

# Kelley Rider Goodwin

2017 CBA YLD Gary McPherson Young Lawyer of the Year

BY BRENDAN BAKER

---



Kelley and her husband Ethan with their dog Andie.

**K**elley Rider Goodwin is a fifth-generation Texan, and it's fair to say she does her home state proud. She was born and raised in Austin, where her ancestors were among the famous Old Three Hundred settlers who purchased land from Steven F. Austin between 1824 and 1828. Kelley's father practiced law in town, and from the start she knew she wanted to follow in his footsteps—although she confesses that for a week or so in grade school she considered

studying architecture instead.

When the time came to choose a college, Kelley did break from family tradition, leaving Texas to study at Auburn University in Alabama. There she majored in political science and criminology. She also earned a minor in Africana Studies, after spending spring break of her junior year in South Africa, and then returning for her fifth academic year.

For law school, Kelley was attracted to the University of Denver Sturm College of Law

because of the school's strong international focus. During her 1L summer she lived in Nairobi, where she took law courses and traveled extensively throughout the region, from the Serengeti to Samburu National Reserve to Rwanda and further afield. Back at DU, she planned to become a litigator, like her father, and became active in the Student Trial Lawyers Association, the Criminal Law Clinic, and Moot Court (it was through her trial partner on the Moot Court team that she met her future husband).

Upon graduating in 2009, Kelley found that the unstable economy thwarted her immediate plans of joining the D.A.'s office. Through volunteering at Colorado Legal Services, Kelley assisted low-income Coloradans and gained experience with Chapter 7 bankruptcy proceedings, foreclosure defense, and mortgage modification. By participating in the Metro Volunteer Lawyers Family Law Court Program, Kelley started gaining experience and making connections in the area of family law, and found that it was very much to her liking. She also interned with a firm in Chicago, and passed both the Colorado and Illinois bar exams within months of each other. She was in the middle of studying for a third bar exam when she received an offer for a full-time position with the Family and Children division of Colorado Legal Services.

Kelley spent five years with CLS, assisting families throughout the Denver metro area in divorce and custody proceedings, domestic violence cases, and other complicated and sensitive matters. The autonomy and flexibility of her position at CLS allowed Kelley to de-

**While building a thriving legal practice, Kelley has also exemplified the professional's responsibility of giving back to the community, which her parents modeled for her growing up.**



Kelley and family.

velop her own highly effective style of responsibly managing cases and helping people in need, while also giving her extensive training in the basic day-to-day practice of law. In 2014, shortly after getting married, Kelley left CLS to found her own law firm, Rider Goodwin Law Offices LLC. She hung out her shingle in the conviction that no individual, whatever their circumstances, should have to face a legal crisis on their own. Managing her own practice allows Kelley to apply all of her training, as well as her imagination, creativity, and vision, to the singular goal of delivering unwavering support to her clients.

While building a thriving legal practice, Kelley has also exemplified the professional's responsibility of giving back to the community, which her parents modeled for her growing up. She is active in the Colorado Bar Association and the Colorado Women's Bar Association. She teaches monthly Pro Bono Clinics for Project Safeguard, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping end domestic violence and providing safety planning, legal advocacy, and court support to victims of domestic violence. She volunteers as a legal contact at Family Tree,

an organization that provides legal advocacy services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. She is on the board of directors for Kids 24/7, an organization that provides children with resources and support to help ease the process of divorce. She serves on the Adams County Domestic Violence Task Force, which raises awareness and educates the public on prevention of domestic violence. In addition, she is a member of the Doyle Inn of Court and the First Judicial Access to Justice Commission, is an active sponsor and fundraiser for Dress for Success, and donates her time to the Women in Crisis shelter.

Kelley's qualities of intelligence, drive, and desire to give back have been recognized within the Colorado legal community, where she is highly and widely respected. She received the 2017 Purple Ribbon Community Ally Award from the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the 2017 VIP Woman of the Year Circle Award from the National Association of Professional Women. She was also named a 2017-18 Rising Star by Super Lawyers, and she is a member of the 2018 COBALT class. To those honors she can now add the 2017 Gary McPherson Young Lawyer of the Year award from the CBA Young Lawyers Division.

In her free time—although it is hard to believe anyone this active has much free time—

Kelley enjoys travel, occasional fly fishing with her husband, watching football, playing tennis, being outside, and spending time with Andie/Pants/Pantalones, their Labrador/Weimaraner mix.

Kelley's advice for young attorneys is to learn how to be vulnerable, particularly in asking for help. "When you are capable of being vulnerable, you become your true self—happier, and more in line with your higher power, whatever that may be." Kelley looks forward to growing her business, and continuing to provide excellent service to the Colorado community. **CL**

*Colorado Lawyer's "Profiles in Success" column celebrates those individuals, living and deceased, whose contributions to the practice of law lend themselves to inspiring narratives. To suggest an article, contact CBA/DBA Communication Specialist Brendan Baker at [bbaker@cobar.org](mailto:bbaker@cobar.org).*