

Bar News Highlight

The "Highlight" page of *Bar News* spotlights recent activities and special events around the Bar, and presents short profiles of Colorado attorneys. If your local or specialty bar or legal organization has marked a notable milestone and there's a short story to tell about it, or if you would like to recommend a colleague to be "highlighted," please contact Leona Martínez at leonamartinez@cobar.org.

The Diversity in the Legal Profession Committee ("DILP") is a joint committee of the Colorado and Denver Bar Associations. The DILP is committed to celebrating and promoting diversity in Colorado's legal community. For more information about DILP, click on "Sections/Committees" at <http://www.cobar.org>. To recommend a person or organization for a DILP profile, please contact Andrea Wang at andrea.wang@dgsllaw.com. The author of this profile, Ginny Brannon, is an Assistant Attorney General in the Natural Resources Section of the Colorado Attorney General's Office. Her practice emphasizes CERCLA and RCRA enforcement.

"Set Goals and Dream Big": A DILP Profile of Christine Arguello

by Ginny Brannon

Christine "Christy" Arguello (née Martínez) grew up in Buena Vista, Colorado, a middle child in a family of six children. By the age of 12, Christy was already thinking and reading about law school. Even at that tender age, she knew that when she went to law school it would be to one of the best schools in the country. So, she set her sights on Harvard Law School and never abandoned her goal.

As the oldest daughter in a family that embraced traditional values regarding the role of women in the home, Christy assumed the major responsibility of assisting her mother (who was chronically ill) with household chores and other matriarchal duties. When she turned 16 and got her license to drive, Christy took over many tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and shopping. She also was employed outside the home. Her jobs ranged from washing dishes at the local A&W to serving ice cream at the Dairy Queen. She saved every penny she earned for college. When she graduated from high school, Christy had amassed \$1,500.

Armed with her savings and a scholarship, she headed for the University of Colorado–Boulder ("CU"). It was during her first semester in the Elementary Education program at CU that Christy met Ron Arguello, also a CU student. They married when Christy was 18 years old.

Continuing the tradition she had established in high school, Christy ranked first in her graduating class at CU. With the encouragement of her husband and with her ten-year-old dream still



in mind, she applied to Harvard Law School. Her acceptance into Harvard made Christy Arguello the first female Hispanic from Colorado to attend that law school. In 1977, Christy and Ron crossed the eastern Colorado border for the first time in their lives and pulled their possessions by trailer to Boston, Massachusetts. Three years later, Christy's father, Felipe Martínez, a barber at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, took a bus across the country to witness his oldest daughter receive her law degree. (*Graduation-day picture above left.*)

Christy decided not to return to Colorado immediately after graduation. Instead, she accepted a position with a Miami law firm as a litigation attorney. Over the next four years, she devoted herself to commercial litigation.

In 1985, when Christy and Ron decided to start a family, they also decided they wanted to return to Colorado, where the children would be close to their grandparents. Six weeks after son Ronnie was born, the family moved to Colorado Springs and Christy accepted a position at the law firm of Spurgeon, Haney & Howbert. The firm merged with Holland and Hart LLP and, in 1988, Christy became the first Hispanic (male or female) partner at one of the "big four" law firms in Colorado. Christy had a successful career at Holland and Hart's Colorado Springs office, ultimately becoming chair of that office's litigation section.

Five years after Ronnie was born, the couple adopted a 13-day-old baby girl. They named her Tiffany. They later would adopt two more



children: 5-year-old Jennifer and her 2-year-old brother Kenny. A family photo appears at left.

In 1991, Christy was offered and accepted a position at the University of Kansas School of Law to direct the school's Trial Advocacy Program. She also taught bankruptcy and contract law there. In 1998, Christy received tenure, as well as a promotion from Associate Professor to Professor.

In 1999, when the new administration was forming at the Colorado Attorney General's Office, Christy was asked by Attorney General Ken Salazar to join his team as Deputy Attorney for State Services. A year-and-a-half later, she was promoted to Chief Deputy Attorney General. During this period at the Attorney General's Office, Christy also found time to return to CU to teach courses in bankruptcy law.

After more than seven years in academia and four years at the Attorney General's Office, Christy decided to return to private practice. In October 2004, she became a partner at the Denver law firm of Davis Graham & Stubbs, LLP ("DG&S"). Her current practice emphasizes employment law and includes commercial litigation and creditors' rights. In addition to litigation, Christy enjoys serving as a third-party investigator in employment matters.

Christy also works tirelessly to promote diversity in the legal profession. She acts as a "mentor" to law students through the Law School Mentorship Programs at CU and the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, and mentors Latinas in the community through the Circle of Latina Leadership Program. She also mentors new attorneys as they enter the legal profession and become familiar with the "real world" practice of law.

One of Christy's top priorities is to develop a meaningful mentorship program at DG&S. She contends that one of the reasons law firms and corporations have not achieved "meaningful diversity" is because such programs are not seriously developed. "It's easy to recruit diverse applicants," Christy says, "but it's another matter to retain them." DG&S is committed to making available to Christy the necessary resources to develop the mentorship model she has in mind.

Christy is the recipient of numerous awards that acknowledge her mentoring efforts. Among the awards she has received are the Dia de la Mujer Latina Courage and Valor Award, from the Latino/a Research & Policy Center at CU–Denver; Hispanic Pioneer Award, from the Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Mary Lathrop Award (Woman Trailblazer), from the Colorado Women's Bar Association; and Outstanding Hispanic Lawyer Award, from the Colorado Hispanic Bar Association.

When the topic of her success comes up, Christy is quick to acknowledge her husband Ron, who has "kept the family and me firmly grounded" for thirty-one years. For her own part, Christy gladly imparts her words of advice and encouragement: "Set goals and go beyond what people expect. . . . And dream big!"