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# Better Together

Since co-founding **Boyd & Early Family Law LLC** one year ago, attorneys Missy Boyd and Liz Early have made a profound difference for clients, team members, and the communities they serve.

by **BILL DONAHUE** | photos by **JODY ROBINSON**

Missy Boyd and Liz Early met for the first time eight years ago, while working as family law attorneys for a regional general practice firm. Almost immediately, each saw in the other a trusted friend, a kindred spirit, a tribe member. “As soon as Liz was hired, there was something different about our connection, personally and professionally,” Boyd says. “In addition to being colleagues and really enjoying collaborative cases, we were also instantly friends.”

Early adds, “What made Missy very different was her approach—the mindset that you *can* do it all. You can be a mom, a spouse, a family member, your child’s coach, the homeroom mom, and a full-time attorney. Her approach was, ‘We work hard for our clients while we are here, but you also need to go do everything else you want to do.’ That is something that has really carried over to what we’re doing here.”

By “here,” she means Boyd & Early Family Law LLC, the law firm co-founded by the pair last October.

Starting their own firm has been both immensely challenging and easier than expected, thanks to the help and encouragement of a seemingly endless list of business partners, well-wishers, and even their former colleagues. One year later, the women-owned business enterprise has earned a reputation for fielding a compassionate and devoted legal team committed to helping clients through complicated divorces, high-conflict custody disputes, support litigation, and other complex matters pertaining to family law.

“I don’t refer to myself as a lawyer but as a solution seeker,” Boyd says. “The path can be different for everyone—from litigation to alternative dispute resolution. The facts we deal with in any given case are often stranger than any fiction. Regardless of the facts, I’m always asking the question: *What is the solution?* We want to help these people get through the process as unscathed as possible and get to a better place.”

A passion for helping others—particularly children—compelled Boyd and Early to pursue a career in family law. In fact, both volunteer their services for the Montgomery Child Advocacy Project, a nonprofit devoted to preventing child abuse and neglect in Montgomery County through a combination of legal services, advocacy, and education.



Missy Boyd (left) and Liz Early



Boyd sits on the board of the nonprofit in addition to serving as a volunteer attorney. Each also serves as a guardian *ad litem* for children, appointed by a court to look after a child's best interests in custody matters.

"In family law, we are oftentimes dealing with failed relationships, but there is still a child at the center; there's a life to cultivate," Boyd adds. "We handle high-conflict, high-net-worth divorces, but the ones that involve children are the toughest ones we do. We, and our clients, are well aware of what the end of a marriage might mean for a child. At the very least I am educating my clients and making sure they do not lose sight of the child that could become collateral damage in that fight."

While litigation remains the primary avenue for resolving divorces, the attorneys of Boyd & Early Family Law handle a large number of mediations and arbitrations, which tend to be kinder and gentler for all involved. Regardless of the method, the firm's multifaceted and solution-focused approach has resonated with clients and non-clients alike. Case in point: Former opposing counsel and opposing parties are some of the firm's best referral sources.

Just as Boyd and Early ensure that clients feel valued and prioritized, they strive to do the same for each member of their team. They do so by providing fellow attorneys and paralegals with a comprehensive benefits package, a collegial workplace, and the flexibility to lead full lives away from the office. While team members are devoted to making sure all clients' needs are addressed in a timely and effective manner, they also carve time out of their schedules to attend their children's sports games and other activities. As a nurturing team, it is not uncommon to find the firm's members supporting each other outside of the office, including attending the sporting events of each other's children.



In addition to the firm's founders, the legal team has grown to include (left to right) Chelsey Christiansen, Jennifer Ryan, and Allison Wickman.

"We spend most of our lives with our work colleagues, and the environment here is one that we intentionally created," says Early. "It's more than the office culture. It was important for us to offer a battery of benefits [to employees] as soon as possible. In order for people to feel that they can do their best work, they need to feel taken care of, and that they have lives beyond the walls of the workplace. And that's what we're committed to doing for everyone who works here."

Boyd and Early go so far as to refer to their fellow team members as "a second family." The family includes two other attorneys—Chelsey Christiansen and Jennifer Ryan—soon to be three with the addition of new graduate Allison Wickman, as well as a "dynamic" support staff in the form of Tracy Bowers, Latoya Wilson, and the newly added Jami Levin. Six of the eight-person team worked together at their last firm. Boyd describes the team as "a fierce collection of women," yet she and Early point out that half of their clients are men.

The attorneys support the community through involvement in professional and civic organizations. In 2024, Boyd will ascend to the position of chair of the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Family Law Section, while Early will chair the Family Law Section of the Montgomery Bar Association; Early is also a trustee for the Montgomery Bar Foundation. Christiansen, currently secretary of the Montgomery Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section, will take over as chair of the section in the near future. Ryan is a leader

within the Bucks County Bar Association, providing pro bono assistance to parties engaged in protection from abuse. In addition, multiple members of the firm serve as volunteers in a variety of roles throughout their community.

Boyd and Early consider the fact that the firm has added two new team members within its first year as a telling sign of good things to come. As of October 1st, the firm made another significant change: Attorney Jennifer Ryan was advanced to a partnership role.

"We collaborate on a lot of cases, so if you hire one of us, you get five of us, each with our own perspective and skills to add to each issue," Early says. "Our clients, especially those with young children, remain our clients for many years. We get them through the hardest parts of their lives. I will often tell clients at our first meeting, 'Today is the worst day. Bear with me and a year from now you will be in a very different place.' We're all here to help people 'get through the toughest parts' and come out the other side ready to move forward in their lives."

"Our ethics and integrity are what matter most to us," Boyd adds. "Quite candidly, the world of family law can get messy sometimes, and it can be even messier when there are children involved. We view each case with the idea that there will still be a family that's left after a divorce. We're always mindful of that." ■



Boyd and Early are pleased to announce that attorney Jennifer Ryan has moved into a partnership role.

➔ **Boyd & Early  
Family Law LLC**

(610) 596-8111

[boydearlyfamilylaw.com](http://boydearlyfamilylaw.com)