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SEVENTY-FIVE
PEOPLE TO KNOW

Sherry Harlan
**Attorney, volunteer strives
for common ground**

By Terri Milner Tarquini
Correspondent

ROCKFORD — In both work and life, Sherry Harlan has found her niche: assisting others in finding common ground.

"I have a mediator personality," said Harlan, a commercial transaction and real estate lawyer at Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP for 30 years. "I don't have the litigator-type personality. I enjoy building toward a consensus and I like to find a way to advocate for people through the process of coming to a meeting of the minds. I enjoy learning about my clients' businesses so I can ultimately be a part of their success."

Now a partner at the firm, it was a little over a decade ago that Harlan was looking for some equalization of her own.

"My kids were young and I couldn't do it all; I couldn't be a good lawyer and a good mom," said Harlan, of her family that includes a daughter and a son, both in college, and her husband of 27 years, Greg.

"Something I'm really grateful for is that when I told Hinshaw I needed to scale back, I had absolute support in working part time. As an office, we have continued allowing that flexibility in an effort to support families and keep quality lawyers."

Born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Harlan was six when she moved to Rockford when her father, Richard Shilling, a Harvard law graduate, became the general counsel for Sundstrand and remained there for 30 years.

"My dad was my inspiration for my choice of career," Harlan said. "I saw how the law allowed my father to travel the world and to look at things and see them differently. He brought his broader world vision to our home."

Taking a multi-faceted view is something that Harlan applies in the stateline community.



Sherry Harlan, a commercial transaction and real estate lawyer at Hinshaw & Culbertson, said she has a "mediator personality" that thrives in finding a way for people to meet common ground. [ARTURO FERNANDEZ/RRSTAR.COM STAFF]

"I like the diversity of our people here in Rockford," Harlan said. "I like the variety of opinions that diversity brings and I think we are in the process of growing a city that is really on the rise."

To that end, Harlan is part of Transform Rockford and the 815 Choose Civility group.

"Our diversity can cause challenges because we don't always listen to one another," she said. "The goal of these community groups is to encourage more crossover between the various populations. If we can be more inclusive and really listen, then we can help to grow our city even more."

Harlan has been, and currently is, active on several boards and community organizations and is passionate

when talking about what Rockford has to offer and the direction the city is heading.

"Rockford was built with such a variety of industry and with great tenacity and now we're back on the rise," she said. "Locally, we have a world-class art museum and symphony, the Rockford Public Library, gorgeous gardens, a beautiful river and active church communities. We have the Coronado Theatre and the Nordlof Center and a strong Park District. We have a brand-new hotel being built on the Rock River and a new downtown 21st century library to be built. It is so exciting to watch Rockford blossom."

Harlan's life motto of the golden rule is both simple and

SHERRY L. HARLAN

Age: 56

Occupation: Attorney

City of residence: Rockford

Motto: One: Exercise the golden rule in your daily life and two: Do not be judgmental — look for the best in each person you meet.

straightforward.

"Do unto others as you want them to do unto you," she said. "It really guides me and allows me a filter before I say and do things. There's a place for that in law too — being aware of both sides. I don't have blinders on, but I'm an optimist and I try to see the good. I hope that outlook allows me to positively impact others."