

# Small town upbringing helps attorney chart her own path

By Brian Cox



Though she's a big city lawyer now, Megan Howard has roots that can be found in a small town in the mountains of northern Georgia.

The town of Ellijay where Howard grew up was so small that it didn't have a movie theater until she was in college. The students she graduated with from high school were kids she'd known her entire life.

"I always like to joke around and say the only things that come out of my hometown that people know about are apples and cabins," says Howard.

Now known as the "Apple Capital of Georgia" and as a popular weekend destination because of its hiking trails and wineries, Ellijay has grown to nearly 2,000 residents and has "gotten bigger than its britches," according to Howard, who is an associate at Krevolin Horst, LLC in Atlanta.



Atlanta attorney Meg Howard with her parents, Rich and Scarlet, at Burt's Pumpkin Farm in Dawsonville, Ga.

"You get a real sense of community in a small town," she says of growing up in Ellijay. "Everybody knows everybody."

The youngest of three sisters – all red-headed and blue-eyed – Howard spent her childhood camping, hiking, and enjoying lake days with her family, with whom she remains close and still visits on most weekends. Her father, Rich, was an engineer with his own firm, and her mother, Scarlet, worked as the firm's office manager. Her mother named her youngest daughter after the actress Meg Ryan, who starred in beloved romantic comedies such as "When Harry Met Sally" and "Sleepless in Seattle."

Howard has always had a strong sense of self and confidence in her abilities.

"I blame it on my parents," she says. "My dad is a very confident person, and I get my confidence from him. I feel I've always been strongheaded."

Though Howard had little interest in sports in high school, she was active in most of the academic clubs, including the school newspaper, math team, and a community service club. Despite having a great-uncle and a godmother who were lawyers, Howard gave little thought to a career in law. Instead, she pursued a marketing degree at the University of Georgia Terry College of Business in Athens, where she was able to live with her sister, who was studying to be a teacher.

Howard loved learning about marketing except for one important aspect: social media. She had to force herself to spend time on TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media platforms. Sometimes she felt old-school compared to her peers because she eschewed social media and preferred to take hand-written notes (which she still does).

Her distaste for social media led to a bit of shock during her final summer internship when a mentor delivered a blunt message: marketing might not be the right fit for her.

"She told me she didn't think I would enjoy it," recalls Howard.

The mentor also told her, "When I talk to you, it makes me think of our legal department. You seem to click with them."

The observation made sense to Howard, who tends to be direct and straightforward.

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"I always knew I wanted to do something business focused, and I thought it was going to be marketing, but it turns out instead that I'm better at analyzing the legal part of the business side of things," says Howard. "It wasn't a smack in the face so much as it was a realization."

An earlier internship at Coca-Cola had exposed Howard to an entire legal team that concerned itself with the legalities of marketing, which led her to think she could perhaps combine her marketing knowledge with a legal education.

After talking it over with her family and gaining her parents' support, she decided to go to law school. She continued living with her sister in Athens while attending University of Georgia School of Law, where she was drawn to transactional work.

"I think I liked the parts of law school that a lot of people hate," says Howard with a laugh. "Contracts is a class that a lot of people hate, but I loved contracts. When you're choosing marketing words to catch people's attention, it's a similar thing to when you're choosing contract words to capture what your client wants."

Law school also taught Howard that each person's differences and struggles are unique and they must find their own way to overcome them.

She took as many clinics as possible as she explored potential areas of interest.

"I worked more in law school than I was in a classroom," she says, "which I think was really beneficial to finding out what I like doing."

When she graduated in 2020, it was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the bar exam was rescheduled three times before finally taking place in October. The law firm that was set to hire her suddenly instituted a moratorium on hiring and wasn't sure when they would be able to bring her on board.

It was an uncertain and anxious time.

A law professor contacted Howard with an opportunity: A friend had recently been appointed to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in Washington, D.C. and needed a judicial law clerk. He would let her focus on contract claims. Was Howard interested?

Indeed, she was. She packed up and after eight years of living with her sister in Athens, Howard moved to the nation's capital for the next year-and-a-half.

"Having clerked in that court helps me so much whenever I have a contract that deals with government contracting issues," says Howard.

When the clerkship was ending, Howard knew she wanted to return to Atlanta to be closer to family. She also knew that she didn't want to work in a large firm where she would feel underappreciated and undervalued. Her time in Washington gave her the opportunity to look for the right fit.

"I got to find a place where I love working and that place is Krevolin Horst," she says.

The firm was looking for someone who wanted to work on commercial contracting work, and for Howard, the position was ideal. Her old-school mentality proved to be a strength when it came to document review.

"There is no better thing than printing out a contract and looking at it on paper and finding typos," she says. "I will catch something every time I print out a document."

Howard has been with the firm more than two years and primarily works with Crissy Wolfe, a partner who focuses her practice on providing corporate and transaction counsel to public and private companies in a range of industries.

"She needed someone to assist with her outside general council services," says Howard of Wolfe. "I do so many different styles of commercial contracting. I get to work on weird things that I never thought I would."

For instance, Howard has worked on contracts dealing with a Guinness World Record, butter, and elevators, and she finds the variety fun and interesting.

As she works to grow her practice, Howard is focused on building a network of friends who are business oriented and is aware of her need to become more comfortable using social media. She attended the Primerus Young Lawyers Section Conference in New Orleans last April and posted about the experience on her LinkedIn page.



**Native Georgian Meg Howard, an associate at Krevolin Horst, LLC, recently visited Savannah.**



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"I had the wonderful opportunity to meet some amazing young attorneys this past week," she wrote. "There is no doubt that each of these great people will do marvelous things, and I am extremely fortunate to call them my new peers."

Even as she is adapting some of her tendencies in order to grow as a lawyer, Howard is conscious of the need to define her own parameters.

"It's important to be aware of how you do things differently," Howard says. "Everyone has to find their own path."



Attorney Meg Howard (left) with her older sisters, Jess and Katie.