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akron bar association



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PHONE NUMBERS

Area code 330 unless otherwise indicated

Community Services

Alcoholics Anonymous 253-8181

Battered Women's Shelter 1-888-395-(HELP) 4357

Community Legal Aid Services 535-4191

Fair Housing Contact Service Inc. 376-6191

Rape Crisis Center 1-877-906-(RAPE) 7273

Summit County Juvenile Court Family Resource Center 379-3613

Visitors Information

Akron/Summit County Convention & Visitors Bureau 374-7560 Toll Free 1-800-245-4254

Transportation

Akron-Canton Regional Airport 499-4221

Akron METRO Bus System 762-0341

Greyhound Bus Lines 434-9185

Neo Executive Sedans & Taxi 777-5454

City Yellow Cab 234-542-3941

AAA Ohio Motorists Association 923-4826

AAA Emergency Road Service- 800-447-4888

Note: Our hours of operation are M-F 9am-1pm. Support will be available through all of our normal channels. Our employees are all working towards the common goal of continuing to deliver the legal news to our clients.

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Lewis Brisbois expands its Akron office

SHERRY KARABIN
Legal News Reporter

It's been just over three years since Los Angeles-based Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith (LBBS) opened its Akron office at 1 GOJO Plaza in late February 2020.

At the time, it was staffed by seven former Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs attorneys and one paralegal, including John Hill, former shareholder and litigation practice group chair and David Kern, also a former shareholder who served as the partner-in-charge of the Akron office and prior to that led the business practice group.

Today there are nine attorneys and five support staff and the office space is being expanded by 6,000 square feet after firm leaders made a decision to lease and renovate a large vacant area adjacent to their third-floor location.

"We are very excited about the support we are receiving from the firm," said Kern, managing partner of Lewis Brisbois' Akron office and chair of the firm's national tax practice. "We did not expect to grow as quickly as we have, but I think it's a testament to the benefits that being part of the sixth largest U.S.-based law firm in the country can offer.

"We have been able to attract some excellent lawyers, who are helping the firm build up its northeast Ohio presence," said Kern. "When the renovation is complete we will have about 14,000 square feet, almost double the footprint that we now have.

"We also anticipate hiring another five to seven attorneys over the next year, if not more," said Kern.

"It's been a very exciting time to be part of the firm," said Hill, a partner who focuses on complex commercial litigation. "Lewis Brisbois already had an office in Cleveland, which is well known for insurance defense litigation. The attorneys in the Akron office primarily handle corporate, tax, business transactions and business litigation.

"One of the goals down the road will be working to meld the offices together, not physically, but from the perspective of creating a really strong northeast Ohio hub that serves clients of all kinds."

"David Kern and John Hill are world-class top-of-the-food-chain lawyers, well known in northeast Ohio for excellence and successfully taking on some of the most difficult cases," said Michael G. Platner, national corporate practice chair at Lewis Brisbois.

"Akron has historically been a great industrial town and is now becoming a hub for technology and innovation. We're excited to bring the strength of our more than 1,700-lawyer platform to businesses and entrepreneurs in this thriving area and look forward to seeing David and John build up our Akron team over the coming years."

Since 2021, three attorneys have been hired in Akron.

John Conley started at Lewis Brisbois as a partner in July



John Conley

2021, filling the void left by the departure of Andrew Pullekins, who joined a client as in-house counsel.

"John has been a great hire for us," said Hill. "His practice area has added an important component to our office and the Lewis Brisbois platform has helped him especially to serve a particular client with matters pending across the country, so he collaborates and works with our lawyers in several other offices."

"Joining Lewis Brisbois has been an awesome experience for me, personally and professionally," said Conley, whose practice is almost exclusively business and commercial litigation.

"Personally my colleagues in Akron are some of the best in the business, as professionals and as people.

"Professionally joining a firm with a truly national platform has put my practice on jet fuel," said Conley. "I am able to serve my national clients in cases across the country with a breadth of resources and capabilities that really only firms the size of Lewis Brisbois can support."

Born in Hampton, Virginia, Conley received his bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University, where he majored in sociology and criminology and earned his juris doctorate from The University of Akron School of Law in 2008.

