

## women in real estate 2010



FEATURING BARBARA ALESI, KATHLEEN DEEGAN DICKSON, KATHRYN SAMMON BURNS AND ANDREA TSOUKALAS

# Four women attorneys of Forchelli, Curto, Deegan, Schwartz, Mineo, Cohn & Terrana LLP

**ba** Barbara Alesi

Partner  
Forchelli, Curto,  
Deegan, Schwartz,  
Mineo, Cohn  
& Terrana LLP

*What award or recognition has been the most meaningful to you and why?*

Recently, I was asked by Education and Assistance Corp. (EAC) to be its honoree for its Annual Fundraising Golf Outing and Dinner.

EAC is a leading not for profit human service agency which helps more than 70,000 people throughout Long Island and New York City. Its programs protect children, works with senior citizens, supports people in recovery and empowers individuals through employment and education. Its efforts help build strong families and communities throughout the area it serves. EAC is an active, strong and longstanding agency which has been doing good work in the community since 1969 and its programs continue to be well supported by many of the major corporations, banks, real estate developers, businesses and individuals throughout Long Island and the New York metropolitan region.

I have always held the strong belief that all of us, particularly those business owners and professionals who serve our communities, have an obligation to "give back" to those communities in whatever way we can whether it be contributions, serving on committees and boards of not for profit organizations or lending our expertise where needed. The old adage that "those that do good will have good done to them" holds true.

I am honored to have been chosen to be EAC's 2010 honoree and am looking forward to the June 21 event, and meeting my clients, colleagues and the members of the communities which it serves there.

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Barbara Alesi concentrates her practice in corporate and commercial matters, including mergers and acquisitions, commercial real estate transactions, private placements of securities and mortgage and asset-based financing.

Alesi has served as chair of the North Shore Animal League America President's Advisory Board and as a member of the Advisory Board of Chicago Title Insurance Company. She has served as an executive board member of the National Association of Women Business Owners-LI Chapter and on the membership committee of the Executive Women's Golf Association, Long Island Chapter. Her article, "Potential Tax Pitfalls," was published in the New York Real Estate Journal in 2008.

**kd** Kathleen Deegan Dickson

Partner  
Forchelli, Curto,  
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*Professionally, where were you ten years ago and where are you now?*

I have always been engaged in the practice of law with a concentration in real estate, zoning and land use matters, however, my career has changed direction significantly over the last ten years. Early in my career, I had the tremendous opportunity to represent the Planning Board and Zoning Board of the city of Glen Cove, positions which, along with other roles in the city attorney office, I held for 13 years. During that time, I represented several other municipalities and government entities in their economic development initiatives both as special counsel and general agency counsel. Over the last several years, however, my practice has evolved into predominantly representing private developers and companies, and doing very little municipal representation. The experience, relationships and expertise that I garnered during those years representing public entities has proved invaluable in representing the private sector. That experience has given me insight into the way that municipalities and elected officials approach development projects, and has enabled me to use my skills as a conciliator to get things accomplished.

*How has the need to create a more sustainable environment influenced the way you do business?*

In 2009—I was invited to join other Long Island leaders to participate in The Energeia Partnership at Molloy College in Rockville Centre. The Energeia Partnership is a two year leadership academy dedicated to identifying and addressing the issues challenging the Long Island region. The Energeia Partnership recruits proven leaders in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors of Long Island and provides them with information, a solid network and the support necessary to encourage a collaborative, regional effort for change and improvement of the quality of life for all Long Islanders. These leaders will dedicate themselves to serving as stewards of Long Island, offering their talents and wisdom to promote the common good.

Kathleen Deegan Dickson concentrates her practice in the areas of real estate transactional matters, and, in particular, land use and zoning law. Deegan Dickson has an extensive track record of success with and before municipal boards and agencies on significant projects throughout Long Island. Perhaps more importantly, she has a reputation for effectiveness and integrity in the pre-hearing meetings and outreach to municipal planning staffs and civic groups that are now a must in Long Island's current development climate.

