

by **Matt Cosentino**
photo by **Jody Robinson**



The Big Picture

In a practice area rife with emotions, Susan M. Gibson of **Gibson Family Law** helps clients focus on the future and make informed legal decisions that are best for their families.

As a family law attorney for nearly two decades, Susan M. Gibson has seen countless clients at their most vulnerable, especially upon their initial consultations when the wounds of a pending divorce or custody battle are fresh. While it never becomes any easier to see someone struggle, she has learned to use those moments to uncover what is most important to people, and to assure them that she will do whatever it takes to guide them to the other side.

"I try to keep clients focused on their long-term goals," she says. "What do you want your life to look like in five years when this is a thing of the past for you? At the end of the day, I make

sure I am advocating for what the client truly wants and what will help them get to that goal."

As the founder of Gibson Family Law in Doylestown, Gibson specializes in divorce, equitable distribution, child custody, child support, alimony, prenuptial and postnuptial agreements, and more. She strives for negotiated settlements whenever possible but always prepares for going the distance and fighting for her clients at trial.

"It's always a balance of those ideas," she says. "It comes down to what the client wants, what I think the court is going to do, and what I think we can do to compromise with the other side to make it more personalized to this family

without going through the emotional and financial expense of going to court."

Gibson graduated from law school in 2008, the same year she met her now-husband and his young son. She simultaneously grew into the roles of family law attorney and stepparent, giving her insight into the dynamics of a blended family.

Today she is the mother to three more boys. She can relate to the love her clients have for their children and why that can make divorce so difficult.

"It's hard when kids are involved, because there's always going to be emotions," she says. "I encourage clients to look at their situation objectively, and have them understand what the court process looks like so they can make as rational a decision as they can. Sometimes, that means accepting a result that they don't love but that they can live with. I don't think anybody goes through a family court case and at the end considers it the most ideal situation. That's a struggle that clients have to wrestle with."

Gibson's aim is not to make their personal decisions for them, but to present a clear picture of the legal landscape.

"I do the best I can to lay out the options and let them decide what makes the most sense for them, their family, and their children," she says. "Hopefully they can move on to the next stage of their life and function without my help, so they don't have to come back to me for custody disputes and other issues over the years."

All family law cases are different, she adds, and a big part of her job is to educate people. Just because a client's friend or cousin had a divorce end in a certain result doesn't mean the same will happen in their case.

With her vast experience in both Bucks and Montgomery counties, Gibson has developed meaningful relationships with many of her peers. Although that doesn't affect how each side fights for their clients, it does allow many negotiations to proceed in a civil manner.

In addition to being a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association and Bucks County Bar Association, Gibson volunteers for several local charitable groups. She is also the vice president of the Central Bucks School District Board of School Directors.

"Community involvement is important," she says. "I think I have the reputation of being a committed community member, and I think that translates to the support I give clients. My experience with the school board also gives me additional insight into how a school district works. When I have cases that may involve issues like school choice, I have a better understanding of what's going on behind the scenes and it helps me to be a better counsel for my clients." ■

Gibson Family Law

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