"During law school, I was on Akron's nationally recognized mock trial team," said Conley. "At that time, Larry Sutter ran the team and he also ran the law firm, known at that time as Sutter O'Connell & Farchione.

"Larry got to know me well, offered me a job, and I spent the next eight years trying cases with a team of very talented trial lawyers."

In 2016, Conley joined the Akron office of Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease.

"Vorys was a good landing place for me with many talented attorneys and a regional reach," said Conley. "But in 2021, when the opportunity opened up to join a national powerhouse and to have my office remain in downtown Akron and to join this wonderful group of people, I leapt at it."

A member of the Akron and Ohio State bar associations, Conley continues to coach Akron's mock trial team and is also engaged in various community-strengthening efforts, including



Michael Altvater

You Can You Will Foundation's outreach programs.

"I can safely say that in the 18 months since joining Lewis Brisbois the success of my practice has skyrocketed in a manner that would not have been possible from Akron at any other firm," said Conley.

More recently Lewis Brisbois added partner Michael Altvater and associate Moriah Cheatham Williams.

Cheatham Williams began on Nov. 1, 2022 while Altvater started in January.

"We are really excited to have both of them here," said Hill. "Moriah is very active in the community and she has been working closely with me and our other litigators, helping us during a particularly busy time. She is highly respected in Summit County and I think she will do well here.

"Michael has been a magistrate over at common pleas court and has a great reputation in the Akron and Summit County communities," said Hill. "He is handling commercial litigation for us and he's already proving to be a great fit here."

"Working for Judge Joy Oldfield as a magistrate and judicial attorney was a fulfilling experience for me," said Altvater. "I cherished my time at the court, but this new opportunity was too compelling to turn down.

"Joining a distinguished group of local attorneys with access to Lewis Brisbois' expansive national platform offers the perfect opportunity to deliver exceptional legal services to clients."

Born in San Diego, California, Altvater grew up in Hudson, Ohio.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Wright State University in Dayton and his juris doctorate from Akron Law in 2008.

Altvater began his legal career as a judicial attorney to Judge Elinore Marsh Stormer, who was serving on the Summit County Common Pleas Court bench at the time.

He left the court in early 2011 to join Stark & Knoll Co. as an associate where he focused on insurance defense.

Altvater also worked for Babst Calland as an associate and served as a director in the Akron office of Krugliak, Wilkins, Griffiths & Dougherty Co., respectively.

When Jason Wells was appointed as a judge on the Summit County Court of Common Pleas,



Moriah Cheatham Williams

Altvater returned to the court to serve as his judicial attorney and magistrate.

He later worked for Judge Oldfield.

While at the court, Altvater was a judge for Akron Law's trial advocacy program.

Prior to joining Lewis Brisbois, he resigned from the Summit County Child Fatality Review Board.

"I'm excited to engage in the community in new ways now that I'm in private practice," said Altvater.

Cheatham Williams, who started her career at Roetzel & Andress in 2019, said the chance to take on complex business and commercial litigation cases was her incentive for joining Lewis Brisbois.

"At Roetzel I primarily dealt with insurance defense so the opportunity to expand into other areas was very attractive to me," said Cheatham Williams.

A native of Barberton, Ohio, she received her bachelor's degree in English literature from The Ohio State University and her juris doctorate from Akron Law.

Cheatham Williams is a member of the Akron Bar Association where she is on the membership and nominating committees.

She is also a member of the Ohio State Bar and Akron-Canton Barristers associations and the Charles F. Scanlon and the Judge Samuel H. Bell American Inn of Court.

A 2021 recipient of the Greater Akron Chamber's 30 for the Future Award as well as other accolades, Cheatham Williams continues to be active in the community.

Cheatham Williams currently serves on the boards of the American Red Cross of Greater Akron and the Mahoning Valley and the Barberton Community Foundation where she chairs the governance committee.

She recently joined the board of United Way of Summit & Medina.

Cheatham Williams and her husband are expecting their first child in June.

"I've had major life changes these past few months between leaving my first firm and preparing for our first baby," said Cheatham Williams. "We've all heard stories about unsupportive law firms and partners but everyone at LBBS has been wonderful and happy for my family."