

LAW WEEK

COLORADO

Up-And-Coming Lawyers: 2014

This year's class of Up-and-Coming Lawyers includes two young attorneys who have already established their own practices, a former Division 1 soccer player, one of the co-counsels from a marriage equality case that changed the law in Colorado, a bilingual and scientifically minded former military man, a former professional swing dancer and an emerging sports law guru.

Thomas Cossitt

IN ONE OF Tom Cossitt's cases, he represented a mother who faced her child's father in court; the father was seeking custody only between the hours of 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. — while the child was sleeping.

Cossitt can chuckle about the father's strategy to avoid making child support payments, but with a practice in family law, specifically in protecting children from abusive parents, few of his cases are laughing matters.

The first client he ever had was a father who felt his 10-year-old son was endangered by the mother's drug use. Cossitt filed an emergency motion to restrict and found himself in trial for the case within seven days.

"That threw me into the deep end of family law, and once I was able to see the good that came out of the work, it was appealing to me, and other attorneys started sending me family law clients," he said.

Since then, he's become firmly rooted in the practice area. He started his career in the law for Sam Owen, an estate-planning attorney who served as Cossitt's mentor. Cossitt developed his own practice in family law and hung his shingle this past August.

In the few months since then, he said it's been an amazing experience of breaking from the limitations he had working in a law firm run by someone else. By practicing on his own, he has the freedom to pursue practice areas he's interested in. A feat that he said he's most proud of is seeing the success he's had in building his own business.

"Having good rapport with clients and for them to have so much trust in me to handle cases



and refer other people to me — that they genuinely appreciate the work I've done for them — I think it's just reflective of the quality of work and dedication that I put into what I do," he said.

His family law niche is stressful but also very rewarding, especially when it involves cases similar to that first one, which require an emergency motion to restrict.

In those situations, the child must be in danger, and the court will restrict parenting time on short notice. He said trials can come about within two weeks, and when that happens, he has to rush to line up exhibits, evidence and witnesses, and sometimes other cases have to take a lower priority until trial. It's a whirlwind, he said.

Another emergency case involved three children who were being neglected to the point that someone at their school offered their mother laundry detergent so the kids could have clean clothes. As a result of Cossitt's work, the father was granted full custody, and several months after the trial, he followed up to tell Cossitt that all three kids made the honor roll at school.

"In order to get in on a case like that, with children who are 7-, 8- and 9-years-old, who are neglected, and to get them away from that parent and get them to the parent who is attentive, is really rewarding," Cossitt said.

Although he's been practicing for just more than five years, Cossitt has developed his own niche,

and he is active in the Larimer County Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division to help other young lawyers get the kind of help and mentoring that he did when he first started.

On that first case, another attorney helped him get pointed in the right direction and continued to help him on subsequent cases.

"I can read books all night and day, but having someone mentor me was so helpful and valuable, so whenever I've got a friend, colleague or someone at one of the (YLD) events asking a question who's new in the practice, I absolutely want to help them out and share whatever knowledge I have with them," he said. •

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