leader sets an example for younger associates that they have a future and a path at the firm.”

While many female attorneys report feeling overlooked for leadership roles, Stipe said she felt supported and encouraged at her firm, despite significant challenges that come with being a working mother in the high-pressure industry. She attributed much of her success to the mentorship of Sid Dunagan, a retired GableGotwals shareholder.

“You’re told to make sure you have mentors and sponsors to help guide you in your profession,” she said. “Not only did Sid provide his 45-plus years of experience and wisdom, but he also helped advocate on my behalf.”

She also relied on an “amazing” support system.

“Like most people, I think one of the more important things that I had to learn early on was that you cannot manage all of your demands alone,” Stipe said. “I’m really lucky to have a support network at home with my husband, Jack, who’s a tremendous help, and my mother. And equally important, is having a great support system at your place of business.”

Still, she allowed that her advancement at the firm has translated to more than just a few late evenings spent catching up on work.

According to Amy Fogleman, vice president of growth at GableGotwals, the firm has tried to cultivate a culture to attract and retain talented attorneys by providing them with clear paths to thrive and advance. She noted that the

firm has consistently been named on lists of top workplaces in Oklahoma. GableGotwals also has been named a "Top Inclusive Workplace" by Mosaic, a coalition of companies and nonprofits in Tulsa that champions diversity, equity and inclusion.

Fogleman pointed out that five out of six new associates selected for this year's incoming class at GableGotwals were women.

"We are proud to have such a talented group of individuals joining us this fall. They graduated at the top of their respective classes and were ready on day one to make positive contributions to both the firm and community," she said. "I believe the firm's culture, our client work, and growth opportunities are driving forces that allow us to attract the best talent."

Sitting in her corner office on the 22nd floor of BOK Park Plaza in Oklahoma City recently, Stipe reflected on her career progression.

"I long for the day when women in leadership roles are not referred to as the 'female executive,' but just as the 'executive.'" she said. "If I have even a small part in that journey, then that makes me very happy. I hope being in this position gives other women in the legal profession confidence in the opportunities that are available. Inspiring them to strive for leadership positions would be one of the best benefits of being in this role. The more women take advantage of those opportunities, the more it will become the norm."