

How Long Are You Going to Stay?

Practicing law in one of Wisconsin's rural areas has many advantages, and not just for new attorneys.

BY KARINA O'BRIEN

This was the most asked question by many prospective clients and most local attorneys during my first year of practice in 2014, in Arcadia, Wisconsin. It seemed that everyone expected me to leave once I gained enough experience. However, each time someone asked me that question, I found myself answering: "What makes you think I am going to leave?"

Within my first couple years of practice, I had learned I was where I wanted to be. Why would I leave? I had everything I would need in one location. I could easily travel to bigger cities while still having a small-town lifestyle. Each day brought new and different cases. Lastly, I had access to an extraordinary group of colleagues who have yet to let me down, the members of the Tri-County Bar Association.

Why am I writing about my reasons for staying in a small town? I was asked to address why our office decided to participate in the State Bar of Wisconsin's Rural Clerkship Program. I have chosen where I want to be, but when I look around me, I notice that so few others are making the same choice. Fast forward 20-ish years, and it is likely that most of my colleagues will no longer be practicing.

Kostner, Koslo & Brovold LLC participates in the Rural Clerkship Program because we are looking to the future. We want other attorneys to live and practice in this area again. We want to bring more attorneys to the Tri-County Bar Association. I do not want to be a solo practitioner. The communities served by the Tri-County Bar Association need and deserve attorneys.

Therefore, we are seeking others like us. We are seeking those who love wide open spaces, challenges of a rural practice that changes daily, and the sense of community, both

personal and legal. We are hoping to find such individuals in the Rural Clerkship Program. Maybe it will work out, maybe it will not, but it is worth a try.

For anyone who has an interest in rural practice, I encourage you to reach out to those practitioners closest to you. You might find something that you have been searching for your entire career. If you practice in a county similar to mine, where you are wondering

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who you are going to be practicing with in the future, consider participating in or supporting the Rural Clerkship Program.

Maybe we can inspire a new generation of rural lawyers through mentorship and collegiality. I know it worked for me. Before I started working at Kostner, Koslo & Brovold LLC, my plan was for me to stay in the position for one year to gain experience. However, after working there, getting reacquainted with the community, and being a part of the Tri-County Bar Association, my answer to the question "How long are you going to stay?" is now "I am not going anywhere. I am home." **WL**



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