



Lawyers With Heart

As corny as it sounds, the name says it all. Lawyers have a big heart, and I am proud of the work Jeanne and others have done for this great cause.

I vividly remember a phone call I had with my father when I was in law school. I could tell right away that he was flustered, and he quickly told me why: “You need to pray for Jeanne Tate’s daughter, Mandi. She just had a major heart attack and needs a heart transplant as soon as possible. She is just eight years old...” As a parent, I cannot fathom what the Tate family went through after receiving such awful news. Fast forward to the present, though, and I am happy to report that Mandi’s story has a happy ending. She received the needed heart transplant and is thriving. But the story does not end there.

Having witnessed firsthand the incredible impact that the American Heart Association (AHA) can have, Jeanne started the “Lawyers With Heart” initiative as a way of giving back to an organization that did so much for Mandi and her family. Each Fall, the American Heart Association holds its premiere event — the Heart Walk — that brings communities together to raise funds, encourages people to live a more heart-healthy lifestyle, and celebrates the progress made in the fight against heart disease and stroke. In Tampa Bay alone, more than 35,000 people attend the Heart Walk each year, and millions of dollars have been raised for the worthy cause.



Jeanne Tate and her daughter Mandi at the American Heart Association Tampa Bay Heart Walk.

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Jeanne founded the “Lawyers With Heart” initiative by challenging her fellow legal colleagues to join her in forming teams and raising money for Tampa Bay’s Heart Walk. If you know Jeanne, then you know she can be very persuasive, and I am pleased to report that lawyers exceeded her expectations. In 2017 alone, 16 law firms, along with the Hillsborough County Bar Association, raised over \$108,000 for the cause. The Yerrid Firm, P.A. won the friendly law firm challenge by raising the most money. But there truly were no losers in this contest, as all firm participants stepped up and did their part. As corny as it sounds, the name says it all. Lawyers have a big heart, and I am proud of the work Jeanne and others have done for this great cause.

But, we as lawyers can do even more. Cardiovascular disease is the nation’s most costly illness, directly and indirectly accounting for \$298 billion in costs each year. Every 34 seconds, someone has a heart attack, and every 40 seconds, someone has a stroke. Presumably, either you or someone you know has been impacted, and the American Heart Association could use our help.

I encourage all of you to consider participating in this great event. You don’t need to be a part of a large or even small firm to participate. Law firms or non-firm groups of any size, and even individuals, can participate. This year’s event will be held in November at Raymond James Stadium with the exact time and date still to be determined. If you or someone you know is interested in joining the “Lawyers With Heart” initiative, please contact McKenzie Doll with the American Heart Association at McKenzie.Doll@heart.org or (727) 563-8022 or Bob Fulton at bob.fulton@hwhlaw.com or (813) 221-3900.

LAWYERS DOING GOOD IN THE COMMUNITY

As I am closing each of my articles by telling the story of attorneys who have gone above and beyond in their civic involvement, I will continue to praise Jeanne Tate whose charitable work goes far beyond the Lawyers With Heart initiative. Her work is too vast to detail in this short column, but here are just a few highlights. First, Jeanne won the 2013 Tobias Simon Pro Bono Service Award, the highest statewide pro bono award given each year, in recognition of the thousands of pro bono hours she has devoted to Bay Area Legal Services and others. Second, Jeanne has been a tireless advocate for the Florida Chapter of Gift of Adoption – a non-profit that provides financial grants to make adoptions more affordable for deserving individuals and families. Since 2002, these grants have helped make adoption a reality for more than 227 children, and our own Hillsborough County Bar Foundation has been a significant contributor to this great cause. Third, Jeanne founded the non-profit Heart of Adoptions Alliance, Inc. in 2001 to promote adoption education, provide much-needed resources and support to families facing an unplanned pregnancy, and provide grant money to families needing assistance with the costs of adoption. As Rosemary Armstrong said so well in nominating Jeanne for the Tobias Simon Award, Jeanne’s “service to poor children and families in Florida is immeasurable, but what is certain is that many hundreds of children would not be in permanent placements today without her assistance.” Thank you Jeanne and the attorneys in your firm for all the great work you have done in our community.

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