

Breaking the Ice: Inclusivity draws attorney to HCBA leadership

■ Todd Nelson

BASSFORD REMELE shareholder Jessica Klander, who recently joined the Hennepin County Bar Association's executive committee as secretary, said its commitment to diversity and inclusion helped motivate her to pursue a leadership role with the association.



Klander

Klander is on track to serve as HCBA president in the 2025-2026 bar year.

"What the HCBA does right is it focuses as hard on the inclusion part as on diversity part," Klander said of the bar association's executive committee. "They're intentional about recruiting and retaining a diverse group of people by making people feel necessary and included."

Klander also serves on Bassford Remele's board of directors, saying she wanted to be involved in the firm's leadership because of her respect for her colleagues and because of the support she has received since she began working at the firm during her second year of law school.

In her practice, Klander defends professionals in legal and medical malpractice claims and does commercial litigation and defense work in consumer finance. She also co-chair's Bassford Remele's recruiting committee.

Name: Jessica Klander

Title: Shareholder, Bassford Remele; secretary, Hennepin County Bar Association

Education: B.A., English literature, Macalester College; J.D., William Mitchell College of Law

Q: Best way to start a conversation with you?

A: I love talking about my kids. Talking about kids is always a great way to start a conversation with me.

Q: Why did you go to law school?

A: I was planning to buy my parents' insurance agency in Becker, Minnesota. I loved working with my parents, and I look up to them a lot. But they were going to retire and I wasn't sure I wanted to run that business by myself. I decided to take a risk and went to law school instead. I quickly learned that I loved the law and, to my own surprise, wanted to be a litigator. That all came into place, and then I got lucky in finding the firm where I wanted to stay right out of my 2L year.

Q: What books are you reading?

A: I love reading fantasy sci-fi novels. I don't have a lot of time to read, so I listen to audiobooks. I'm currently listening to "The Wheel of Time" series. In my free time, I like to read stories that are very opposite of the concrete and factual reading I do in my legal career.

Q: What's your pet peeve?

A: I don't like posturing, which is sometimes a necessary part of my job. I am more comfortable being vulnerable and authentic.

Q: Best part of your work?

A: The people that I work with at my firm. I am a huge cheerleader for my

firm. They're more like family than colleagues and I am very lucky to work with them.

Q: Least favorite?

A: Discovery fights with opposing counsel.

Q: Favorite activity away from work?

A: I like to fish. I like to be outdoors. My family and I are very outdoorsy. We have a cabin, so when we're not here, we like to be at our cabin together. If I can be outside, that's my happy place.

Q: Where would you take someone visiting your hometown?

A: I would take them to one of the Three Rivers Park District parks.

Q: Legal figure you most admire?

A: RBG. I admire her courage and willingness to be comfortable with the uncomfortable.

Q: Misconception that others have about your work as an attorney?

A: A lot of times when people meet me, they're surprised that I'm a litigator. When I ask them why, they usually say, "Well, you're so friendly." As if being a litigator means you're going to be cantankerous or argumentative in social situations.

Q: Favorite book, movie or TV show about lawyers?

A: I love "My Cousin Vinny" and "Legally Blonde." When Marisa Tomei and Linda Cardellini are on the witness stand, there is a "gotcha moment" when they get an admission and solve the case. It usually doesn't happen that way in real life but that's what every lawyer is hoping happens, whether we admit it or not.