**kb** Kathryn Sammon Burns

Associate  
Forchelli, Curto,  
Deegan, Schwartz,  
Mineo, Cohn  
& Terrana LLP

*Who was your mentor and why?*

Since joining the firm, partner James Ricca has been my mentor. I work directly with Ricca in all facets of his practice, including commercial real estate transactions, real estate litigation, commercial and residential foreclosures and corporate work, allowing me the opportunity of learning many areas of law early in my career. Ricca has been a great teacher, combining methods of 'baptism by fire' with a pragmatic professorial approach. Ricca has helped me mold and specialize my practice area, and has provided me with the resources, encouragement and practical experience to advance in that field. Ricca's mentorship has been, and continues to be, invaluable.

*How do you stay ahead of the curve?*

My practice area, foreclosures and real estate litigation, is ever changing. There have been two waves of major revisions to the law since 2008. There are constantly new requirements, new burdens of proof, and new defenses. It is essential to continuously educate myself in all matters related to my field. What was effective last month may not be effective next month. Every week there are decisions published which outline the latest demands. Before work and at the end of the day I sift through the daily mound of newspapers, journals, bar association newsletters, and emailed legal updates for any information that will help my clients stay ahead of the curve.

*What obstacles have you overcome to get where you are today?*

My schooling, both undergraduate and postgraduate, provided lessons in perseverance and time management. While in college I was a Division I scholarship athlete, juggling a rigorous athletic schedule with majoring in two subjects. In addition, I held several jobs and internships throughout each year. While attending law school I worked for the firm as a summer associate and law clerk, was involved with a number of organizations, and was also co-editor-in-chief and managing editor of my Law Journal. Coping with those demanding times has given me the skills to work more efficiently and manage my time effectively, which has greatly assisted me in my work today.

Kathryn Sammon Burns concentrates her practice in real estate and banking litigation, residential and commercial foreclosures, workouts, and debtor and creditor rights. Burns is admitted to the New York State Bar and is a member of the New York State Bar Association and the Nassau County Bar Association. Her article "How New Residential Foreclosure Laws Affect Commercial Lending" was published in the New York Real Estate Journal (2010).

**at** Andrea Tsoukalas

Associate  
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*What advice would you give to a woman just starting a career in your field?*

Know your client's goals and expectations and understand the overlay of regulations that affect the property in interest. Real estate transactions have become much more complicated. In addition to standard transactional issues, real estate attorneys must have a working knowledge of zoning, environmental and land use regulations. In other words, a lawyer can't just have the client sign on the dotted line and hope for the best.

In a recent example, I was retained by a client after she had purchased a vacant oversized parcel of land in a prestigious neighborhood with the intention of constructing a house. The attorney who represented her in the purchase relied on representations that the property was a building lot and the contract was not contingent on obtaining a variance and/or a building permit. Subsequent to the sale she was informed that the property was not a buildable lot and could not be used for any purpose whatsoever. The result is that my client is now engaged in a lengthy and expensive process to obtain the approvals needed to develop her property, which could have been avoided if her prior attorney had performed some basic due diligence.

**Know your client's goals and expectations and understand the overlay of regulations that affect the property in interest.**

Andrea Tsoukalas concentrates her practice in zoning, land use, environmental and municipal law matters. Tsoukalas represents a wide variety of clients including national corporate chains, local developers and small business owners in the development of commercial and residential properties. Tsoukalas also has extensive experience in appellate practice and civil litigation. She litigates contract and real estate claims, corporate and partnership disputes, and regulatory claims arising out of building and zoning code violations.

Tsoukalas is general counsel to the Long Island Gasoline Retailers Association, a nationally recognized non-profit trade association with over 600 members. She also serves as counsel to the village of Kensington Board of Trustees, Zoning Board of Appeals and Architectural Review Board. She is also an associate member of the Long Island Builders Institute (LIBI). LIBI is an association of building industry professionals who are dedicated to making Long Island a better place to live and work, by creating a balance between the economy, the environment and development opportunities for all communities and residents.