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Sereni Law Group LLC's legal team includes (left to right) Julie Derby, Linell Lukesh, Gabrielle C. Sereni, Samantha Newell, and Keri Macken.



In a Class of its Own

Led by founder Gabrielle C. Sereni, **Sereni Law Group LLC** has quickly become a leading resource for expertise in legal matters pertaining to special education and municipal law.

If the legal profession gave out end-of-season awards, attorney Gabrielle C. Sereni would likely be on the short list for Most Valuable Player. Not only is she a litigator with more than 20 years of experience, a current doctoral student, and a mother of three, but this November she is celebrating one year as the founding member of her own law firm.

"It's been a big year, and it's been incredible," says Sereni. "Our clients and communities have been entirely supportive."

A boutique special education school district defense firm located in Delaware County, Sereni and her team at Sereni Law Group LLC provide dispute and litigation support public and private educational institutions in areas of special education and consulting on compliance with complex federal and state regulations. The firm recently expanded its services to support the legal needs of municipal entities, making it one of the few female-owned law firms in Pennsylvania acting as a solicitor.

Whether working in education or municipal law, Sereni says the goal is to develop long-term relationships.

"We really live alongside of our clients," says Sereni. "We work very closely with them, and, by the nature of our work, we work with them as they respond to the needs of their families and their communities."

The firm's practice is driven by those needs. Issues can arise at any time and often demand thorough responses on tight deadlines; that's especially true when dealing with matters concerning special education. Sereni says handling such emergent cases is easy considering the experience and exceptionalism of the firm's legal team.

"Linell Lukesh is a highly skilled litigator and had her start in early intervention,"

says Sereni. “Samantha Newell, the firm’s newest attorney, has a background as a special education teacher and is currently the youngest named municipal solicitor in Delaware County.”

Sereni’s bench also includes Kerri Macken, a seasoned trial attorney with broad experience in defense-side litigation, and Julie Derby, a municipal and governmental attorney who Sereni describes as her “right arm.”

“While we have our own specialties and strengths, it’s synergistic,” says Sereni. “I couldn’t ask for better teammates.”

The Sereni Law Group also has five on-staff educational consultants, including certified school psychologists, an occupational therapist, a speech and language pathologist, and two behavioral specialists, as well as a special education teacher and transition expert. These subject-matter experts allow the attorneys to be more effective in their representation.

“While I and other attorneys have education backgrounds, we aren’t specialists,” says Sereni. “With our consultants, we are constantly deepening our own understanding of the issues so we can better inform and support our clients.”

Leading the Way

A child of two university professors, Sereni always suspected she would end up in the education sector. Prior to her law career, Sereni received her Master’s in Secondary Education from the University of Pennsylvania and taught English (eighth grade through 12th grade) in area schools for three years. Although she enjoyed the work, something was missing.

“I knew I loved being around school people, and I loved being around kids and helping kids,” says Sereni. “I just didn’t feel like I was in the best role.”

She changed her career paths and enrolled in Villanova University School of Law. After graduation, she completed a clerkship with federal judge Robert F. Kelly in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. She then saw an ad for a school attorney with Philadelphia-area firm Wisler Pearlstine LLP.

“I thought: *I’m a teacher, and I’m an attorney. I need to check this out,*” says Sereni. “It was just perfect timing.”

She spent five years at Wisler Pearlstine, representing school districts and other public entities, before becoming a lead federal

court litigator for McAndrews Law Offices in Berwyn. She then was approached by Raffaele Puppio in Media to build that firm’s special education practice. In 2023, after working with Raffaele Puppio for over a decade, Sereni decided to take the next step in her career by founding her own firm dedicated to education.

Sereni may lead the way, but she says all her attorneys practice with the view that they play an integral role in finding resolutions to difficult situations. In the future, Sereni hopes to expand the firm’s client base, especially by focusing on building its municipal practice. At the same time, she doesn’t picture the firm becoming too large; rather, she wants the firm to continue to live up to its reputation for personalized, relationship-based service.

“It can be heartbreaking, seeing what things can happen to children in their communities, in the home and sometimes even in schools,” says Sereni. “You have to bring your empathy to this practice. . . . When you pick up the phone, you’re going to get not just an attorney, but the attorney that you actually want to talk to. Being too big would be antithetical to what we do.”

When Sereni isn’t leading her all-star

team, she spends time with her three children, ages 15 to 20, at their home in Glen Mills. She is also pursuing her doctorate in educational leadership at Neumann University. In her few spare moments, Sereni practices mindfulness and tries to stay active, often swimming, weightlifting, and biking either early in the morning or late in the evening. “Any opportunity to exercise is a good day for me,” Sereni adds with a laugh.

When asked to reflect on her what she sees as a successful outcome in education matters, Sereni says that the best resolution is always an amicable one that serves the continuing relationship between the child, the parents, the school, and the community.

“Every child has a team, and that team is supposed to work together for the child’s benefit,” she adds. “In our work, we become part of that team, and as difficult as that can be, it’s just so rewarding. I can’t see myself doing anything else.” ■



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—Gabrielle C. Sereni, Sereni Law Group LLC



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