



2015 PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Stephen R. Miller

By Perry Brandt

It is a tremendous privilege to pay homage to my good friend Steve Miller as we celebrate his receipt of KCMBA's President's Award. If anyone was deserving of this great recognition, it is Steve! Steve is a "mensch" in the truest sense of the word, "mensch" being defined as "someone to admire and emulate, someone of noble character, someone who exhibits rectitude and dignity." That pretty much sums up Steve, don't you think?

Steve has been a life-long fixture in the Kansas City community. The eldest of nine children, Steve attended Rockhurst High School before heading off to a place which has remained a life-long passion: The University of Notre Dame. Steve first obtained a B.A. Degree from Notre Dame in 1980, and he then remained there for Law School, obtaining his J.D. Degree in 1983. Interestingly, both in college and law school, Steve played varsity soccer for Notre Dame, and soccer has remained one of Steve's other great passions (you can see him in the Cauldron at pretty much every Sporting KC game).

Upon his graduation from law school, Steve returned to Kansas City and went into practice with his father, longtime KC litigator Dick Miller. After practicing law for five years, Steve returned to Notre Dame for a year and a half and obtained a Master's Degree in Theology in 1989. He then returned to law practice and worked with his father for twenty five years.

More recently Steve formed his own firm with good friend John Schirger, and today Miller Schirger LLC has grown to six lawyers and handles a wide range of matters. Steve personally focuses much of his practice on the construction industry, but he is first and foremost a trial lawyer and, as such, represents individuals and businesses in state and federal courts and before arbitration panels nationwide in all types of cases. Steve annually has been honored as Best of the Bar by the Kansas City Business Journal and also by Super Lawyers. Everyone in our community recognizes Steve as a true "lawyer's lawyer," given his great skills and great dedication to client service.

Meanwhile, Steve has devoted a substantial amount of time to civic and charitable endeavors. In August 2009, Steve was appointed by Governor Jay Nixon to the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission (MODOT). The six-member

commission has authority over all state transportation programs and facilities, including bridges, highways, airports, railroads, mass transit, ports and waterways. In the spring of 2014 Steve became Chairman of MODOT, and he did so extremely well in that role that, in unprecedented fashion, he was asked to stay an extra year, now up until early 2016. Steve also has provided valuable service to other organizations as well, including the Don Bosco Center, and the Turning Point Center for Hope and Healing. Meanwhile, given his Theology background, Steve often acts as a lay minister at Visitation Parish, of which he has been a lifelong member. Steve also is very much a fitness guru, getting up three mornings per week for Morning Maniacs at the Carriage Club, and also going to hot yoga another three days per week (he even teaches it!). The big question: where does he find the time?

The greatest passion in Steve's life, however, is his family. Steve and his wife Susan have been married for 25 years and are one of the cutest couples around. The rarely restrained Susan says about Steve, "One of the things I admire most about Steve is that he never, ever says an unkind word about anyone." All true, and – again – he is a total mensch!

Steve and Susan have two beautiful children (whom Steve coached at soccer for years). The eldest, Maddie, is a Junior at – you guessed it, Notre Dame – although currently she is studying abroad in Paris. The youngest, Lucy, is a freshman at the University of North Carolina, thus leaving Steve and Susan as empty nesters. However, they are never far away – you can see Steve and Susan anytime sporting Notre Dame or UNC caps as they attend home football games with their daughters.

The girls too are effusive in their praise. Says Maddie, "My dad is the smartest person I know, not only in a book-smart way, but also in a deep understanding of the world way. This probably comes from his ceaseless curiosity and genuine investment in a wide variety of endeavors. He inspires me and challenges me on a daily basis, but he never fails to be the loving, supporting daddy I need." Lucy echoes this view: "Everyone thinks their own dad is the 'best dad,' but really my dad is the BEST dad. This can be proven true because there has

not been a day in my life when I haven't felt his unconditional love for me, my sister, and my mom; and even though he seems to be wholeheartedly involved in everything under the sun, my dad is who he is because he has developed the perfect balance in bringing his vast intelligence and light into everything he does. He is the greatest man I know, and I am lucky and proud to call him 'Daddy.'" Ladies and gentlemen, there ain't no higher praise than that!

Which gets me to this: Steve also has provided great service to our beloved KCMBA. This year he was Chair of the Construction Law Committee and, as you might expect, was extremely active and involved. The Committee has always met, of course; however Steve took things to a whole new level. Steve organized the Insider's View Discussion Series, where he invited in-house counsel and leaders from various construction-related organizations and thus provided members a unique opportunity to hear things straight from the leaders of the industry. The KCMBA Staff was very impressed with Steve's attention to detail, especially in light of his many other

commitments. Says Director of Sections and CLE Kim Elrod, "Steve has done an outstanding job in personally reaching out to members of the Committee and increasing their engagement."

So, to sum it up, if you go to your dictionary and look up the word "mensch," you will find a big smiling picture of Steve Miller. He is most definitely someone of noble character for us all to admire and emulate. On behalf of KCMBA, congratulations Steve! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Perry Brandt is the Managing Partner of Bryan Cave LLP, and was KCMBA's President in 2014.

KCMBA's 131st Annual Meeting

SHERATON HOTEL CROWN CENTER • DECEMBER 11, 2015

11 AM - 12 PM

Registration and Networking Reception with Cash Bar

12 - 1:30 PM

Introductions and Welcome

Presentation of Awards

Election of Officers and Board of Directors

Vote to Adopt New Bylaws

Outgoing President's Remarks: Scott S. Bethune

Incoming President's Remarks: Russell S. Jones

Keynote Speaker: Cheryl Brown Henderson

Adjourn



Cheryl Brown Henderson

Cheryl Brown Henderson is the daughter of the late Rev. Oliver L. Brown who in 1950 joined a suit against the local Board of Education that became known as the landmark decision, *Brown v. the Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas. Cheryl is the Founding President of The Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research, and owner of Brown & Associates, an educational consulting firm.